

# การศึกษาเปรียบเทียบการบรรเลงเปียโนระหว่างเพลงพื้นบ้านจีนและเพลงจีนสมัยใหม่

## A Comparative Study of Piano Accompaniment in Chinese Folk Song And Chinese Modern Song

ลู ลีหาน<sup>1</sup>, อวิรุทธ์ โทท่า<sup>2</sup>  
Liu Lihan<sup>1</sup>, Awirut Thotham<sup>2</sup>

Received: 24 March 2020

Revised: 26 August 2020

Accepted: 23 September 2020

### บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์ดังนี้ 1) เพื่อศึกษาความเป็นมาของบทเพลงร้องจีน และการบรรเลงเปียโนประกอบการขับร้อง 2) เพื่อวิเคราะห์การบรรเลงเปียโนประกอบการขับร้องระหว่างเพลงพื้นบ้านจีนและเพลงจีนสมัยใหม่โดยใช้ระเบียบวิธีวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพในการเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูล ณ สถาบันดนตรีเซอผวน ประเทศจีน ผลการวิจัยพบว่าเพลงพื้นบ้านจีนและเพลงจีนสมัยใหม่เป็นหลักฐานสำคัญของศิลปะการร้องเพลงจีน ซึ่งมีการแสดงการร้องเพลงจีนที่แตกต่างกันอยู่สองประเภทสำหรับการบรรเลงเปียโนประกอบการร้องเพลงจีน สำหรับการสอนขับร้องและการแสดงในประเทศจีนมีบทบาทและเป็นแนวทางที่สำคัญเป็นอย่างมากแต่ค่อนข้างมีระยะเวลาสั้นในการคงอยู่ และไม่ใช่สาเหตุในการมีส่วนร่วมของเปียโนสำหรับการบรรเลงประกอบของประเทศจีน ในปี ค.ศ. 1600 การขับร้องเพลงจีนทั้งสองประเภทนี้ไม่มีรูปแบบที่สมบูรณ์ในการเรียนรู้และในทางการศึกษา พื้นฐานทางดนตรีสำหรับการแสดงมีความสำคัญเป็นอย่างมาก ไม่ว่าจะเป็นนักร้องหรือนักเปียโน และทำนองของบทเพลงที่เป็นเอกลักษณ์เฉพาะตามพื้นฐานทางประวัติศาสตร์ที่มีผลกระทบต่อกันและกัน ดังนั้นการเปรียบเทียบบทเพลงพื้นบ้านจีนและเพลงจีนสมัยใหม่จึงมีความแตกต่างกัน การวิเคราะห์ทำนองมีความจำเป็นสำหรับทักษะการบรรเลงเปียโนประกอบการขับร้องที่ดี ซึ่งเป็นสิ่งที่นักร้องต้องการสำหรับการได้รับการเรียนรู้ ดังนั้นการวิจัยครั้งนี้จึงเป็นประโยชน์ต่อการปรับปรุงทักษะการบรรเลงสำหรับการบรรเลงเปียโนประกอบการขับร้อง และเป็นข้อมูลที่สำคัญสำหรับการศึกษาระบบของการบรรเลงเปียโนประกอบการขับร้องในอนาคตต่อไป

คำสำคัญ: เปียโนคลอ, เพลงพื้นบ้านจีน, เพลงจีนสมัยใหม่

<sup>1</sup> นิสิตปริญญาโท หลักสูตรดุริยางคศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต วิทยาลัยดุริยางคศิลป์ มหาวิทยาลัยมหาสารคาม

<sup>2</sup> อาจารย์ วิทยาลัยดุริยางคศิลป์ มหาวิทยาลัยมหาสารคาม

<sup>1</sup> Master of Music Student, College of Music, Mahasarakham University

<sup>2</sup> Lecturer, College of Music, Mahasarakham University

## Abstract

This research aims 1) to investigate the status of Chinese vocal music and piano accompaniment; 2) to analyze the piano accompaniment between Chinese folk songs and Chinese modern songs. A qualitative research methodology was used for collecting data. The results indicated that Chinese folk songs and Chinese modern songs are of Chinese mainstream singing art. There are two different types of vocal music performance. Vocal music in the piano accompaniment for the vocal music teaching and performing in China has a very important guiding role, but it is very short and does not cause the attention of the corresponding due to the piano into the 1600 A.D. of Chinese year. It does not have a complete system of learning and education. Music background for the performance is very important as the singer or the pianist and the melody of songs are unique and follow historical background that influence each other. Thus, musical styles are different between Chinese folk songs and Chinese modern songs. Analyzing melody is essential for good piano accompaniment skills. There is a need for singers to acquire knowledge and learning. Therefore, this study is helpful to improve the performance skills of piano accompaniment for supporting a vocal music. It also provides some references to support the systematic teaching of piano accompaniment in the future.

**Keywords:** Piano accompaniment; Chinese folk song; Chinese modern song.

## Introduction

Piano accompaniment is a form of artistic expression, in which piano and various instruments or vocal music cooperate with each other. Musicians can achieve the best performance through the cooperation of piano accompaniment and the singer or other instruments (Jin, 2007, P. 14).

Chinese folk songs refer to songs with national characteristics or typical regional characteristics which are sung by unique national singing methods. Chinese modern songs refer to Chinese modern art songs with western singing style, which is called "Bel canto". These two types of vocal music works are also the main teaching types of vocal music

courses in colleges and universities in China (Jin, 2007, P. 15).

The subject of piano accompaniment has developed very slowly. Thus, the teaching impact is not ideal. In addition to students' lack of learning initiative, the lack of a teacher is also one of the important reasons. Most of the learning of piano accompaniment is done according to a score that is provided by a teacher. Therefore, comparing these two types of vocal music and piano accompaniment in China has to explore the system that conforms to the rules of piano learning.

## Objectives

1. To study the status of Chinese vocal music and piano accompaniment.

2. To analyze the piano accompaniment between Chinese folk songs and Chinese modern songs.

### Scope of the study

1. The geographical scope. We focused on the music of Sichuan province, China. Data collection was carried out in Sichuan province. A field survey was conducted in music institutions in Sichuan and relevant teachers were selected for interview and also data collection.

2. Academic research scope. We focused on Chinese folk songs and Chinese modern songs. Bel canto songs were the subject of this research. We selected representative Chinese folk songs and Chinese modern songs (hereafter used to refer to Chinese modern songs sung by Bel canto) for separate analysis and then compare the two types of songs, the songs themselves and the piano accompaniment.

### Research methodology

This study used qualitative methods by referring to historical literature and applying the methods of music theory, musicology, and ethnomusicology for fieldwork. The data were collected from libraries, books and historical materials websites as well as some music periodicals and news websites related to the arts in China as follows.

1. Field Research. For interviewing teachers who were relevant to piano accompaniment, the required materials were

obtained with a camera and a note book. We observed different ways of playing, behavior, facial expression and different ways of playing processing of the song through recorded video and pictures. Analyzing the impact of the piano accompaniment combined dynamic performance and piano spectrum in order to analyze different songs or playing skills. In this research, we interviewed Mu Yi, a teacher from Sichuan Conservatory of Music. Mu Yi systematically studied the performance of foreign vocal music works in Belarus, including many Bel canto singing works. The interview content of this paper focuses on teacher Mu Yi as a vocal piano accompaniment and vocal music art guidance teacher,

2. Participation. We participated in classrooms and concerts to observe and survey what were the key point of different songs that are taught by teachers so as to make a comparative analysis of the key points. In the concert, we observed the differences between actual stage performance and classroom teaching and also the interaction between piano accompaniment and vocal singing in the environment of the concert hall.

3. Data analysis. In this study we selected two pieces of Chinese folk songs and Chinese modern songs to analyze. We selected four songs to analyze, and four key informants to interview who were popular and well known in Sichuan as the best of performers. They were also suggested by scholars, guru, students, and others.

4. Evaluation. We give an evaluation that connects our research with the said objectives. We use the survey methods detailed above to obtain data, perform the analysis and to come to the conclusion. We found that Chinese folk songs and Chinese modern music are different in terms of melody, lyrics and the performance of the singer.

### Outputs and benefit

1. Understanding the development history of Chinese vocal music works and Chinese piano accompaniment.

2. In-depth study of piano accompaniment and vocal music-theoretical and practical knowledge.

3. Those who study vocal music and piano accompaniment can learn from this paper.

4. The piano accompaniment of national music can be distinguished from the piano accompaniment of modern songs to better complete the performance of the works.

5. Protecting and spreading Chinese traditional music culture, understanding the integration of western culture and traditional culture.

### Results

From the professional perspective of music performing arts, the title of piano accompaniment is “piano art director”, or “cooperative piano” and “cooperative piano”. From the perspective of its title, its connotation is that the piano accompanying the

accompaniment cooperates with the soloist to perform or sing the works of music together (Jin, 2007: 14).

At present, normal music college and secondary art school lack a large number of piano art instructors for the teaching of vocal and instrumental music majors, and even fewer high-level piano art instructors. From an objective standpoint, piano accompaniment in domestic music colleges and universities is placed in the orchestral or vocal departments as a basic job (Geng, 2006: 58).

There are some common problems in current music teacher piano accompaniment; specifically the monotony of accompaniment, the lack of strain capacity of mode, number, and the lack of flexible use of accompaniment texture. Therefore, in future piano accompaniment training and attention should be paid to the training of normal accompaniment, impromptu accompaniment and the rationality of chord matching. (D. Q., personal communication, August 20, 2019).

A piano accompaniment has been divided into formal accompaniment and impromptu accompaniment. Improvisational accompaniment means that the performer must have a certain level of piano performance and organically combine the basic theoretical knowledge of music with practical operation.

In order to make the research more specific, we selected two songs from the Bel canto of Chinese folk songs and Chinese modern songs respectively for analysis and research. Folk songs were “A glass of wine”

and “Wusuli River song”. Modern songs were “Blue Sea of love love” and “Love song”.

Folk songs refer to songs created by a certain nation in their ancient or modern times with their own national style. These original folk songs have developed to the present, and later generations have adapted the melody and lyrics to form a modern folk song that is easier to sing. Therefore, most folk songs have distinctive regional characteristics. For example, “A glass of wine” is a Xinjiang Uygur folk song. In Xinjiang, the Uygur is the largest minority group except the Han. The “Wusuli River song” is a song adapted from the traditional Hezhe folk songs. The Hezhe people are also an ethnic minority present only in the Northeast. There are 56 ethnic groups in China. Due to the differences in historical traditions, linguistic features, and customs of different ethnic groups, the styles and colors of folk songs of various nationalities are very distinctive (Wang, 2006: 36).

Xinjiang folk songs are popular in Xinjiang and around the country. Xinjiang is located in the northwestern border of China. The “A glass of wine” uses the Uyghur harmonies. The whole layout is divided into two parts. The first part is a single two-part style and the second part is an expanded single stage.

“Wusuli River song” uses the traditional Chinese folk song five-tone, “1, 2, 3, 5, 6”, but the author has a fusion of Chinese and Western melody of the song, which adds unique features of Western piano music. The

melody is smooth and natural flowing like a river.

The structure of the “Blue Sea of love” phrase is square, showing outstanding contrast characteristics. In the first half of the music, it uses natural major features, with a soothing rhythm, unfolding the music scene of the moonlight.

“Love Song” is an aria that expresses missing lovers, so the melody of love songs is full of drama. It is closely connected with the storyline. Its melody has a strong Mongolian atmosphere, but it also draws on Western opera in the melody rhythm and harmony changes. The creative method of “Love Song” is also the main theme of the entire opera.

In summary, the melody basis of folk songs mostly adopts the traditional Chinese five-tone style. Secondly, the melody and rhythm have distinct national characteristics, and the singing style has a dialect accent. The melody of Chinese modern songs is generally seven-tone, major and minor in some modern songs with ethnic flavors. Singing is also used in the Bel canto vocal singing style, and national songs are significantly different.

Xinjiang folk song accompaniment instruments include tambourine, Dongbula, hot corrugated iron drum and so on. In “A glass of wine”, most of the piano accompaniment adopts seven-tone natural tone, and five-tone, b7, #1, #2, #4, #5, etc. The piano accompaniment of “Wusuli River song” also has national characteristics. The first seven notes and the sounds use parallel

octaves, which produces the ethereal effect corresponding to the Qingshan shouting. The decorative sounds and arpeggios, the widening of the range bring the whole song to a climax. "Blue Sea of love" uses the chord decomposition of the voice, in the second half in the piano accompaniment of the paragraph, the use of sound density contrast, wide and narrow contrast, strong and weak contrast and other performances make the music more three-dimensional. The piano accompaniment of "Love Song" runs through the rhythm of the triplet, making the music more coherent and freer in expression (Yu, 2014: 26).

In summary, in the piano accompaniment of Chinese national songs, according to the different national characteristics of the songs, or the dialects in the lyrics, the corresponding second degree or vocal accompaniment will be added to strengthen the national flavor, and the rhythm will also be based on the singer's emotions are adjusted differently. It can be freely extended according to the emotion of the song or the singer. The piano accompaniment will also appear in the temporary adaptation of the original score. The piano accompaniment of Chinese modern songs tends to be neater. When playing, it is more important that the piano rhythm matches the original score.

Folk songs are mainly lyrical, most of the folk songs are free-tempered and melodic, and the singers are relatively free when singing them. The songs often have a unique national singing melody. Performers often add their own impromptu singing

according to the national characteristics of the song, so the piano player is playing. When the corresponding song transitions end, it will pay special attention to the cooperation with the singer, and will also cooperate with the vocalist's improvisation to match the corresponding piano sound. Chinese modern songs have regular melody and tunes have strong expressive power. Therefore, piano accompaniment has a strong and guiding nature in Chinese modern songs; mainly to help singers grasp the rhythm and the melody of songs. Interlude makes the music work hierarchically, and provides time for the singer's rest, exhalation, and emotional accumulation. Singing and piano accompaniment are a co-creation and interdependence. Through perfect combination, the two can better show the characteristics and connotation of the song.

Based on the above content, We sorted out and summarized the piano accompaniment comparison between Chinese folk songs and Chinese modern songs.

Piano accompaniment of Chinese folk songs is adapted from traditional folk songs, and modern songs create it by themselves. Chinese folk songs with syncopated notes. The Chinese pentatonic mode in the majority, "1,2,3,5,6". Chinese modern songs with melody similar to opera, there are arias and melodies in major intervals. In the Chinese folk songs, the beginning of the piano accompaniment melody is mostly free, with a wide range of intervals, allowing free play of the singer, the

piano accompaniment can be added to the improvisation in the singing. However, in Chinese modern songs, piano accompaniment melody is mostly regular, rhythm is relatively regular and interval range is small. It will not join the player's impromptu accompaniment. The piano accompaniment with Chinese folk songs is used to help the singer find the melody and increases the characteristics of the national melody. It can adjust at any time according to the singer free rhythm. In Chinese modern songs, the rhythm of the singer is controlled by the regular piano accompaniment to heighten the singing atmosphere. (M. Y., personal communication, August 21, 2019)

## Conclusion and Discussion

First of all, the accompaniment of Chinese folk songs is more flexible and freer in terms of rhythm. More emphasis is placed on grasping the urgency of speed and the strength of rhythm according to the singer's mood, singing style and state. Secondly, in timbre, the accompaniment of Chinese folk songs especially emphasizes the imitation of Chinese national musical Instruments. The way of touching keys and playing techniques are quite different from the accompaniment of western vocal music works. Thirdly, many Chinese folk songs have strong Chinese opera characteristics. The only way is to maximize the reserve the original Chinese folk songs, to make the piano a unique style of folk song to achieve the perfect combination of Chinese and western music art. (Z. K., personal communication, July 26, 2019)

To master the accompaniment part of songs, one needs to have some understanding of the creation background, the strength of the harmony and contrast, the phrase of breathing and the accuracy of speed. It is also necessary to analyze the classification of songs harmonies and phrase, the lyrical content and so on. For cylindrical chords, octaves and tremors, there should be color comparison in content. (Y. Y., personal communication, July 25, 2019)

To sum up, the piano accompaniment of vocal music songs integrates various factors of music, which are highly artistic and ideological. In the history of western music, it carries the artistic brilliance that cannot be erased by artistic songs. The piano accompanist can understand and grasp the style of the work in a deeper way and play it accurately and properly, which will definitely integrate with the singer in a better way and greatly reflect the artistic charm of the art song.

Huang Tengpeng (2002) in his article "aesthetic thinking about art songs in China" expressed the point of view that we are in the process of creation and study art songs, efforts will be European music composing skills and culture aesthetic combined with traditional Chinese culture, We agree with Huang Tengpeng's point of view, the reasonable solution exists in two kinds of cultural exchange between the creators and appreciators, the contradiction of the aesthetic ideology in the quintessence of western music at the same time, fully affirmed its ethnic dances.



## Suggestions

The result is useful for the piano accompaniment teachers and students in universities to study. Solving the problem between vocal music and piano accompaniment will make learning more efficient and targeted. If other teachers want to do more research in this direction, they can work on the development status and future development planning of piano accompaniment. This research will help to improve the teaching system of a piano accompaniment and solve many of problems future.

## Acknowledgement

I would like to thank my adviser Dr. Awirut Thotham for his patient to guide and explain what to do during writing this paper, which enabled me to finished my thesis successfully. I thank the Dean and all professors who have taught me knowledges. I thank Sichuan Conservatory of Music for providing me with the required materials during my postgraduate thesis.

Finally, I want to thank my parents for their support and tolerance also my grandmother for her infinite love.

## References

- Jin, P. (March 5, 2007). *On the cooperation between vocal singing and piano accompaniment*. The relevant tribe. Retrieved from [www.xzbu.com/9/view-9416279.htm](http://www.xzbu.com/9/view-9416279.htm)
- Geng, Q. (2006). Teaching and singing of ethnic vocal music and Bel canto singing. *Qinghai Normal College Journal*, 03, 23-25.
- Wang, X. (2006). Overview of Uygur folk songs and dances. *Artistic Exploration*, 05, 5-6.
- Yu, H. (2014). The guidance and promotion of folk song adaptation to the development of Chinese vocal music art. *Music*, 22, 122.
- Huang, T. (2002). Aesthetic thinking about art songs in China. *Journal of Northwest Normal University (Social Science Edition)*, 05, 31.