

# Regional Musical Cultural Characteristics of Chinese Piano Music Writing ---- Taking "Spring Dance" for Example

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**Abstract.** With the continuous improvement of piano music writing techniques and the intersection and integration of regional cultures, more and more piano works with regional ethnic characteristics have emerged. Studying the regional cultural characteristics behind these works has become an important research direction. At present, most of the research directions in the study of Chinese piano music works, such as "Spring Dance", focus on music creation style and performance techniques, and there are few literatures focusing on regional culture. Therefore, this article mainly focuses on the regional music and cultural characteristics behind it, and uses the methods of literature research and inductive summary to further explore the manifestation of regional music and cultural characteristics in Chinese piano writing. The final research found that the Xinjiang ethnic music characteristics presented in "Spring Dance" illustrate that regional culture influences piano music writing and promotes the innovative development of traditional piano music writing. Finally, the conclusion is drawn: there is no single form of music, it is complex and diverse. The existence forms of music in different regions are influenced by different regional cultures, including regional ecological culture, national aesthetic psychology, and language characteristics.

**Keywords:** Region;national music;xinjiang;aesthetic psychology.

## 1. Introduction

Regional music culture is an important part of national culture. It is also a symbol of civilization for the development of a tribe and nation, reflecting the customs and practices of a specific region. In China, the unique national culture has been passed down for thousands of years, which is inseparable from the role of music in the development of regional culture, so if it want to explore the cultural characteristics of Chinese piano music writing, one must inevitably explore regional and ethnic music. Today, the history of Chinese piano music creation has reached 100 years, and the process of nationalization of Chinese piano music is constantly developing, and piano works with regional national cultural characteristics are gradually emerging in front of the public. For example, there are the "Ussuri Boat Song" with ethnic characteristics of the Hezhe nationality, the "Southern Yunnan Mountain Ballad" of the Yi nationality, the "Numa Amei" of the Hani nationality, and the "Spring Dance" of the Xinjiang Uyghur nationality. These piano works not only reflect the composers' unique creative techniques, but also reflect the national style under regional characteristics, or the spiritual connotation that the composers themselves want to express.

Studying and gaining a deeper understanding of these excellent Chinese piano works with regional and national cultural characteristics is not only a further improvement of piano playing techniques, but also a continuation and promotion of national culture. Use the sound of music to consolidate national strength, deepen understanding and identification of national culture, and enhance cultural confidence. Therefore, studying these Chinese piano works can help us discover the compositional techniques and narrative characteristics behind the works. It can further reflect on the composer's bold attempt to integrate Chinese traditional culture into Western piano art, and gain a deeper understanding of the national characteristics and national sentiments contained in the music. It is beneficial to further study and understand the development of Chinese piano music and explore the music culture of the region. The author selected Mr. Sun Yiqiang's representative work "Spring Dance" as the research object of this study, and conducted research and investigation on the national cultural characteristics behind his work. The author will consider his unique musical style from a

specific regional perspective, and then explored the regional music and cultural characteristics contained in the work.

At present, there are limited literatures on the study of regional music culture using Spring Dance as an example. Most of them study the composition style and performance techniques of the music, and there are few references that take regional folk music culture as the main research direction. However, the author has reviewed the literature on related research and found that most of the literature focuses on performance techniques while also having unique innovative perspectives. It has certain reference value and guiding significance, and gives the author a new perspective. Based on the research on the creative style and performance techniques of the work "Spring Dance", the author uses the methods of literature research, case analysis, and inductive summary. Further research will be carried out with the language characteristics and cultural features of Xinjiang music as the main idea. The first is music characteristics analysis, which involves conducting a preliminary analysis of the music's expressive techniques and the author's creative characteristics. The second is: regional music characteristics, taking Xinjiang as a specific regional perspective, combined with local language characteristics, exploring its local ecological culture, combining the two, region and music, to make the research more in-depth. The third is: the aesthetic value of regional folk music, to explore its national aesthetic psychology and value, with the dialectical thought of unity of opposites to treat the dialectical relationship between nationality and world in music. Finally, the author hope to achieve effective research results that combine regional culture with music, and Western piano art with traditional Chinese culture. It provides more possibilities for future research on regional music culture.

## **2. Introduction and Musical Characteristics of Spring Dance**

### **2.1. Introduction to the Author and Work of Spring Dance**

Sun Yiqiang, a Chinese American, is a famous music educator, performer and composer in China. Born in Shanghai in 1943, he began to learn piano at the age of five and was admitted to the Affiliated Middle School of Shanghai Conservatory of Music at the age of eleven. He graduated with a bachelor's degree from Shanghai Conservatory of Music and later went to the United States for further studies, pursuing a master's degree and a doctorate degree at the University of Washington. He is not only one of the outstanding representatives of Chinese pianists, but also a well-known figure in the field of Chinese piano music creation and music education.

During his musical career, as a music educator, he trained a large number of outstanding students and cultivated generations of outstanding bloodlines for the Chinese piano industry. As a performer, he also enjoys international acclaim, having won awards in a number of international competitions, such as the Norris Piano Competition in Chicago and the Fifth International Piano Competition in New Orleans. As a composer, he created many famous piano works, the most famous of which are "Flying Grain" and "Spring Dance". His works contain rich national emotions and feelings, and have a profound impact on the development of China's piano industry.

Spring Dance is a piano piece with regional ethnic flavor that was created by Mr. Sun Yiqiang in the 1980s based on his life experience in Xinjiang, China and with reference to the musical characteristics of the local Uyghur people [1]. This work well demonstrates the writing techniques that combine the characteristics of Western piano writing with traditional Chinese folk culture. Both the melody and rhythm have distinct exotic and regional characteristics, reflecting the hospitality, liveliness and joy of the Xinjiang people, and their positive attitude towards life.

### **2.2. Characteristics of Xinjiang Folk Music Reflected in Spring Dance**

#### **2.2.1 Stylistic Characteristics of Xinjiang Folk Music**

Xinjiang is located in the northwest of China and is one of China's ethnic autonomous regions. Music and dance are very common in the lives of Xinjiang people. They are good at singing and dancing, and often celebrate important festivals or special days in the form of singing and dancing.

This is how Xinjiang earned its reputation as the "hometown of song and dance." The sound effects of Xinjiang folk music are rich and varied. Its rhythm and melody sound very cheerful, making people want to dance. In Xinjiang piano works, the rhythmic characteristics are very obvious. Commonly used are weak bars, triplets, syncopation and dotted rhythms, coupled with the flexible use of accents and mixed beats, or the use of "fixed rhythms" to create music of a specific style, all of which reflect the passionate, unrestrained and free musical style of Xinjiang piano works [2].

### **2.2.2 National Beauty is Reflected in the Melody**

Melody, as the externalization of national soul and carrier of feelings, is deeply rooted in national life and maintains a deep connection with internal temperament, character, production, lifestyle, and cultural mode [3]. In Xinjiang's music, the melody types are quite diverse, the music is attractive and expressive, and there are different decorations and changes in different modes, which reflects the rich and colorful musical characteristics of the Xinjiang Uyghur people. Judging from the melody, the work "Spring Dance" shows the unique musical charm of Xinjiang and is the embodiment of the "beauty" of the Xinjiang nation. Experiencing Xinjiang's "national beauty" through the melody of "Spring Dance" is to further explore the profound insights into the national characteristics behind it. This work has a very distinctive theme melody, which runs through the entire work and appears a total of five times. In particular, after the first theme melody is played, the subsequent theme melody continues to appear in the form of embellishments [4]. The form of embellishment is a commonly used writing technique in Chinese folk music. It is a unique "national beauty" in writing and has important national characteristics. At the same time, the composer also referred to the local folk music characteristics of Xinjiang when composing "Spring Dance". This is why some listeners who know Xinjiang can associate this type of music melody with Xinjiang's ethnic group and culture. This is also the embodiment of "national beauty" in "melodic beauty".

### **2.2.3 Ethnic Style is Reflected in Rhythm and Instruments**

The main ethnic groups in Xinjiang include Uyghur, Kazakh, Hui, etc. Their unique "ethnic style" is fully displayed in rhythm and musical instruments. The author thinks the most distinctive feature of this song is the sense of rhythm brought by the rhythm changes, which is full of strong national flavor and makes people feel endless aftertaste when listening to it. In addition, most of the ethnic languages in Xinjiang belong to the Altaic language family, which is characterized by the habit of placing the stress on the last syllable. Therefore, most Xinjiang music clearly shows rhythmic characteristics such as weak bars, syncopated rhythms and dotted rhythms [5]. At the same time, folk musical instruments can show the overall appearance of a nation and its musical and cultural characteristics. For example, among percussion instruments, the Uyghur hand drum is the most famous and is known as the "soul" of the Uyghur band. Its sound is very clear and loud. Uyghur people often use hand drums to perform a series of folk dances or band accompaniment and other activities. In the work "Spring Dance", the use of syncopated rhythm imitates the usual rhythmic pattern of Xinjiang hand drum instruments, making it sound full of rhythm. Not only that, the rhythmic pattern of eight at the beginning and sixteen at the end also often appears, like the sound of a horse running, which is similar to the sound color of the Kazakh plucked string instrument dombra, and also indirectly reflects the characteristics of the Kazakh nomadic people. It can be seen that rhythm and musical instruments are important components of folk music, and also reflect the unique charm of music from different regions.

## **3. The Main Reasons for the Formation of Xinjiang's Regional Music Characteristics**

### **3.1. Music is Influenced by Local Language Characteristics**

The music of a region has something in common with its language, in that both language and music have accents. Among the languages spoken in Xinjiang, Uyghur is the most common. Uyghur is an agglutinative, atonal language with stress similar to music. Research shows that in most Uyghur

words with two or more syllables, the stress is fixed at the end of the word, the last syllable is longer than the first, and the pitch of the stressed syllable drops faster than that of the unstressed syllable[6]. "Spring Dance" composed by Sun Yiqiang uses syncopated and dotted rhythmic patterns, and even weak rhythms. The stress positions of these rhythmic patterns are similar to the phonetic characteristics of the local Uyghur language in Xinjiang. On the other hand, Xinjiang has more modal particles, richer variations in parts of speech, and more vivid dental sounds. The creation of "Spring Dance" effectively incorporates this language feature, using ornamental sounds as auxiliary sounds or passing sounds to imitate modal particles in Xinjiang's ethnic languages[1]. In general, the characteristics of this language have influenced the development of Xinjiang music, not only showing the localization of the musical language, but also embodying the national characteristics of musical works.

### **3.2. Music is Influenced by Xinjiang's Local Ecological Culture**

Xinjiang is China's largest province, with vast expanses of land, mountains and glaciers. The advantageous terrain conditions have also enabled it to form a unique nomadic culture and farming culture, which has had a profound impact on the local ecological environment and agricultural production. From the perspective of cultural ecology, literary creation, including Xinjiang music, is inevitably influenced by factors such as the natural ecological environment and the social ecological environment[7]. When collecting information, the author found that a lot of inspiration for Xinjiang music comes from the local ecological and cultural influences. Most piano music works related to Xinjiang are inspired by Xinjiang's natural scenery and ethnic characteristics. The Chinese piano work "Spring Dance" that the author mainly lists here was also created by composer Sun Yiqiang during his field research and life in Xinjiang. In addition, some widely spread Xinjiang folk songs are songs with primitive ecological music characteristics improvised by farmers in their daily life or production work, such as "Wheat Harvesting Song" and "Cart Driving Song". These labor songs all demonstrate the farmers' spirit of hard work and endurance. In general, Xinjiang's music is closely related to the local ecological environment and people's living habits and culture.

## **4. The Aesthetic Value of Regional Folk Music**

### **4.1. The Embodiment of National Aesthetic Psychology and Aesthetic Value in Regional Music**

Why can we feel a strong sense of "nationality" from regional music? The author believes that this is certainly inseparable from the national aesthetic psychology embodied in music creation. By understanding its national aesthetic psychology, we can ultimately achieve a further understanding of aesthetic value and significance. In a sense, the national characteristics of musical aesthetics are actually the externalized manifestation of a nation's aesthetic psychological characteristics in its music[8]. From the perspective of motif, the uniqueness of a musical motif is influenced by the culture, living conditions, aesthetic psychology, and living conditions and cultural forms of the music subject[9]. Then, based on the title of "Spring Dance", we look at the national aesthetic psychology and find that the word "dance" is in the title of the work. In this work, "dance" is used as the creative theme in music creation, which coincides with the aesthetic concept of "beauty in singing and dancing" in the hearts of the Xinjiang people. In the national aesthetic psychology, their sense of identity with their own national culture and the formation of their aesthetic views on song and dance culture are the innate genetic genes of the nation and the aesthetic consciousness gradually formed by the acquired national collective. In addition, as ethnic groups develop and integrate with other ethnic groups, new things will continue to emerge in the aesthetic field, and through the adjustment of their original aesthetics, new aesthetic fields will be created or supplemented [10]. When composing "Spring Dance", Sun Yiqiang did not abandon the original traditional aesthetics of Chinese music. On this basis, he tried to combine it with the writing techniques of Western music aesthetics to create a new collision, and finally presented an excellent and representative Chinese

piano work. This work not only reflects the aesthetic requirements of traditional music adapting to modern society's music, but also produces new spiritual spirit and new musical aesthetic values in the constantly improving and developing national aesthetic psychology, giving the audience a different aesthetic experience.

#### **4.2. The Dialectical Relationship between Nationality and Universality in Music**

Russian composer Rimsky-Korsakov once said: "There is no music without national characteristics. In fact, it is generally believed that all musical works of mankind have national characteristics" [11]. This shows that cosmopolitanism depends on nationality, and nationality promotes cosmopolitanism, and they influence, communicate and integrate with each other. At the same time, different ethnic groups have different cultural customs, religious beliefs, etc. These factors have created different musical aesthetic concepts, which shows that the musical aesthetics of different ethnic groups are different. However, this natural connection is very valuable and is the foundation for the rich development of world music. In this regard, materialist dialectics reminds us that any nationality has dual value: it is both national and global; it is both special and universal; the two are inseparable[8]. Therefore, the author believes that what we need to do is to recognize its particularity and the differences between them. In addition, we must ensure the individual development of national music and pay attention to the creative development of its variability while maintaining its stable development. Finally, in the big family of world music, national music is rich, diverse and ubiquitous. For this reason, we should learn to be tolerant and live in harmony. Only in this way can we ensure the stable development of individuality and commonality, nationality and worldliness in music.

### **5. Conclusion**

Through the analysis and explanation of the above chapters, we can draw the general conclusion that the cultural characteristics of regional music influence the writing techniques of Chinese piano music, giving the music distinct national and regional characteristics. Several insights can be drawn through research and analysis. First, we can understand the important elements of national music, such as melody, rhythm and musical instruments, from the analysis of the musical characteristics of "Spring Dance", which explains why the musical elements of Xinjiang ethnic groups have a necessary connection with the "nationality" of Chinese piano works. Secondly, based on the fact that the music is influenced by Xinjiang's language characteristics and local ecological culture, it shows that in the creation of Chinese piano music, the creation of some piano works with national characteristics is inevitably inseparable from the influence of regional culture. Next, from the cultural connotation of music, we explore the embodiment of national aesthetic consciousness and aesthetic psychology in music, and on this basis further explore the aesthetic value of music. Finally, extending from the national characteristics in music to the universal characteristics, we must view the dialectical relationship between the national characteristics and the universal characteristics in music from a correct perspective, and strive to promote the stable development of the individuality and commonality of music. In general, this article mainly adopts research methods such as literature analysis and inductive summary, and takes "regional national music culture" as a new research direction to analyze the regional music culture characteristics reflected in Chinese piano music writing. At the same time, we strive to achieve the new perspective of "culture empowers music, and music reflects culture" to discover more new elements and new aspects in music.

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