

From Practice to Performance: The Evolution of Chinese Piano Études through National Aesthetics

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Abstract: Chinese piano études have emerged as a distinctive genre that synthesizes Western technical frameworks with indigenous musical idioms rooted in traditional opera and folk modalities. This study explores how Chinese composers integrate national stylistic features into the piano etude genre to create innovative and pedagogically meaningful works. This paper explores the evolution of the Chinese étude through historical and theoretical analyses, and culminates in a detailed analysis of Ni Hongjin's "Four Piano Études" as a model for cross-cultural musical integration. The study concludes that Chinese études function not only as technical studies but also as vehicles of cultural transmission, advocating their inclusion in modern piano curricula and positioning them as vital tools for sustaining and recontextualizing Chinese musical identity in globalized art music discourse.

Keywords: Chinese Piano études; Ni Hongjin; Traditional Chinese Music; Music Pedagogy; Cultural Integration.

1. Introduction

The genre of piano études written by Chinese composers is a fusion of Western musical techniques and traditional Chinese musical elements. This fusion not only enriches the piano repertoire, but also provides a unique opportunity to glimpse the evolution of contemporary Chinese musical expression. As globalisation continues to influence cultural exchanges, the study of these genres offers a way to gain insight into how traditional forms have adapted and flourished in the contemporary musical landscape (Kraus, 1989; Kang, 2009) [1-2].

Focusing on the performance and development of the piano étude as a musical genre in the compositions of Chinese composers, this study aims to explore how Chinese composers have fused traditional Chinese musical elements with Western étude traditions to create nationally original piano works. The article firstly comprehends the basic concepts and artistic characteristics of piano études, and reviews their development in the Chinese context, further analysing the practical value and artistic function of Chinese études in the piano teaching system. Taking Ni Hongjin's "Four Pieces for Piano" as an example, the thesis analyses in depth the specific embodiment of the work in terms of technicality, national style and genre fusion, and then reveals the unique path and aesthetic logic of the Chinese piano practice piece in the process of adaptation and evolution.

The theoretical significance of this study is that it contributes to a broader understanding of the development of musical genres under the influence of cross-cultural interaction. It allows us to understand how elements of Western classical music are interpreted and transformed in China.

From a practical perspective, this study may be of value to piano teachers, performers and composers. Teachers may discover new repertoire to teach with a distinctly ethnic flavour through this study. Performers will be able to better understand the characteristics of Chinese piano music by familiarising themselves with the concert repertoire. For composers, this study provides concrete examples of the

successful integration of Eastern and Western musical practices, thus stimulating further creative research in the area of synthesis of musical traditions from different cultures.

2. Piano Études as a Musical Genre

2.1. The Concept and Characteristics of Piano Études

The piano étude is a special artistic and technical phenomenon. The genre has been an integral part of piano music for two centuries. Tracing the history of the piano étude, we can see that its evolution is closely related to the development of piano culture itself, i.e. the increasing role played by the performer in it (Wagner, 1959; Herdlicska, 2016) [3-4].

The piano étude is designed to improve the technical skills of the performer. Its essence is revealed by the structural formula on which it is based. Whereas in pedagogical research a limited set of such formulas is usually used for each individual case, in artistic research a whole set of similar formulas is usually used, not only typical ones but also characteristic ones that apply only to a particular composer or even to a particular work.

The term "étude" has a rather broad meaning. Etymologically, it comes from the French word "étude", which literally means "to work," "to exercise," "to learn." Étude literally means "work," "exercise," "study." The word "étude" is used in various fields of creative activity.

Musical études are most similar to pictorial sketches, which are usually preliminary elaborations of a part of a larger work, or the equivalent of drafts or sketches. However, drawing is usually a genre in its own right, and is mainly done from nature (landscapes, still lifes, portraits, etc.). Similarly, in music, a practice piece can be understood as a piece composed to practise a specific performance technique, but it can also be an independent concert piece.

2.2. Evolution of the European Piano Étude Genre

The first major achievement of the étude genre can be

traced back to the London piano school and its illustrious representative, M. Clementi and his pupil I.B. Kramer. The masters of the Viennese school of pianism made equally important contributions to this school - I.N. Hummel, and especially C. Cerny. among the French composers, L. Adam, A. Lemoine, S. Geller, and A. Marmontel wrote a large number of studies. There is a unity in the form and structure of the études in the works of all the composers mentioned above - in their études we will almost always find a three-part structure, the predominance of a single technical idea (études on specific types of technique, or even specific technical formulas), and the simplicity of the harmonic language.

The original version of Clementi's collection of studies, "Gradus ad Parnassum" (1817, 1819, 1826), is very interesting. The title "Un pas vers le Parnasse" hints at the instructive and applied nature of the score, which is musical material for pianists studying works of high art. Even more interesting is the genre diversity of Klementieff's works. In addition to a separate collection of études in the modern sense, later published by K. Tausig, the collection also includes works by Klementieff. The separate collections published by K. Tausig also include works in other genres: sonatas, études, narratives, caprices, arias, as well as fugues and canons. In most cases (54 out of 100 works), the individual types of works are combined into suites. Each suite begins with a prelude, followed by an extended polyphonic work, a sonata-like Allegro and a finale, usually also written in sonata form. Clementi's concept of the "étude" can be glimpsed in the tradition of the 18th century, when composers (such as Johann Sebastian Bach or Scarlatti) used the term "étude" in their works, and what we understand today as the "études" have nothing to do with repertoire designed to improve the pianist's technique.

The masters of all the aforementioned schools of études (and many others) engaged in the composition of instructional études, i.e., applied études. Their birth and rapid development in the 19th century was linked to the cult of virtuosity that prevailed in the music salons and on the concert stage at the time. The demand for pianists to play quickly, concisely, and well gave rise to countless technical exercises (Wagner, 1959; Woo, 2020) [3, 5].

Some time later, however, another type of genre emerged in addition to the pedagogical genre - the concert (or artistic) étude. In its new form, the piano étude ceased to be an aid to the development and maintenance of correct playing form and became autonomous. For some Romantic composers, notably Chopin (Dong Yunqiu, 2009) and Liszt (Hsieh, 2015), the first innovative interpretations of the étude were made, and the étude has become one of the most important phenomena in their piano works. It could be argued that the concert étude provided an opportunity to bring to full fruition the main aesthetic claim of the Romantic era, the idea of the perfect artist, the inspired virtuoso who stood at heights beyond the reach of mere mortals (Woo, 2020; Leikin, 2008; Hamilton, 2005) [5-7].

Since there were no fixed standards for this new type of practice piece, composers were free to experiment and free to realise their ideas. With the exception of F. Chopin and later to some extent K. Debussy (Kao, T. Y. 2018) and A. Scriabin (HUANG, 2020), who developed specific techniques and sometimes even single structural formulas in each of their études, they created true masterpieces of art. Most composers have begun to deviate from the specific pedagogical function in concert practice pieces. As a result, their concert études are

usually programmatic, full of rich metaphorical content, and from a technical point of view represent mere showpieces. Also from a formal point of view, the concert exercises not only began to "expand" the compact three-part structure inherited from the didactic works of Clementi and Kramer, but sometimes even reached gigantic proportions, as in the case of Ch.V. Alkan's work (Woo, 2020; Roberts, 1996; Bowers, 1996) [5, 8-9].

2.3. Exercises by Chinese Composers

Chinese piano études are an important carrier of national art in the 20th century, carrying the cultural pursuit of seeking a balance between borrowing from Western experience and maintaining national characteristics.

The history of Chinese piano études can be traced back to the earliest genre, which was included by Xiao Youmei (1884-1940), the founder of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, in the "New School System Piano Textbook" published in 1927 (Zhang, 2021) [10].

Although the early piano textbooks already had a national flavour, it was the Russian composer Cherepnin, who came to China in 1934, who had a profound influence on the development of the Chinese piano étude, and who promoted the practice of nationally inspired piano works through the organisation of composition competitions.

Cherepnin's views at the time were tinged with radicalism. For example, Alexander Nikolayevich (using a common name, or just "he") argued that the study of 18th- and 19th-century Western music was irrelevant to China at the time because there had been no actual cultural exchange between Europe and China until the 20th century. Thus, in the light of the European experience, Cherepnin suggested limiting his own research to the modernists Bartók and Debussy, and concentrating instead on the development of traditional Chinese music, taking into account the technical innovations of more advanced European composers. During these years he himself began to develop a system of piano exercises in pentatonic scales, and in 1936 he published "Cinq études de Concert" ("Five Exercises for Concert"), reflecting his fascination with Chinese culture. Unfortunately, the Russian composer's compositional message had little impact on the creation of Chinese études, either in pedagogical form or in concert performance form.

Later, however, in the second half of the 20th century, some interesting works in this genre appeared by Chinese composers. The first successful attempt was the "Exercises" by Du Mingxin (b. 19228), composed in 1955, while he was still a student at the Moscow Conservatory. Exactly ten years later, Guo Zhihong (b. 1932) composed two pieces, "Treading on a Waterwheel" and "Celebrating a Bountiful Harvest." In the same year, a book of "Octave Technique Pieces" by Chu Wanghua (b. 1942) appeared. After the end of the "Cultural Revolution" decade, Ni Hongjin composed "Four Piano Études" (Ni Hongjin, 1979), which, like Chu Wanghua's earlier piano works, integrates operatic elements (Pan Xing, 2015). A few years later, Zhao Xiaosheng (born 1945) composed "Six Concert études" (Zhao Xiaosheng, 1980). Both works are characterised by the richness of their repertoire, and their authors are among the leading piano players of their generation, which is naturally reflected in the texture of their works. Later works include Zhang Shouming's "Exercises" (1987), based on folk songs from northeastern China, and Ding Shande's (1911-1995) "Sixteen Simple Exercises for Piano", Ding Shande Op. 31 (1988) [it

is not necessary to write when these people were born, but if it is necessary to do so, write the year in which the works were published].

Considering the works listed, we can say that many of them (as is the case with almost all Chinese music) are programmed. Although the concert repertoire of Chinese composers is often characterised by virtuosity, from a technical point of view the authors of these works have not set themselves the problem of equaling the difficulty of the études of Chopin, Liszt or Rachmaninov. Nevertheless, most of the works mentioned above are suitable for young performers to play in concerts, and the works by Ni Hongjin and Zhao Xiaosheng could take their place in the repertoire of professional performers. The main tasks of the Chinese études are different, however, and this is even more evident in the examples from the pedagogical collections discussed below.

They present different tasks to the performer than those of Western piano study. The current state of piano teaching in China shows that students play many of their compatriots' works, but neglect the piano works of Chinese composers. This has had adverse consequences (Wang, 2010) [11].

As a matter of fact, although it has been less than a hundred years since the first piano piece and the first professional pianist in China, the level of piano playing and the national repertoire in China have undergone fundamental changes during these hundred years. A number of Chinese piano works, represented by the "Yellow River Piano Concerto", have gained wide recognition internationally. Chinese composers have taken it upon themselves to reflect the uniqueness of the nation, producing many new performance techniques that are impossible to learn through Western piano study alone. It is not surprising that some musicians who grew up listening only to European music regard Chinese works as non-piano works.

On the other hand, European piano études are a complete system of technical training, while Chinese piano études are not. The current number of Chinese piano études does not always succeed in addressing the problem of continuity from the simple to the complex, taking into account the individual needs of each particular student.

However, from a methodological point of view, based on the reality of professional piano training in Chinese colleges and universities, successful attempts have been made to systematise the existing Chinese piano études. The reality is that many students in colleges and universities start learning piano from scratch. It is almost impossible to master the complex Chinese piano repertoire in four years of undergraduate study, so we will first consider the technical repertoire for beginners and intermediate levels. Of course, the chronological order of these technical repertoire is equally applicable to teaching children.

According to the learning objectives of the first four years, the Chinese ethnic études textbook is divided into basic, intermediate and advanced difficulty études. The learning time for each piece is two years. During the one or two years of study, students are expected to master not only the correct piano posture, but also a range of piano playing techniques. These include the mastery of various keystrokes, the ability to play the main melody with accompaniment, jumps, octaves and other diatonic techniques, scales, arpeggios, melodies, polyphonic techniques, and so on.

As far as the study of Chinese piano repertoire is concerned, the task at this stage is to study the different pentatonic scales. Appropriate technical training can effectively stimulate the

students' desire to learn folk music and improve the aesthetic level of their perceptions.

The following teaching materials are used at this stage:

(1) Li Chongguang.

The author of this textbook, "Selected Piano Pieces for Children", is one of the oldest surviving professors of the China Conservatory of Music, Li Chongguang (b. 1929), who worked mainly in the field of children's music. Introduced in the last third of the 20th century, the series was popular and reprinted several times. It is a series of short exercises based on the pentatonic scale. It is simple, but covers all of the techniques mentioned above, including jumping, playing with both hands, polyphony and melodic accompaniment, exercises to build finger dexterity in both hands, techniques for crescendo and decrescendo, crescendo and decrescendo, and preparatory exercises for playing diatonic, vibrato, and vibrato. Each piece in the series has a title indicating the technical task, such as "It's Raining" (alternating breaks with the left and right hands), "Spring Walk" (paired connections of notes and leaps), and "Water in the Canal" (Preparation for the Vibrato).

(2) Dou Qing's "Sixty Exercises for Piano in Chinese Style"

Dou Qing (b. 1968) is a professor at the Music Department of Shandong Normal University. She directed a special project to create sketches in the Chinese style. The result of her work is the work "Sixty Piano études in Chinese Style" (Dou Qing, 2012). Zhou Guangren (1928-2022), one of the greatest pianists of the old Chinese generation, has said that this collection fills a serious gap in the literature of Chinese piano methodology. The collection consists of three parts. The beginner's section contains 20 short exercises, each of which illustrates a technical task, such as Exercises (Little Toccata), Exercises in Folk Songs (Diatonic), and Team Day (Gradual Strength and Weakness). Special attention is paid to the issue of co-ordination, which is essential for developing independence between the right and left hands. Technical tasks are set in the context of mastering the pentatonic scale to help students gradually master the specific playing positions unique to the Chinese pentatonic tuning.

(3) Xie Gongcheng's "30 Chinese Folk Songs for Children's Piano"

As the title suggests, all 30 dramas in the collection are drawn from the folk melodies of various ethnic groups in China. Their methods of expression are novel and unique. Although the word "études" is not in the title, many of the pieces present specific technical challenges, such as "Don't Be Afraid of the Big Tiger" (alternate meter diatonic), "Yang Liu Qing" (two-handed imitation of the melody), "The Great Tiger", and many others. In terms of complexity, this is also basic level material, and for the reasons mentioned above is also used in junior college courses.

Exercises of intermediate difficulty are aimed at third and fourth year piano students or third and fourth year university students. At this stage more emphasis is placed on finger independence and clarity. The demands on their technical skills increase significantly, with diatonic, octave and chordal studies being studied in depth, and more attention being paid to expanding the dynamic range and achieving tonal richness.

The training materials used at this stage are as follows:

(1) Dou Qing's "60 Piano études in Chinese Style"

This time we will discuss 20 moderately difficult exercises (20 basic exercises have been mentioned above). These include exercises on sustaining, trills, arpeggios, legato techniques, polyphony, etc. It is noteworthy that the authors

do not limit themselves to technical tasks, but rather appeal not to lose sight of the beauty and fluidity of the tone. Many of the exercises are accompanied by detailed notes, which make their study all the more interesting.

(2) Xue Weien's "Chinese Pentatonic Scale Piano Études"

Xue Weien's "Chinese Pentatonic Scale Piano Études" (Xue Weien, 2000) collection was composed in 1997 and published in November 2000 by People's Music. It contains 10 exercises. The composer indicates in the title the technical task of each piece (e.g. development of finger dexterity, development of left hand technique, synchronised movement of the fingers of both hands, octave technique, etc.), supplemented by detailed instructions on how to master it in the score. The complexity of this series is equivalent to that of Czerny's works 849 and 299.

(3) Li Yinghai's "Piano Fingering Exercises in Pentatonic Tones"

This textbook is designed for students who want to learn how to play Chinese piano music, and is a Chinese version of Charles Hanon's masterpiece "Piano Masters." It can be said that since its release in the 1960s, this series has become a classic of its kind. The works of renowned composer Lai Ying-hai (1927-2007) remain the most detailed and informative manuals for finger exercises on the pentatonic scale. Most of the techniques needed to perform Chinese piano repertoire can be found here. The book contains 20 sections: exercises for transposing melodic sequences to fixed tones, exercises for moving from one pentatonic scale to another; exercises for playing in the style of Xiang Opera, parallel moving pentatonic scales, and more. This series of fingering exercises is designed to solve the following problems: 1. Learn how to use adjacent fingers in the lower registers of pentatonic scales and the technique of placing the first finger when playing these scales. 2. Master all five pentatonic scales and be able to play them fluently from each tone. 3. Master pentatonic transposition.

(4) Li Jialu's "The Basic Piano Technique Exercises"

The work of the famous Chinese pianist and educator Li Jialu is a summary of his many years of experience. The book is divided into eleven chapters, arranged in accordance with the principle from simple to complex, including: cultivating correct basic hand position exercises, exercises for the independent and flexible use of the five fingers, exercises to increase the mobility and extensibility of the third, fourth and fifth fingers, octave and chord exercises, etc. The contents are very complete and detailed. Particularly interesting is Chapter 11, which provides exercises for mastering the pentatonic scale. This chapter covers eight areas: finger extension exercises, four- and five-finger strengthening exercises, alternating left and right hand exercises, different types of keystrokes, arpeggios, diatonic, octave, and chord exercises. This series of important and detailed finger training exercises provides piano students with strong technical support for learning Chinese piano music. Additionally, Chen Lei's "Basic Piano Technique Training" (Chen Lei, 2005) provides an extensive system of fundamental technical exercises.

Although we have classified the last two series in the category of aids for intermediate teaching, they can also be used for more advanced learning. The third part of the above-mentioned manual by Dou Qing and many of the pieces listed at the beginning of the second part of this chapter are also intended for them.

3. Analysing the Characteristics of Chinese Piano Pieces Using Ni Hongjin's "Four Piano Études" as an Example

The previous article outlines the creations of Chinese composers in the field of piano études, highlights the most famous works, and assesses the status and role of Chinese piano études in national education. Among them, Ni Hongjin's "Four Piano Études" is one of the most representative works written by Chinese composers in the genre of piano études (Xu, 2020) [12].

Ni Hongjin is a renowned Chinese pianist and educator who went to the Moscow Conservatory for further studies, becoming one of the few Chinese pianists to receive a complete Soviet higher musical education. Influenced by her father, Ni Qiuping, a Peking Opera pianist, since her childhood, she has had a deep sense of national music throughout her creative life. Since the 1970s, she has specialised in piano composition, and is renowned for her fusion of ethnic elements with modern techniques, with masterpieces such as "Suite from the Zhuangxiang Countryside," "A Walk in the Yuanmingyuan Garden," and "Two Fantasias."

Ni Hongjin's "Four Piano Études" composed at the end of the "Cultural Revolution" decade of 1975-1976 and published in 1979, is a creative fusion of the Qu School's musical tradition and European genres.

In an essay describing his motivation for creating the series of "Four Piano Études," composer Ni Hongjin writes: "Chinese students are sometimes completely unfamiliar with, or even reject, their own national music. That is why the proposed Chinese Piano études will not only help to develop the pianist's technique, but their musical content will lead to results in musical development that cannot be achieved by studying Western studies alone."

At the same time, the author does not want to use her work as a substitute for Western piano study. She sees it as a supplementary textbook, providing students with specific, nationally orientated and specific techniques, and introducing them to the richness of traditional Chinese culture from an artistic point of view.

The qu pai has its origins in folk music. As a form of accompanying music, the qupai is an important element of Peking Opera. It makes Peking Opera more colourful. Throughout the performance, the instrumental accompaniment of qu pai helps to develop the story, create an atmosphere, and shape the characters' roles. The music for the overture, interlude, scene changes, and the ending are all included in the concept of qupai.

According to Peking Opera terminology, a qupai can be either a text, i.e. a song sung to a specific text, or purely instrumental. A supai is also known as a dacza paizza, literally meaning "song lyrics in large letters." This is because the lyrics are sung by several performers and accompanied by instruments such as suona and drums.

In instrumental songs, there are no lyrics and different instruments are used. The category of instrumental song signs is determined by the instruments used, such as suona song signs, flute song signs, huqin song signs, etc. The music of the blowing song is related to the depiction of a hunting or camping scene, and the suona song is usually used. Flute tunes and huqin tunes are mainly used for interludes and domestic scenes.

In Peking Opera, the instrumental music is synchronised with the stage movements of the actors and serves to create the dramatic atmosphere of the stage. This style of instrumental music can be easily transplanted to non-theatre instruments such as the piano. The qu pai is based on instrumental interpretation of qu paix and has a distinctive Peking Opera national character.

Ni Hongjin's "Four Piano Études" utilises the structural techniques of Western piano music, combined with the melodies and harmonies of Chinese music. As a result, this set of pieces is pleasing to the ear for the piano without losing its ethnic character.

The "Little Open Door," also known as the "Little Baimen," is an opera tune widely used in a variety of Chinese musical genres, including the suona of Hebei Province, the silk and bamboo genre of Jiangnan, as well as the Errendai tune of Gansu and Inner Mongolia. Characterised by a lively melody and a relatively fast tempo, "Xiaodengmen" is popular and is often used to demonstrate great skill. Despite its name, "Little Open Door" is not tied to any particular plot or character, and can be flexibly applied to a variety of scenarios, such as court ceremonies or the emperor's travels.

The "Little Open Door" exercise is in three-part form and consists of five parts: Introduction - A - B - A - Conclusion. The introduction is played in the key of #C Umbrellas, and the other sections are played in the key of Feuille. The final section (bar 52) carries on the material of the introduction, with both hands raised an octave and the right hand harmonised for a richer and more expressive tone. The theme makes its first appearance in bar 15, based on the traditional "Little Open Door."

The second exercise "Liu Qing Niang" is also based on a traditional tune, with a beautiful, bright melody. In the suona repertoire, this tune is mostly used to express fighting scenes; in the Jinghu repertoire, it is mostly used to express women's sewing, cleaning, and other household chores. In Ni Hongjin's practice piece, the composer quotes the original melody, which is lyrical, long and smooth.

The third work is based on the Kunqu piece "Pomegranate Flower." This piece is mostly used in stories such as "Liang Hongyu Beating Drums to Retreat the Golden Soldiers" and "Fifteen Guan." In these Peking Operas, the original lyrics with the melody of "Pomegranate Flower" describe battlefields, rough sea waves and the sound of timpani.

The practice piece for "Pomegranate Flower" composed by Ni Hongjin echoes the melody of the Peking Opera "Liang Hongyu Beating Drums to Retreat the Golden Soldiers." The piece embodies a heroic and tragic spirit. The études is divided into two distinct parts (AB), with four introductory sections and five concluding sections. At the beginning of the piece, the chord of the C-flat major sets the tone of the whole piece, which is full of joy and excitement.

The complete theme appears for the first time in bar 5. It is repeated three times in the A section. The final A section is played in the plume of the B section and transitions naturally to the B section, which is based on a fragment of the A section. Beginning at bar 28, the B section ends with a fast, virtuosic toccata.

This piece requires good co-ordination. It is very important for the player to avoid muscle tension, otherwise the arm will quickly become fatigued while playing this three-page toccata. It is important to feel the right forearm rotate inward towards the thumb. Feel the elbow and forearm up to the fingertips as one. The fingers should be controlled by the forearm, not by

independent movements. When practising one-handed playing of exercises, the player should play the chords in the right hand with arpeggios in order to feel their stable position on the keyboard.

In alternating hands, the connection of the relationship between all the voices is crucial. Once this technique has been mastered, the hands must be perfectly coordinated with no gaps.

The song "Willow Shaking Gold" is usually used as music to accompany scenes of dancing, tomb-sweeping and drinking. The melody of this piece is lyrical and long. It is lively and playful, with a fast tempo. This piece is most famous in the play "The Drunkenness of the Concubine" directed by Mei Lanfang. In the scene where the princess is dressed for her entrance into the palace, her servants are busy cleaning the house in preparation for the "flower viewing," Ni Hongjin recreates the bustling atmosphere of the original piece in his practice piece "Liu Shaking Gold."

The piece is in open rondo form (A-B-A-C) with two introductory phrases. The introduction, noted *ff* (very strong), is played with great vigour. The A section is divided into two parts (A1-A2). The second part (A2) is in the key of D-flat, and is characterised by the lyrical expressiveness and rhythmic plasticity of the "Liu Shuo Jin" tradition. A five-bar transition (bars 17-22) forms the B part in E-flat mode. The B section (from measure 23 onwards) consists of three parts, the first two of which continue the theme of the A section.

There is a lot of tension between the fingers in this piece, but the correct use of rotary movements of the hand and forearm can help achieve the necessary speed and prevent hand fatigue.

4. Conclusion

Reflecting national characteristics is what Chinese composers set out to do, and this has given rise to many new performance techniques that cannot be mastered by Western piano exercises alone. The specific difficulties encountered by performers in playing pentatonic modes have spawned a rather extensive pedagogical literature. A reverent attitude towards the national heritage prevented these works from becoming boring exercises. To an even greater extent, this is used in cases where technical tasks are combined with a desire to understand national traditions in the context of the timbre of European keyboard instruments. Such exercises are not only technically enriching, but also an artistic expression of the Chinese spirit.

As Ni Hongjin has done with the pieces, the integration of traditional Chinese musical elements into the Western practice piece form creates a work that is not only educationally valuable, but also culturally expressive.

This integration allows for a deeper understanding and appreciation of China's musical heritage through accessible piano music, promoting a unique musical dialogue between East and West. Maintaining and continuing such a dialogue can have a significant cultural impact and ensure that the rich heritage of Chinese music will continue to enrich the global musical landscape.

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