

# Chinese Peking Opera Elements in Zhang Zhao's Piano Work Pi Huang

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## Abstract

*Peking opera is a representative type of traditional Chinese opera. It originated during the reign of Emperor Qianlong of the Qing Dynasty. It incorporates elements of various operas such as Hui opera and Han opera. It is famous for its unique singing style, facial makeup, and costumes. It is performed by singing, reciting, acting, and fighting. There are two main operatic tune Peking opera, Xipi and Erhuang. The musical accompaniment mainly uses Jinghu, Jingerhu (traditional Chinese stringed instrument) and percussion instruments. As an important symbol of Chinese culture, Peking opera has been listed as an intangible cultural heritage of the United Nations. Pi Huang is a solo piano work composed by Chinese composer Zhang Zhao using the elements of Chinese Peking Opera, which involves the use of the Structure of Banqiang and vocal elements of Peking Opera. The piece imitates the timbre and technique of the accompaniment instruments of Peking Opera, which is also one of Zhang Zhao's most representative works. This paper analyzes the background, structure, and characteristics of the piano piece Pi Huang, and reveals the profound meaning and connotation of the work, to provide a valuable reference for performers and teaching research.*

**Keywords:** *Chinese Peking Opera, Piano Composition, Zhang Zhao, Pi Huang, the Structure of Banqiang.*

## Introduction

### *Introduction of Zhang Zhao*

Zhang Zhao is a Professor at the School of Music, Minzu University of China, first class composer and one of the most active composers in contemporary China. Zhang Zhao was born in Yunnan in 1964 into a musical family. His father, Zhang Nan, was a composer who was engaged in collecting folk music and composing music all year round. His mother, Ma Jingfeng, was a folk singer. Influenced by the family music atmosphere, Zhang Zhao has had a strong interest in music since childhood, composing his debut works Haiyan and Witty Harmonic at the age of 16, and successfully performing the piano concerto Mountains and Forests with the symphony orchestra at the age of 18. In 1983, he graduated from Yunnan Provincial Art School with a piano major; In 1987, he graduated from the Music Department of Minzu University of China with a double major in composition and piano. In 1997, he entered the Central Conservatory of Music to study for a master's degree in composition with composer Guo Wenjing and graduated from the composition department the following year. Zhang Zhao has composed a wide range of music genres, including symphony, folk instrumental music, chamber music, piano music, dance drama, musical, film and television music, songs, and large-scale square art music.

### *Introduction to Zhang Zhao's Solo Piano Works*

Zhang Zhao's solo piano works are currently divided into six categories:

Collection of Ancient Styles,

Collection of Local Characteristics,

Collection of Diaries,

Collection of Nature,

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## Collection of Adaptations and

### Collection of Children.

‘Collection of Ancient Styles’ - Ancient Style refers to Chinese classical culture, "China's ancient culture has a long history, it is it that gives me most of the nourishment, and the ethereal poetry of ancient Chinese culture is the soul of piano creation" according to Nie (Nie, 2015). Rhyme in classical Chinese culture is what Zhang Zhao has been pursuing in his music creation. The works included in the Collection of Ancient Styles are, Pi Huang, Chinese Dream and Cuàn, all created by borrowing elements of ancient Chinese opera and ancient opera and combining Western composition techniques, which embodies the creative characteristics of the combination of Chinese and Western cultures, and also shows the composer's unique creative style.

In ‘Collection of Local Characteristics’ includes the first piano suite Three Ballads of Southern Yunnan, the second piano suite Looking for the Distant Voice, the third piano suite Luo Zuo and Mountain Songs, and two pieces of folk style works Dance of the Divine Flute, Dance of Huayi and Numa Ami. This series of works shows the customs and customs of ethnic minorities, the culture of ethnic minorities. Zhang Zhao once said : "I am full of emotions for national things, and its raw vitality and vitality bring a very optimistic spirit to art." (Nie, 2015)

Because he was born and raised in Yunnan Province, where ethnic minorities gather, and his parents were engaged in ethnic minority music, Zhang Zhao was deeply influenced by the cultural customs of ethnic minorities since he was a child, and his works not only express his love for his hometown, but also show the traditions and customs of Xinjiang, Tibet, Inner Mongolia, Xiangxi and other ethnic minority areas. Zhang Zhao's exploration of ethnic music creation is not limited to Yunnan. Life in Yunnan has cultivated his love for Chinese folk music, and he has sprinkled this love on the vast land of China.

‘Collection of Diaries’ is a collection of stories that Zhang Zhao uses music instead of words to record his life, including Nocturne, Meditation, Midnight (nocturne on the white key), Reverie and other works. The composer once said : “Every day is a special experience, and the feelings recorded with music can revive the lost time.” (Zhang, 2013) Zhang Zhao records his life in this way, and at the same time collects materials for his own music creation, which reflects his good creative habits.

‘Collection of Nature’ - The main works included in ‘Collection of Nature’ are Song of the Wind, The Sea, Watching the Moon, Fugue Suite of the Four Seasons (Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter), Nature No. 1 (meditation on ice and snow, tone poem of flame). The abundant spiritual energy of nature has given Zhang Zhao a steady stream of creative inspiration and themes, beauty, simplicity, tranquility, and spaciousness. His experiences about nature, and in his opinion, the piano is the best instrument to express the scenery and scenes of nature. He is not only depicting nature in the ‘Natural Collection,’ but also permeates the elements of nature in the creation of other categories of works such as ‘Ancient Style Collection.’

‘Collection of Adaptations’ includes Two Songs for Parents (1. Tone poems 2. Shangri-La in the distance), In That Distant Place, Singing the Ballade of the Cowherd, March of the Volunteers, Mei Niang Song, My Motherland, The Story of Spring, 21 Chinese Folk Songs on the Piano, etc. Among Zhang Zhao's solo piano works, the most adaptations are based on Chinese folk songs, and he has adapted what he considers to be classic folk songs into solo piano works, which have been widely disseminated. This adaptation gets rid of the restriction of lyrics on the melody of music. The familiar folk song melody is presented in another form on the piano, which is a new auditory experience for Chinese audiences. Foreign audiences who have never known Chinese folk songs can also experience Chinese music culture.

‘Collection of Children’ includes Xinjiang Suite, Tibet Suite, Yunnan Suite, Inner Mongolia Suite and so on. In terms of learning and playing piano music, most of the Chinese piano children are enlightened with Western works. Zhang Zhao has created piano works with different local characteristics according to

different regional characteristics, which not only enriches the library of Chinese children's piano teaching and performance, but also prompts them to inherit and carry forward Chinese music culture while learning Western musical instruments.

The above classification of piano works was proposed by Zhang Zhao himself, in addition to solo piano works, he also composed works for double piano, piano and orchestra.

#### *The Background of the Creation of Pi Huang*

The composer got rid of the shackles of the traditional Western music structure, adopted the rhythmic pattern structure of Peking Opera. He created the piano work Pi Huang with childhood memories and hope for life as the theme. The music tells the composer's childhood life by the Dianchi Lake in Yunnan Province, which not only depicts the magnificent and elegant scenery of Dianchi Lake, but also reflects his pursuit of spiritual freedom and nature.

The first draft of the work was completed in 1995. After 10 years of repeated revisions, it was finalized in 2005 and participated in the first Chinese Music Composition (Piano Works) Competition of the Paratiano Cup in 2007. The piece stood out among more than 400 entries and won the first prize. After the competition, the composer made further detailed changes to the work, and finalized it in 2009, which shows the composer's serious and rigorous attitude towards music creation.

#### *Analysis of the Structure of the Pi Huang*

The name of the piano piece Pi Huang comes from the Pi Huang dialect of Peking Opera, which is the joint name of Xipi and Erhuang, which are the two most important vocal systems in Peking Opera. They have different structures and characteristics, and the music often has dramatic tension and conflict.

Xipi is the Qinqiang opera in Gansu and Shaanxi provinces in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties. The operatic tune spread to Xiangyang city, in Hubei province, and was reformed by Hubei's artists. It was originally called Xiangyang melody. According to the research by Zhou Yibai and Ouyang Yuqian, the people of Hubei call singing as Pi because the melody comes from the Gansu and Shaanxi areas in western China, it is called Xipi (Xi means the western of China). Erhuang is said to have originated in Anhui province and spread to Yihuang (the country of Jiangxi province) and evolved. One theory is that it originated from Siping operatic tune (an ancient traditional operatic tune, a branch of Yiyang operatic tune (one of the four major Chinese operatic tune) in Anhui and spread to Hubei to develop into Erhuang operatic tune. Accompanied by Huqin (a Chinese instrument), the melody is smooth and peaceful, the rhythm is stable, and it has the characteristics of gentleness and concentration.

In the development of melody, Xipi has more leaps, and the overall pitch range is high, its mode is mainly Gong mode. Therefore, its melody is bright, gorgeous, and sharp. When it is with a gentle rhythm, it often expresses bright and lyrical comedy plots and joyful character emotions. When it is with a light or strong rhythm, it often expresses warm, intense drama scenes, lively, excited character emotions.

In contrast, Erhuang is based on an interval of seconds, the overall pitch range is low, and it is in Shang mode. Its melody is dark, solemn, and calm. When the rhythm is slow, it is often used to express repressed tragic plots and melancholy character emotions; when the rhythm is strong, it often expresses repressed, tragic drama scenes and sad, angry character emotions.

As for the two-opera melody Erhuang, Xipi comes from Bangzi opera melody, and Erhuang comes from Yiyang opera melody. The ensemble of Pihuang opera melody on the same stage reflects some of its strengths - such as the richness of the rhythmic patterns, the beauty of the melody, the vocal characteristics of alternating fast and slow, and both passionate and deep." (Analysis of Peking Opera Terminology (I) 2024)

Xipi and Erhuang belong to the same structure of Banqiang, and the explanation of 'board cavity' in Shi Chengxiang's book *Peking Opera Art - A Wonderful Flower of Chinese Culture* is: "The 'Ban' of the Banqiang structure refers to the beat of opera music. The opera band uses the Guban (In Peking opera, Guban refers to a combination of percussion instruments, consisting of a drum and clappers, used to control the rhythm and provide accompaniment for the actor's singing and performance. Specifically, the Gu (drum) is a single-headed Peking opera drum, struck by the drummer to produce strong, powerful beats, while the Ban (clappers) consists of two wooden pieces used primarily to mark the tempo) to make the beat, all the strong beats are struck on the board is called 'Ban'. The sub-strong beat and weak beat are beaten with Guqian (In Peking opera, Guqian refers to the drumsticks used to strike the Peking opera drum. The Guqian are typically slender wooden sticks held by the drummer to control the rhythm and tempo, coordinating with the actor's performance, and singing) are called 'Yan', which is collectively called 'Banyan'. Due to the different forms of beats, different rhythmic patterns are formed, and the name of the rhythmic pattern is often named after the number of Ban. The speed and rhythm characteristics include [Yuanban], [Manban], [Daoban], [Kuaisanyan], [Erliu], [Liushui], [Kuaiban], [Yaoban], [Sanban], [Gunban], etc. The Banqiang structure is composed of these different rhythmic patterns." (Shi, 2003)

The piano piece *Pi Huang* is composed of ten sections: Daoban, Yuanban, Erliu, Liushui, Kuaisanyan, Manban, Kuaiban, Yaoban, Duoban and coda.

The Daoban belongs to the subsidiary rhythmic pattern in the Peking Opera rhythmic pattern, which is derived from the expansion of the Sanban and has the musical characteristics of 'scattered and sang' and plays a leading role in the whole singing section." (Cao, 2010) "The Yuanban is the most basic rhythmic pattern, and it is the basic form of various rhythmic patterns, and other rhythmic patterns evolved and developed on the basis of the Yuanban." (Cao, 2010) Erliu is a unique rhythmic pattern derived from the Xipi melody, which is developed by a series of additions to the rhythm, melody, and structure of the Xipi Yuanban. Therefore, the regulation of the end notes of Erliu, the laws and the change of strong and weak beats are same as Yuanban. The biggest difference is that the rhythm will be more compact than the Yuanban, and the mood will be warmer and livelier. Liushui, like Erliu, is also a unique rhythmic pattern derived from the Yuanban of Xipi, which belongs to the Kuaiban category, but it has a certain difference from the Kuaiban and is roughly twice as slow as the Kuaiban in speed. In the Peking Opera aria, Liushui is mostly two tones singing for one word, and it is even possible to add a Tuoqiang (In opera, Tuoqiang refers to the technique where the performer elongates or extends certain notes or phrases in the singing to enhance expressiveness and emotional impact) at the end of the sentence. While the Kuaiban is too fast, it is difficult to add a drag tone. In addition, Liushui and Kuaiban are the same in terms of the rise and fall of the beats, the form of the beats and the structure of the musical phrases. It should be noted here that Liushui in Peking Opera usually starts singing after the strong beat. It is different from singing on the weak beat. It does not start from the weak beat but starts from the second half of the beat. Kuaisanyan, one strong beat and three weak beats, can be placed between the Yuanban and the Manban, playing the role of connection. The Manban is the slowest form in Peking Opera and is mostly the main singing of the characters in the opera. It occupies an important position in Peking Opera music. It is mainly used to depict and describe the image and psychological activities of the characters. "In traditional Peking Opera, Kuaiban itself is only used for singing in the Xipi singing sections. But in the work, it is used for a new theme with the characteristics of the Erhuang melody. The Xipi Kuaiban is more similar to the Xipi Liushui. First, it is a simplified compression of the original Xipi Yuanban. Secondly, the rhythm is the same as that of the Liushui, using a 1/4 beat with only one strong beat and no weak beats. What distinguishes them is that Kuaiban is much faster in speed compared to Liushui and Erliu. The rhythmic pattern of Kuaiban follows a strict rule: The previous phrase starts after the second half beat and ends on the strong beat. The next phrase starts with a strong beat and ends with a strong beat. Kuaiban is approximately twice as fast as Liushui. In Peking opera, each syllable corresponds to a single note, with no Tuoqiang. However, in Erliu and Liushui, while the tempo is also fairly brisk, one syllable often carries multiple notes, making it less crisp and clean than Kuaiban." (Pei, 2022)

In Peking Opera, the Yaoban is very distinctive, also known as "Jinlanchang (fast accompaniment with slow singing)." There are four major instruments in Peking Opera: Jinghu, Jingerhu, Yueqin and

Xiaosanxian. The fast accompaniment is played with the huqin, which is played quickly, and the notes are very dense, so it is called Jinla. The part of the singing is slow, so slow, so it is called Tuoqiāng. The Duoban in traditional Chinese opera is derived from the condensed version of the Liushui. In Duoban, there is no interlude or transition between phrases, and it often employs the Duochang form of singing, where words are tightly connected. This style is used to express intense emotions and enhance the stage atmosphere.

The Daoban is the introduction of Pi Huang, Yuanban is the theme. Erliu, Liushui and Kuaisanyan form the first part of the theme development of the music. The Manban is the second part of the theme development of the music. Kuaiban, Yaoban and Duoban form the third part of the theme development of the music. The coda serves as the end of the piece.

In the Daoban section (measures 1-7), the composer uses Rubato, with his right hand unfolding in three consecutive trills in the mode of the Eb Gong (Eb Gong is a type of Chinese pentatonic mode. The Chinese pentatonic mode is a mode system based on the five tones of Gong, Shang, Jue, Zhi and Yu. In the traditional Chinese five-tone mode system, the five tones can be used as the tonic tones of the mode and are organized into five modes. These modes are named by their tonic tones, namely Gong, Shang, Jue, Zhi and Yu), leading to a melody set by successive ornamental notes, whose tones resemble a landscape painting, transporting the listener to the composer's childhood memories. With a string of arpeggio from low to high and finally ending in b3, the piece enters the original section.

The image shows a musical score for a piano piece. The top system covers measures 1 through 7. The key signature has two flats (Bb and Eb), and the time signature is 2/4. The tempo is marked 'Rubato'. The right hand (RH) features three consecutive trills, each marked with a 'tr' symbol. The left hand (LH) plays a series of arpeggiated chords. Dynamics are marked as *mf*, *p*, and *f*. Pedal markings are present: 'Ped.' with 'una corda' and 'tre corda' underneath. The score concludes with 'dim.' and 'rit.' markings. The bottom system shows measures 5 through 7, continuing the arpeggiated pattern in the LH and ending with a final chord marked 'dim.' and 'rit.'.

Music Example 1

The Yuanban section (measures 8-25) is the main theme of the whole piece, in 2/4 time, still stated in the Eb gong mode, and the composer uses the C, Bb, and G tones as the motive to lay out the pitch organization of the work. Structurally, this section is a parallel section composed of two phrases with the same beginning and different endings, and the melodies of the two phrases develop in the form of dialogue, and the melody is serene and fresh, describing the composer's innocent childhood.

[原板]  
Largo pacatamente (安祥地) ♩ = 46

Music Example 2

The Erliu sections (measures 26-51) are innocent and upbeat, and the tempo is more compact than the first two sections. The lower part of the voice is introduced with the rhythm crescendo of the Eb gong tune to imitate the rhythm of the Bangu, which is often used as a leader in the accompaniment of Peking Opera and plays the role of a conductor. Structurally, except the first three bars imitating the introduction of the Bangu, this section contains three phrases, with the first two phrases repeated on different octaves, ending in F Shang mode. The mode. The third phrase is a transition sentence that joins the Liushui section, which not only changes in mode, but also speeds up compared to the beginning of the section.

[二六]  
**Allegretto innocente (天真地)** ♩ = 116

26

*mp p*

33

*mf*

*tre corda*

Music Example 3

The Liushui section (measures 52-67) starts in the second half of the beat. At the same time, the mode shifts to A Shang, and the phrases are more compact, with the melody in the right hand being a sixteenth note in one go, and the left hand adding a variation on the theme melody. The composer himself described this passage as: "When you arrive at the edge of Dianchi Lake, you will feel the coolness of the breeze and the fragrance of flowers. This section is the feeling of the wind, and the melody begins to variation with embellishments". (Zhao, 2010) The transition sentence at the end of the section of the piece is followed by the Kuaisanyan section in the crescendo. (Music Example 11)

The composer marks *Vivace spirito* in the Kuaisanyan section (measures 68-85), and the beat changes to 4/8 time, gradually changing from Eb Gong to Bb Zhi, depicting the composer's ambitious and energetic youth. The first eight measures are a reproduction of the motive of the Erlu section, in which measures 69-70 are imitations of plucked music. In measures 71-72 are the minor seconds of the right hand that imitate the acoustics of the Jinghu. Sudden change in measure 73 to a rhythm of three beats, pushing the music to a climax, and an arpeggiated transition phrase appears at the end of the section. Then the music gradually quiets down and enters the lyrical Manban section.

[快三眼]  
**Vivace spirito (精神饱满地)** ♩ = 232

67

*f*

68

72

*cresc.*

*mp* *f* *mp* *cresc.*

Music Example 4

The mood of the Manban section (measures 86-100) is fantastical and free, the mode is Gb gong, and the tempo of this section changes more, and the frequent modulation increases the dynamics of the music. The composer describes the content of this passage as "feeling the tranquility of life in nature and enjoying peace of mind". (Zhao, 2010) This section is structurally divided into two major phrases. The first phrase in which the left hand plays the Erhuang tone. The right hand plays a sustained octave in the upper register, and the short melodic motive composed of notes with the stem facing down is repeated continuously, creating a dreamlike scene. The second phrase is a parody of the bell.

83

(S)-1

L.R.

L.R.

L.R.L.

*mf*

*pp rit.*

*pp* *espress.*

[慢板] **Lento a capriccio (幻想 稍自由) ♩=63**

*una corda*

*Ed.*

*tre corda*

★ 用拳奏。



87

*p*

89

*pp* *mp*

*una corda* *tre corda*

Music Example 5

The Kuaiban section (measures 101-132) begins with two Duoyin the percussion instruments used in the accompaniment of Peking Opera, followed by a second interval for the left hand, which imitate the effect of the gongs, drums and cymbals, percussion instruments in folk bands, creating a strong atmosphere. The first phrase (measures 102-109) shifts from A Zhi to B Yu, followed by a 6-measure transition, the second is a modulation of the third above the first phrase, and measures 130-132 are infinitely repeated.

[快板]  
Allegro decisivo (果断地) ♩ = 184

100

*rit.* *p* *f* *mp* *f*

*Ped.*  $\frac{1}{2}$   $\frac{1}{2}$

Music Example 6

The Yaoban section (measures 133-197) is in F Yu mode, in which the toccata pattern is used to imitate the rhythm of a percussion instrument. The composer used this passage to depict the scene of Lin Chong running in the snow at night in Water Margin, where the voice can be divided into several levels: the melody is in the upper part, similar to the people's Tuoqiang. The middle part is Jinghu and Jingerhu, and the lower part is plucked instruments and Bangu, presenting the effect of tight and slow singing on the piano.

Music Example 7

The Duoban section (measures 198-279) is in 1/4 time, the fastest rhythmic pattern in the whole piece. The mode changes to G Gong mode. This section is a combination of Xipi and Erhuang tones, which has a strong dramatic effect from the beginning. The left and right hands are played simultaneously in different tones. The left hand imitates the Bangu, and the right hand imitates the stringed instruments, forming a vertical double mode. It not only greatly sets off the atmosphere, but also enhances the complexity of the mode. Finally, it moves upward in parallel fourths to a glorious ending.

[垛板]  
Presto sdegnoso ( 愤慨地 ) ♩ = 144

198

210

accel. cresc.

Music Example 8

The coda (measures 280-294) returns to the Eb Gong mode and reuses the three-note motive from the Yuanban to echo the beginning and end of the piece. But instead of repeating it as it is, the composer expands this motive to form alternating column chords with both hands and rapid ascending triplets, creating an imposing acoustic effect that ends the work in a splendid, expansive atmosphere.

[尾声]  
Andante Brillante ( 光辉地 ) ♩ = 84

280

283

rit.

286 **Prestissimo** ♩ = 138

289 **Allegro** ♩ = 126

Music Example 9

*The Creative Characteristics of Pi Huang**Dominant Motivation*

The Yuanban is the theme of the piece, and the melody of the Yuanban section mainly revolves around the three tones of C, Bb, and G. The interval relationship between these three tones is "major second degree + minor third degree". These two sets of intervals are also the basic intervals that constitute the pentatonic scale (the pentatonic scale is an important part of traditional Chinese music and consists of five basic sound levels: Gong, Shang, Jue, Zhi and Yu. Its characteristic is that there is no semitone relationship between adjacent tone levels, which makes the pentatonic scale unique in musical color and expression), so the work has a distinct Chinese national tonal color.

[原板]  
**Largo pacatamente (安祥地)** ♩ = 46

una corda Ped. tre corda

Music Example 10

The composer calls the motive for these three notes 'curtain listening' – "meaning to be like the Empress Dowager Cixi, who is not in the emperor's position, but who dominates in the back." Although these three notes are not obvious on the surface, they are hidden in the music and dominate the whole piece. The repetition of motives recurs like the memories of a composer's childhood". (Zhao, 2010)

In the Liushui section, different combinations of "minor third + major second" and "major second + minor third" appear in the voice of the left hand.

[流水]  
Allegro zeffiroso (似微风地) ♩ = 126

52 *mp legato* *tre corda*

57 *p* *cresc.*

Music Example 11

### Harmonic Characteristics

The chords used in the third beat at the beginning of the piece (Daoban section) can be arranged according to pure fifths, i.e., Eb-Bb-F-C, and the chords of the second beat of measure 3 can also be arranged according to pure fifths to form a pentatonic sequence: Db-Ab-Eb-Bb-F, so it has the characteristics of Chinese national pentatonic characteristics.

Rubato

*mf* *p* *f* *rit.*

*una corda* *tre corda*

Music Example 12

The 72-measure high voice of the Kuaisanyan segment is composed of Bb-F to form a pure fifth, and the low voice is composed of Eb-Bb to form a pure fifth, thus forming a superposition of two pure fifths, while the reduction of A increases the dissonance of the harmony. The high voice of measure 76 is a pure

fifth (C-G), and the low voice is also composed of pure fifths (Bb-F), and the Eb tone is added to form the pentatonic sequence of Eb-Bb-F-C-G, thus creating a pentatonic sound effect. (Music Example 4)

Beginning at measure 268 of the Duoban, the low voice is a pure fifth of C-G, and the high voice repeats A-D, and the E note form the pentatonic sequence of C-G-D-A-E, and the repetition of this "Pentatonic Verticalized Chord" (Pentatonic verticalized chord are non-three-degree superposition chords, which superimpose horizontal musical materials for vertical composite processing. Its chord structure changes with the change of melody and is not limited to the synchronization of harmony and pentatonic melody. According to the composition method of chord structure, it can be divided into three-tone chords, four-tone chords, five-tone chords, etc.) pushes the music to a climax.

Music Example 13

#### *Imitation of Peking Opera Accompaniment Instruments*

##### *Imitation of the Bangu*

At the beginning of the Erliu section, the sustained staccato of the left hand is an imitation of the Bangu, where the composer requested the use of pedals, because "the Bangu has an echo in the hall." The pedal can imitate this sound to create a reverb effect." (Zhao, 2010) (Music Example 3)

In the Yaoban, the C note that continues to appear in the left hand plays the role of the Bangu. (Music Example 7) In addition, in the Duoban section, the staccato of the left hand is also an imitation of the Bangu. (Music Example 8)

##### *Imitation of the Jinghu*

The sixteenth notes of the right hand in measures 33-34 of the Erliu section imitates the Fen bow (a bowing technique, which is characterized by the separation of each note and the disconnection between the notes. This technique requires the strength to be kept consistent when pronouncing the notes, without elasticity.) of Jinghu, while the minor second of the right hand in measures 35-36 is an imitation of the Jinghu portamento.

33

*mf*

*tre corda*

Music Example 14

The minor second of the right hand in measures 71-72 of the Kuaisanyan section also imitates the acoustic effect of the Jinghu portamento (portamento is the most basic and simple fingering technique in Jinghu performance. It plays the role of polishing the note. It is played by sliding from one note to another with the same finger). (Music Example 4)

#### *Imitation of the Yueqin*

The imitation of the Yueqin (a Chinese plucked instrument) in the work is mainly reflected in the Erliu section, which is faster, and the short Staccato in the right-hand melody imitates the crisp timbre of the plucked instrument. (Music Example 3)

### Conclusion

Pi Huang is a piano work composed by Zhang Zhao based on the theme of traditional Chinese Peking Opera, which is based on the structure of Banqiang of the Peking Opera, by borrowing the structural features of Western variation form and combining it with the three-parts structure principle (such as A+B+A), a unique form structure was formed. At the same time, the work also reflects the composer's exploration of the characteristics of national musical instruments and the pursuit of nationalization of sound. This piano piece, which combines traditional Chinese opera elements with Western composition techniques and has unique Chinese characteristics, is highly dramatic and innovative. It is a continuation and development of Chinese Peking Opera art, and a successful practice of nationalizing Chinese piano music.

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