Discussion and Analysis on the Inheritance and Integration of Chinese Traditional Culture in Modern Piano Education

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Abstract. As an important part of Chinese education system, the modern piano education has been traditionally recognized as a kind of western music education. Although there are more and more theoretical studies and teaching practices on the nationalization of piano education in China, much effort has been addressed on ideological concept, curriculum design, and teaching materials and methods, while less attention is paid to the background and soil of Chinese traditional culture, which would largely impair the piano-musical perception and apperception of Chinese college students who grow up in the social environment of Chinese culture. Here, the paper attempts to explore modern piano education from the perspective of traditional culture with emphasis on the cultural inheritance and integration in educational theory and strategy. It may help college teachers and students to understand and master the applications of western musical instruments in the context of national culture, and learn more about and carry forward their cultural traits.

Introduction

Over the past decades, the question of Chinese traditional culture versus western culture as related to the modernization of China has become a subject of heated discussion in academic circles in China. The discussions soon developed into an overall reevaluation of the essence of Chinese traditional culture, its role in China's modernization, comparative analysis of Chinese and western cultures, and a general study of the history of human civilization [1]. The Chinese traditionally believe that sound influences the harmony in the universe. China has a very unique take on the meaning of music, not seeing it as an art form designed for entertainment until very recent times for a country with such an enormous history. However, its forms of traditional culture still exist while they have been influenced by western music for one more century [2]. As an important aspect of the musical art, piano art would also be valuably inseparable from the nourishment of Chinese traditional culture.

Since the introduction of piano into China, Chinese social structure and cultural form have been changed dramatically. The piano education in China has long been typically using the didactic methods and materials from western educational system, but largely ignoring the inheritance of our traditional culture and style. In order to promote the development of modern piano education in China, to accelerate the educational innovation and reformation, and to bring new vigor and vitality into the piano education and teaching system, it is necessary for piano teachers and students to strengthen their understanding of excellent Chinese traditional culture, and to improve the level of piano idea, skill and performance based on this cultural solid [3].

In this article, the modern piano education in China are discussed as viewed from the Chinese traditional culture, which could produce some special results, for example, the development of Chinese piano music culture should be supported by inheriting and integrating traditional culture in modern piano artistry and education, which is a natural result of the interplay and cross-impact between western and eastern cultures. Also, this cultural orientation will certainly influence the Chinese piano music culture through modern piano educational system, and deeply inspire the cultural trajectory of Chinese piano music in the 21st century [4]. Here, an analysis and exploration of
modern piano education in China from the perspective of traditional culture is deployed; it is hoped that Chinese piano educators can better integrate national emotion and consciousness into the learning and performance of piano students, and maximize the role of Chinese traditional culture in piano education and teaching.

Implication of Traditional Culture underlying Piano Education

Traditional culture has an unconscious and accumulative effect on the idea, notion, and orientation of modern educational system. It can gradually influence human thinking and behavior habits through permeating into multiple aspects of people's life activities, such as learning, working and playing. Therefore, it would exhibit differentiated profiles of modern piano education developed based on different cultural backgrounds. The piano education in different areas of China should also be established according to local development level and cultural feature. We can be fed back with a good educational response only by creating an educational system compatible with the content, form and style of traditional social culture.

People's understanding of piano education will become distinct in different traditional cultures and social environments, and we therefore should establish the correct value and notion of piano education that are suited for different regions; each country has its own characteristics in terms of national values. In Britain, for example, pursuit of educational thought is liberal and romantic due to the historical influence of classical humanism, focusing on the cultivation of gentleman personality. In the United States, the characteristics of education fuse with pragmatism and personal self-worth. In China, because of the deep influence of traditional Confucian culture it pays more attention to morality and virtue. It can be seen that educational ideas and values would become quite different in the different cultural backgrounds. However, educational ideas and values will also change with the continuous exchange, collision and integration of cultures of various countries, which can also fundamentally affect the development of modern piano education.

On the one hand, culture has a potential influence on the style of piano creation. Among the excellent piano music in China, the pieces composed by western countries occupy an important position in the history of piano art development. Many good western piano pieces are regarded as the core of modern piano education in China, and are studied and re-created as examples. In different historical periods, cultural change has also taken place in western, especially in the renaissance and ideological reformation, which has a significant impact on the creative thinking and values of piano composers and performers. On the other hand, culture has a restrictive effect on the content of piano education. Under the profound influence of regional traditional cultures people will form a specific cognitive model, which will have a fixed impact on the thinking habits, values, aesthetic attitude of piano educators, and then affect the notion and content of modern piano education. For example, there are considerable differences between eastern and western cultures that also make the primary stage of piano textbooks very different, that is, Asian countries will choose Bayer and Hannon, but the United States will not.

Exploration of Modern Piano Education with Traditional Culture

In recent years, the piano learning and education have been developed rapidly in China. In order to better popularize the work of piano music education and train music fans, many organizations began to increase their enrollment of members and students. However, due to the effect of overheated enrollment and fast-food teaching, piano learners are tempted by grading examination and other factors, failing to better understand the art and essence of piano performance, which makes the modern piano education into a bottleneck, while largely ignoring the role of Chinese traditional culture in the education [5]. In addition, there has been a piano learning craze with the improvement of the quality of Chinese people’s life. However, the social and commercial environment is more impetuous, people cannot have more understanding and attention of the traditional cultural aspects,
which would cast an adverse impact on modern piano education in China, and cannot achieve the purpose of piano education and artistic innovation.

Today, Chinese piano teachers are also trained by western piano teaching system. These Chinese piano players, including our piano teachers, are inevitable to face the fierce conflict between two distinct cultures and between two different aesthetics. If the idea of western culture and aesthetic are dominant in the teachers’ mind, the cultural and aesthetic concepts of their own country will be largely suppressed and rejected [6]. Some teachers and students cannot well understand the difference between the cultural solids that foster Chinese and western piano music, and thus are not conduct the modern piano education in national cultural background, and even some teachers and students look down on the piano music involving traditional culture. For this, modern piano educators need to have a deeper understanding of Chinese traditional culture, and enable students to cultivate their sentiments through the learning of piano music and traditional culture, avoid the situation of blindly learning piano as a black box, improve the overall atmosphere of piano education, and give more respect to traditional culture and integrate it into modern piano education. In order to improve the quality and efficiency of modern piano education with Chinese traditional culture, we need to adjust the notion and strategy of piano education and teaching concept, and pay more attention to the inheritance and integration of traditional culture in the modern piano education system, and also adapt the piano education to students at different levels. Therefore, a solid foundation can be laid for the improvement of modern piano education in China. The proverb is to say learning without thinking is futile, thinking without learning is perilous. In modern piano education, students need to think more about traditional culture and social background. Teachers need to make students understandable of the traditional stories and emotions involved in piano music, integrate their feelings into piano playing, and improve the expression of piano performance.

Modern piano education in China should combine the current higher art education model to create more music pieces containing traditional culture, and then enrich the content of piano teaching with folk art and music. These traditional music pieces can be arranged and classified to generate a scientific system of modern piano education that integrates Chinese folk music into western piano system. In addition, the traditional culture should be strengthened for not only piano teachers and learners but also all Chinese people [7]. The Chinese modern music artists should be encouraged to create more piano music with traditional elements and to pay more attention to promote the traditionalization and nationalization of piano education in China.

Summary
In the development and progression of modern piano education in China, it is necessary to reconsider the factors of traditional culture, inherit national tradition and culture into piano teaching, make piano performance with multiple national characteristics, and fully display the unique artistic charm of Chinese traditional culture. This paper has systemically analyzed and explored the significance of modern piano education in China from the perspective of Chinese traditional culture. It is hoped that piano educators can adjust and optimize their educational strategies to strengthen student understanding of piano performance art with traditional culture. In future, the piano teaching with national culture should be strengthened, the multi-culture music opinion should be established [8], and the contents and range of modern piano educations should be primarily developed in our own cultural background with the view of multi-music culture to be adopted to obtain new valuable orientation on deeper layer of the modern piano education in China by considering multiple subjects such as psychology, sociology and ideology.

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References


