

# The Performance Interpretation of Guangxi Ethnic Modern Piano Works

Jiajia Lin<sup>1</sup>,

Nataporn Rattanachaiwong<sup>2</sup> and Jing Li<sup>3</sup>

Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Thailand<sup>1,2</sup>

Guangxi Arts University, China<sup>3</sup>

Corresponding Author, E-mail: 646886861@qq.com

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## Abstract

What are the musical characteristics and performance techniques of Guangxi ethnic modern piano works? The objective of this study is to explore the performance techniques of ethnic modern piano works in Guangxi. This paper adopts the research method that combines literature analysis and score analysis and interviews. Through combing and analyzing the relevant literature, it explores the musical characteristics of the modern piano works of Guangxi nationality, as well as the technical characteristics of the performance of the works, and analyses the selected works of modern piano works of Guangxi nationality, exploring the performance techniques in the musical works.

The research result are as follows: 1) Through the interpretation of the seven works in "A Collection of Piano Compositions Based on Guangxi Folk Music", it analyzes the characteristics of musical composition, musical image and musical emotion of the works, 2) Piano works simulate some of the sounds of Guangxi folk instruments, the performer will use the special keystroke playing techniques, 3) The performance of piano works requires an accurate grasp of the changes in intensity and harmonic levels in order to better express the atmosphere of the music, so that the music is richer and fuller, and these are a crucial part of the performance, 4) Musical imagery is the soul of a musical work. The expression of musical imagery in Guangxi ethnic modern piano works is an important means to reflect the ethnicity of the works. The performer utilizes a variety of keystrokes and a judicious use of pedal technique to accurately capture the musical imagery of the piece.

The music composition and performance characteristics of Guangxi ethnic modern piano works are more and more modernized and nationalized, which is conducive to the dissemination of Guangxi ethnic music and culture. Let more people can feel and understand the charm of Guangxi ethnic music.

**Keywords:** Guangxi Piano Works; The Ethnic Characteristics; Modern Music; Performance Techniques

## Introduction

Guangxi is an autonomous region of ethnic minorities with a long history and culture. It is inhabited by 12 ethnic groups and contains a rich musical and cultural heritage of folk songs, folk instrumental music and folk operas. With the continuous development and innovation of Guangxi's folk music culture, composers have created a large number of piano works with folk music as a creative element. Guangxi is rich in the history and culture of ethnic minorities, which also provides important material for the ethnic development of music culture. In the context of the era of nationalization and diversification of piano music, these works have

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played a crucial role in the inheritance and development of Guangxi's folk music. The creation and development of piano music is becoming more and more nationalized. At the same time, it makes piano music closer to the aesthetic needs of the audience.

Guangxi ethnic modern piano works based on this background, the piano as a carrier, created a large number of works with Guangxi ethnic music culture. Chinese piano music has been well spread and developed through international exchange platforms, such as Beijing Modern Music Festival, Shanghai Contemporary Music Festival and China-ASEAN Music Week, which further enhance the international influence of Chinese piano music. With the advancement of the Belt and Road Initiative, Guangxi piano music takes China-ASEAN Music Festival as a platform to promote and publicize the piano music culture of Guangxi to the international community. *A Collection of Piano Compositions Based on Guangxi Folk Music* was published in April 2020 by composers of Guangxi Arts University in 2010 to collect, organize and create piano works of Guangxi's ethnic characteristics, with a total of 11 pieces of repertoire. This is a newer collection of piano works in Guangxi, which includes piano works created by the composition teachers at Guangxi Arts University with ethnic elements of Guangxi in recent years. The creation materials of these works contain Guangxi national non-legacy cultural heritage, Guangxi folk musical instruments, Guangxi mountain village scenery, Guangxi Zhuang opera, Guangxi folk songs, etc., which have the representative characteristics of Guangxi ethnic elements. (Zhong, J. & Liu, R., 2013)

My research from the works of *A Collection of Piano Compositions Based on Guangxi Folk Music* reveals that the modern piano works of the Guangxi ethnic group have such musical characteristics as simulating ethnic instruments with special sound, using folk songs as musical elements, and expressing the landscape of Guangxi by using modern compositional techniques. In piano performance, the use of different performance techniques is particularly important to the performance of music, such as special keystrokes, sound simulation, grasp of strength, harmonic layers, musical imagery and the use of pedals. The work needs to express the characteristics of Guangxi ethnic piano music better through the use of correct playing techniques.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the performance techniques of Guangxi ethnic modern piano works by analyzing the music in the works.

## Research Objective

1. To study the the musical characteristics of Guangxi ethnic modern piano works
2. To study the performance techniques of Guangxi ethnic modern piano works

## Literature Review

The study of the compositional characteristics and performance techniques of Guangxi ethnic modern piano music mainly involves literature on compositional theory, music historiography and performance techniques. The literature related to this paper has a large content, and here we only list the books and papers that have a greater impact on this paper for illustration. I will sort out the following categories.

This book surveys the developmental history of the exploration of harmonic nationalization in the composition and teaching of polyphonic music in China since the 1920s. It summarizes the general status of the theoretical study of harmonic theory of pentatonic modulation in Chinese harmony. The author illustrates how to solve the national style of

harmony through a large number of scores, reflecting the diversity of Chinese national pentatonicity in compositional theory and techniques. This book's exposition and analysis of Chinese pentatonic tonal and harmonic theory provided the basis for my analysis of the compositional techniques and musical characteristics of Guangxi's modern piano works. (Fan, 2003).

This essay explores harmonic techniques such as 2nd degree structural harmony, 4th degree 5th degree structural harmony, and 2nd degree and 4th degree 5th degree structural composite. How the author utilizes a work that uses Guangxi Zhuang bronze drums as a musical compositional element. This thesis provides a relevant basis for my study of the incorporation of folk instruments in modern piano works in Guangxi. (Dai, 2023)

This dissertation on the piano piece *The Eight Instruments and the Bronze Drum* explores the composer's inspiration, further exploring the elements of folk music in the piece as well as performance techniques. The author analyzes the elements of folk music, the structure of the piece, and the performance techniques in the piece, and combines them with performance practice to analyze the musical characteristics of the musical images in the piece. This thesis provides relevant literature for my research. (Li, J. & Liu, Y., 2023)

## Research Methodology

1. Population and sample: The overall study of this paper is the 11 piano works in *A Collection of Piano Compositions Based on Guangxi Folk Music*. By analyzing and comparing the music scores, the sample of this paper is taken from seven of the eleven pieces in this collection of piano works as my research object. As shown in Table 1, which lists the sampling portion of the paper.

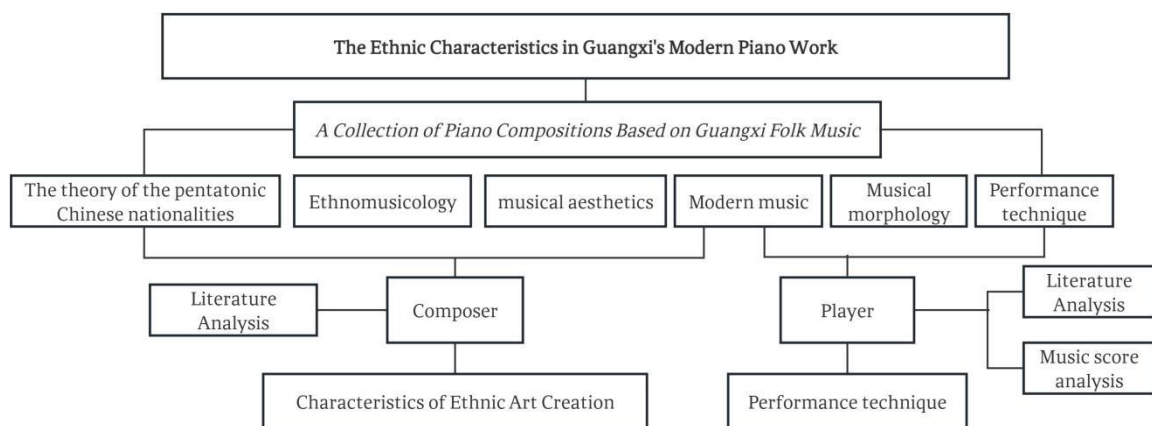
<i>A Collection of Piano Compositions Based on Guangxi Folk Music</i>		
Composers	Work	Page
Ling Ding	<i>The Bamboo Hat</i>	10
Wei Dai	<i>An Impression of the Village</i>	7
	<i>The Eight Instruments and the Bronze Drum</i>	11
Jianfeng Zhou	<i>Zhuang Opera Capriccio</i>	7
Juncheng Zhong	<i>The Village Caproccio</i>	8
Junhui Lv	<i>The Shui People's Duan Festival</i>	6
Yang Qiu	<i>Southern China Capriccio: Dreams and Memories</i>	13

2. Data collection: This paper utilizes a combination of three research methods: score analysis, literature research. By combing and analyzing the relevant literature, it is possible to understand the musical creation characteristics and performance techniques of Guangxi ethnic modern piano works. This paper will analyze the scores of seven piano works in *A Collection*

of *Piano Compositions Based on Guangxi Folk Music* to discuss the performance techniques of Guangxi ethnic modern piano works.

3. Data analysis: This paper mainly uses the theories and concepts of modern music, music aesthetics, music morphology, twelve-tone technique and performance technique as the basis to analyze the musical style, creative features, and musical connotation of the work, so as to better explore how to use the performance skills in the work to better reflect the mood of the work.

## Research Conceptual framework



**Figure 1** Research Conceptual Framework

## Research Scope

*A Collection of Piano Compositions Based on Guangxi Folk Music* was created by the backbone professors of the Composition and Composition Technology Theory disciplines of the Guangxi Arts University, covering the musical elements of the Han, Zhuang, Shui, Dong, and Maonan ethnic groups, totaling 11 pieces. These works show the unique charm of Guangxi's ethnic music by collecting and refining the musical materials of various ethnic groups. As shown in Table 2, I have selected seven works and composers from the collection as the scope of this paper.

Composers	Work
Ling Ding	<i>The Bamboo Hat</i>
Wei Dai	<i>An Impression of the Village</i>
Lixia Dai	<i>The Eight Instruments and the Bronze Drum</i>
Jianfeng Zhou	<i>Zhuang Opera Capriccio</i>
Juncheng Zhong	<i>The Village Caproccio</i>
Junhui Lv	<i>The Shui People's Duan Festival</i>
Yang Qiu	<i>Southern China Capriccio: Dreams and Memories</i>

## Research Results

Through the in-depth analysis of the seven works in *A Collection of Piano Compositions Based on Guangxi Folk Music*, Through the in-depth analysis of the seven works in the Guangxi Folk Music Piano Works Collection, this paper finds that the performance of Guangxi ethnic modern piano works mainly analyses the use of technology from the aspects of special percussive playing method, sound simulation, grasp of strength, harmonic levels, musical imagery and the use of pedals. Different musical weaves, strength changes, chord changes and other manifestations of musical imagery are different, only by using accurate playing methods can we accurately express the musical emotion of the work, fully reflecting the charm of Guangxi ethnic modern piano music.

What are the steps to study a piano work? We need to analyze the work in terms of its musical content, aesthetic principles, musical style, compositional techniques, and express the music through performance techniques. Overall, we will look at cultural practices in piano works to music ontology analysis to performance techniques. Therefore, to study Guangxi ethnic modern piano works, we can firstly explore the ethnic characteristics in the works, and then analyze the musical structure of the works to understand the structural distribution of the works and the connotation and development of the music. Finally, we arrange them from the point of view of performance treatment, such as rhythm, intensity, timbre, harmony, and pedals. I explore the performance techniques of Guangxi ethnic modern piano works through seven piano works in the research.

### 2. Music Characteristics of Guangxi Ethnic Modern Piano Works

I analyze the music of 7 works in *A Collection of Piano Compositions Based on Guangxi Folk Music*. From the works of Guangxi ethnic elements, musical structure, musical development, musical emotion, creative techniques and other musical characteristics and musical connotations to understand and master the musical characteristics of Guangxi ethnic modern piano works. It provides a certain basis for analyzing the performance technology of Guangxi ethnic modern piano works.

#### 1.1 Ding Ling's *The Bamboo Hat*

*The Bamboo Hat* is based on the folk tune *Buy a Bamboo Hat for My Love* of the Maonan ethnic group in Guangxi as the musical inspiration for the change of creation. Bamboo hats are a symbol of good love in Guangxi Maonan culture and a must-have ceremonial weapon for weddings. There is also a love legend about the bamboo hat in folklore. The composer took the prolonged sound musical thematic material from the folk tune *Buy a Bamboo Hat for My Love* to carry and develop throughout the work. The work employs the harmonic technique of chromatic relational tonal superposition and alternation, combined with the modern compositional techniques such as variable meter. The music expresses the scene of the fast rotation of the bamboo hat with fast flowing piano weave, which is in sharp contrast with the theme. This piano piece expresses the Maonan people's yearning for beautiful love.

#### 1.2 Qiu Yang's *Southern China Capriccio: Dreams and Memories*

The musical structure of *Southern China Capriccio: Dreams and Memories* is in compound ternary form. In this case, the introduction creates an illusory dreamscape with lots of compound chords. The melody of the first part is light and rhythmically lively, with a simple pentatonic tune as the main musical theme. The second part of the musical idea is developed with Guangxi's Fangcheng folk song *Songs with the Lantern Dance*, which has a quiet melody, depicting a calm coastal harbor under the sunshine and a dreamy paradise for children to play in. The recapitulation part reproduces the musical theme of the first part. With this piano work,

the composer expresses his love for the harbor and the beautiful life of Guangxi Fangchenggang.

#### 1.3 Dai Wei's *An Impression of the Village*

*An Impression of the Village* is a piano suite of four pieces. The composer went to the minority village life in Hechi to collect ideas. Here he felt the scenery surrounded by mountains, the villagers' labor, and the gurgling water. This piece is adapted and composed using *Toast song of Zhuang* as the musical material. The composer used these wonderful lives and beautiful landscapes as inspiration for *Scenery*, *Stream* and *Harmony*. The composition of *Rushing* originated from the composer's observation of the bronze drum performance in the Donglan region, which served as inspiration for the composition, combining the bronze drum performance technique with the piano. The first song, *Scenery*, depicts the empty, mysterious, and remote mood brought about by the large mountains and villages viewed from afar. The second song, *Stream*, depicts the babbling water of the mountains and the lives of the mountain people. The third song, *Rushing*, depicts the pure and sincere feelings of the mountain people and the mountain. The fourth song, *Harmony*, expresses the primitive civilization of the union of heaven and earth and the unity of man and God.

#### 1.4 Dai Lixia's *The Eight Instruments and the Bronze Drum*

*The Eight Instruments and the Bronze Drum* is composed by the composer using the tones of Guangxi's "Eight Instruments of Guinan" as the material, combining the rhythms of the gongs and drums of Guangxi's Yulin Eight Instruments and the two musical elements of the Zhuang bronze drums, so as to depict the lively scene of the eight instruments and the bronze drums in the Zhuang area playing each other's music. The composer mainly takes the music of gongs and drums of the eight instruments of the Han people in Guangxi as the starting point, integrates the musical elements of wind instruments and brass drums, and utilizes modern compositional techniques and Chinese pentatonic compositional techniques to present the scene of the Han people in Guangxi working together and being united. The main feature of this piece is that the composer uses the special sound of the piano to present the characteristics of Guangxi's ethnic instruments with modern compositional techniques. The innovation of this piece is that it gives full play to the performance of the piano analog instrument and sets up the atmosphere of the Guinan eight instruments and the bronze drums of the Zhuang ethnic group, and at the same time expands the technique of piano playing and the expressive power of the piano to the ethnic culture. (Dai. 2016)

#### 1.5 Zhou Jianfeng's *Zhuang Opera Capriccio*

*Zhuang Opera Capriccio* is a work inspired by one of the composer's field trips. This piece mainly takes the material of Guangxi Zhuang opera as the musical motive, and deforms, contrasts and extends it to form the musical theme style of this piece. This piece combines traditional compositional techniques and Chinese pentatonic tonal expansion to create a piece that embraces a modern sense of musical aesthetics. *Zhuang Opera Capriccio* is divided into three parts. The first part uses fast melody and harmonic changes to express the beautiful scenery of the Zhuang region in Guangxi. The second part is fast and passionate, showing the passionate dance of the mountain people. The third part returns to the slower tempo of the first part, showing the people's reluctance to part with each other after the song ends. The fourth part uses a lot of legato and arpeggio, expressing the composer's love for the Zhuang people and the local ethnic customs.

### 1.6 Zhong Juncheng's *The Village Caproccio*

*The Village Caproccio* is a piano work in which the composer utilizes a combination of traditional and modern compositional techniques. For the compositional techniques of Guangxi ethnic modern piano works, the use of compositional techniques such as tunelessness and tonal excursion is very rare. The composer utilizes the twelve-tone technique to embellish the ethnic tone melody, which is very representative and unique to Guangxi's piano music composition. The compositional structure of this piece is in multiple sections. The music in A and B depicts the scenery of the mountains in Guangxi. The music in section C portrays the life of the people in the mountain villages of Guangxi. The music in section D shows the bonfire party organized by the people of the mountain villages in Guangxi to welcome the composer. The music of section A1 reproduces the theme of section A, showing the composer's love and attachment to the great mountains and cottages of Guangxi. The composers, through the field sampling, integrated their own views of Guangxi's great mountain scenery, village life and ethnic music emotions into the creation of their works, so that people can feel the charm of Guangxi's ethnic minority's folklore culture and music culture from the music.

### 1.7 Lv Junhui's *The Shui People's Duan Festival*

*The Shui People's Duan Festival* is a piano suite written by the composer using the folk songs of the Shui people in Guangxi as the musical material. The Duan Festival is a traditional festival in which the people of the Shui ethnic group bid farewell to the old and welcome the new, pay homage to their ancestors, celebrate a good harvest, and wish for a happy and prosperous year ahead. The composer has divided the work into pieces consisting of an introduction, a coda and five short pieces. This piece utilizes different performance techniques of the piano. The composer expresses the different scenes of Guangxi Shui people welcoming the Duan Festival by enriching the weave, rhythm, changing the beat sign, and other musical compositional techniques.

Through the analysis of the works, this paper finds that the musical expression of Guangxi ethnic modern piano works depicts through music the beautiful natural scenery of Guangxi, the life of the people of Guangxi, the folk festivals of Guangxi, and the characteristics of Guangxi ethnic musical instruments. If the composer is the first-degree creator, the performer is the second degree creator. To play a piece of music, one must respect the composer's expression of the music and understand the style of the music. This is the basis for a better technical expression of the beauty of the music.

## **2. Performance Techniques of Guangxi Ethnic Modern Piano Works**

The piano originated in Europe, and in the more than one hundred years since the piano was introduced to China, Chinese piano music has been continuously fusing Chinese and Western cultures. This fusion phenomenon is manifested in both composition and performance. Among other things, piano playing is a whole composed of technique, style, and performance. Technique is the means of the art of piano playing. Style is the characteristics of musical works of piano music in different periods. Performance is the whole process from practicing a piece to playing it on stage. It is a form of artistic aesthetics that reflects the performer's technical skills, understanding and expression of musical styles, and the degree of understanding of the study of music ontology. Only by combining these three can we more truly and accurately express the artistic charm of the modern piano works of Guangxi ethnicity, so that the audience can feel the beauty of the scenery, folklore, life and culture of Guangxi ethnicity from the music. This paper analyzes and elaborates on the performance technology of Guangxi ethnic

modern piano works from the five aspects of special keystroke method, sound simulation, strength control, harmonic hierarchy, musical image and pedal technology in piano performance.

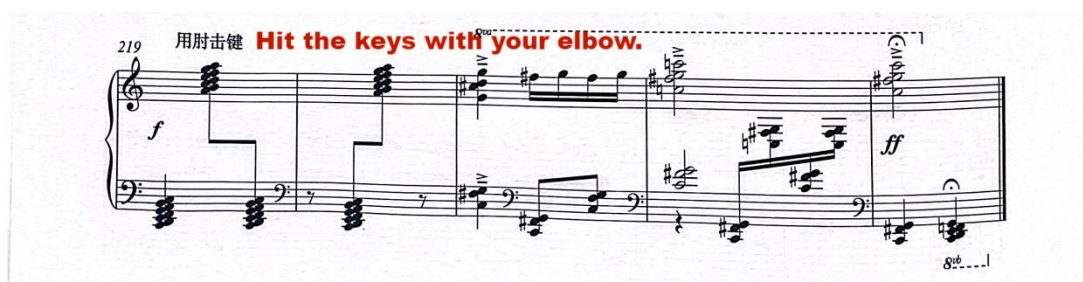
### 2.1 Special Keystroke Method

In Guangxi ethnic modern piano works, in order to simulate certain special sound, the composers would borrow the playing method of various folk instruments in Guangxi as the piano finger touch method. The piece builds unique chords as it simulates particular sound, and these chords use special parts to play. The bronze drums of Guangxi are a characteristic percussive folk instrument, which composers use as an element of their music. The sound of bronze drum is very thick and rugged, and had an inspirational role in ancient Chinese warfare. In the composition, the composer used the tone clusters made up of successive superimpositions of second intervals to increase the figurative sound of the bronze drums. These tone clusters add sound tension to simulate the sound of a bronze drum beating. If you only use your fingers, you will not be able to express the sound characteristics of the bronze drum. Then, in the performance, the player can use the fist or elbow to strike the keys to better simulate the thick sound characteristics of the bronze drum. Therefore, playing such tone clusters requires the use of this particular method of playing. As shown in Figure 1, this is an imitation of the pounding sound of Guangxi bronze drums in *The Eight Instruments and the Bronze Drum*, with a thick and powerful sound. I learned from my interview with the composer that this part needs to be played using the fist or palm joints to better reflect the sound of the bronze drum. Sometimes the composer will mark in the music score that the player needs to use specific parts to play. As shown in Figure 2, the composer hits the keys with the elbow on the music score marking at the end of *The Eight Instruments and the Bronze Drum*, bringing the musical atmosphere to a climactic, shocking close. These special keystrokes are visualized in such a way that the listener can also feel the characteristics of the music from the physical movements of the playing. This is a kind of performance art in which the sense of hearing and the sense of sight are blended. (Dai. 2023)



**Figure 1:** *The Eight Instruments and the Bronze Drum* (Department of Composition and Composition Technology Theory, Guangxi Arts University. 2020)





**Figure 2:** *The Eight Instruments and the Bronze Drum* (Department of Composition and Composition Technology Theory, Guangxi Arts University. 2020)

## 2.2 Simulation of Sound

Guangxi's national piano music in the sound of the simulation of a variety of different, some are imitation of the mountain insects and birds, some of the water flow of the stream, some are imitation of the ethnic clothing in the bell fittings of the jingle, some are imitation of the rhythm of the ethnic dance, some are imitation of ethnic musical instruments, and so on the characteristics of the. In order to make the works fully embody the characteristics of folk instrument performance, musical weaving, chord composition, decorative tones and other techniques are used in the works to imitate the sound of the instruments. Chinese art works, whether music, art or dance, have the aesthetic pursuit of the relationship between reality and falsehood and the shaping of the mood. For example, the music is more realistic in imitating the sound of the bronze drum, because the bronze drum as a percussion instrument is struck solidly on the drum surface. Imitating the chords of the bronze drums, as in *The Eight Instruments and the Bronze Drum*, requires the use of the transfer of power from the back, either by striking the keys with the fist or tapping with the palm joints. If the work imitates the melody of the Xiao, it is fainter. Because these melodies are slightly adapted to imitate the effect of a glissando obtained by pressing the holes of the Xiao instrument, the music's flavor can be reflected only if it is played in a fainter way. After clarifying the characteristics of the sound, the performer uses different ways of touching the keys in order to reflect the characteristics in the music. I borrowed some methods from the performance methods of Chinese folk instruments to express the characteristics of the analog sound in the Guangxi ethnic modern piano works. In addition to the special keystroke method that imitates bronze drums mentioned earlier, the sound in *The Eight Instruments and the Bronze Drum* simulates the eight instruments of Guangxi Yulin. Guangxi Eight Instruments is a kind of wind and percussion music. It refers to eight instruments to play, which are drums, gongs, cymbals, flutes, xiao, strings, zither and vocals. This instrument is played in a warm, cheerful style with loud and clear tunes. In piano playing, the 2 techniques of picking and stabbing the keys are utilized. The technique of "picking" is to pick quickly with the fingertips, which results in a clear, short and resonant sound. "Stab" is a technique of transferring the force of the entire arm to the fingertips and stabbing the keys, a technique that also focuses and resonates the tone. Proficiency in these two ways of touching the keys can cover the sound effects of most Guangxi ethnic piano works that simulate ethnic blowing music. When the music depicts the sound of a mountain stream, this flowing melodic run utilizes the 3 modes of key touch such as stroking, touching, and pointing. "Stroke" is a way of holding your fingers on the keys and caressing them as you play, making the tone extremely soft and hazy. "Touch" is to gently touch the keys from the inside out when you play with your fingers, and the tone is round and soft. "Point" is

to relax the fingertips when playing and gently stick to the keys, lightly tapping the keys, like a dragonfly pointing at the water to produce a light and airy sound. "Point" touch can be used to describe the sound of water dripping in a mountain stream, the strength of the lightness of the different sizes of water droplets to express the sound of ticking. "Stroke" and "Touch" modes of touching are generally used to depict the flow of a mountain or stream. Guangxi ethnic modern piano works will be a large number of fast running arpeggios to express the sound of water flow, the player needs to use the parts of the abdomen of the fingers to touch the keys in a caressing and touching way in the keys to play quickly. It is worth noting that the performer must listen carefully to the changes in timbre, keep the timbre even and soft, do not have too abrupt and harsh sound, so as not to break the picture sense created by the sound. From the performer's point of view, the movement of playing is the externalization and embodiment of the musical imagery. For the listener, it is simply the sound realized by the performer that allows him the experience of the music. To be precise, it is the musical imagery constructed within the performer. What the listener feels is only the "sound", which is not a direct glimpse of the performer's inner musical imagery. Without specialized knowledge of playing, the listener cannot understand the direction of the performer's external movements. However, while imagery is subjective to the mind, sound is indeed material and objective. In general, the performer must find out the difference between the objective sound and the subjective image, and then adjust the keystrokes so that the actual sound will be close to the ideal.

### 2.3 Control of Strength

The strength of musical intensity plays a rather important influence on the musical melody. It not only affects the effect of timbre changes and adjusts the sense of compactness or extension of the melody, but also reflects the ups and downs of the music's mood. As shown in Figure 3, this is an excerpt from *The Bamboo Hat*. This melody expresses the young man and woman meeting each other and gradually stepping into a pleasant state of love. This part is the articulation of the two sections, showing the young man and woman's relationship transforming from the shyness and coyness of their first acquaintance to the joy of being immersed in love. The composer climaxes the mood of the music with the advancement of chords and intensity, but the transition of the section is marked with an immediate change from strong to weak, causing the music to change moods. The change in intensity makes the listener feel as if they are instantly switching from one image to the next situation. As the player plays, from bar 50 - bar 53, each bar gradually builds in strength from p-mp-mf-f, the player needs to use the strength of the back and arms to transfer to the finger supports and drive the mood of the music. In bar 53, the first chord is the highest point at which this melody culminates. Here the score marks the strength of fp, so the melodic note at the end of the first chord needs to weaken quickly, and the melody transforms into a playful and witty musical image. The performer should immediately relax his arms and play the melody of the next section lightly using only the strength of his fingers. By controlling the strength of the music, controlling the change of the music's mood, and even mobilizing the picture sense of the music, the performer can make the audience feel the musical charm of Guangxi ethnic modern piano works.



**Figure 3:** *The Bamboo Hat* (Department of Composition and Composition Technology Theory, Guangxi Arts University. 2020)

#### 2.4 Layers of Harmony

The piano is a polyphonic instrument. When playing the piano, the performer needs to carefully delineate the layers of voices in the piece to make it sound richer and fuller. Among the works studied in this paper, the five pieces *The Eight Instruments and the Bronze Drum*, *The Bamboo Hat*, *An Impression of the Village*, *Southern China Capriccio: Dreams and Memories*, and *Zhuang Opera Capriccio* all utilize the compositional technique of multiple voices. The biggest difficulty for the performer in playing multiple vocal parts is that they can be easily overlooked, making the sound too homogenous. Before playing, it is necessary to divide the score of the sheet music into layers of vocal parts, as well as the strength of the fingers to touch the keys to control the timbre of the different parts of the sound. As shown in Figure 4, this is the development of *The Eight Instruments and the Bronze Drum*, where the melody has four vocal parts. This part depicts flowing water in the mountains and is played in 2 separate vocal parts for the left and right hands. By analyzing the score, the inner vocal part also has a distinct melodic line though. However, the melody of the high vocal part of the right hand and the low vocal part of the left hand should be highlighted when playing. The performer needs to think of the individual vocal parts as separate parts. When practicing melodies with multiple vocal parts, it is recommended to practice the melodies of the separate vocal parts individually to familiarize yourself with the melodic direction of each vocal part. Once you get these exercises right, stack the other vocal parts for cross-practice. The polyphonic melody of *The Eight Instruments and the Bronze Drum* is played with attention to the melodic direction of the outer vocal parts, while at the same time taking into account the melody of the inner vocal parts. In the outer vocal part, the sustaining sound is transmitted to the fingers by the natural fall of the arm and the slow touch of the keys, which makes the sound solid and mellow. The inner vocal part requires the use of flat finger strokes to bring out the melody with a natural, light and smooth sound. The way of touching the keys of the inner and outer vocal parts should be accurately grasped to make the layers more distinct and create a sense of space in the register. By handling the melody of the vocal part in this way, the timbre and level of the music can be better distinguished, making the melody richer. (Li, J. & Liu, Y. 2020)



**Figure 4:** *The Eight Instruments and the Bronze Drum* (Department of Composition and Composition Technology Theory, Guangxi Arts University. 2020)

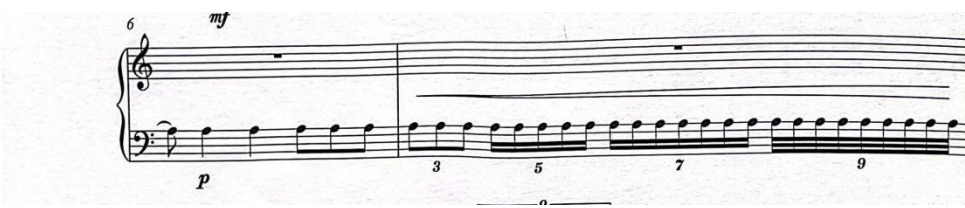
## 2.5 The Imagery of Music

Musical imagery is very important to performance. Music uses melody and sound to shape musical images and musical moods. The performer translates the notes of the score into music and even musical images that resonate with the listener. The performer needs to have a deep understanding of the music itself and the imagery it contains. What is musical imagery? In this context it means, an image, a scene, or even an illusion of an artistic form of an abstract nature that comes out of the note carrier in form and sound. For the performer, any piece of music should be played with the sound in mind, understanding the mood of the music in order to convey the imagery in the notes through the playing technique. As shown in Figure 5, from *The Bamboo Hat*. In this part, the composer uses a fast-flowing piano texture to represent the scene of a rapidly rotating the bamboo hat. From the shape of the notes and the speed required, it is possible to visually analyze this melody as a depiction of something spinning rapidly. Therefore, from the title of the piece, it can be determined that it is a depiction of a rapidly rotating the bamboo hat. When playing, the performer should pay attention to the even and consistent tone of the melody, keeping the fingers close to the keys and running, and never lifting them too high to make the tone seem abrupt. As shown in Figure 6, it is taken from *The Village Caproccio*. This part describes the scenery of a mountain fortress. The composer employs the technique of tautological repetition to change the rhythmic pattern and intensity to depict the dynamic picture of the mountain scenery in the eyes. The melody here goes from weak to strong, and the rhythm goes from sparse to dense, as if the hazy clouds are gradually dispersing to reveal the outline of the mountain. In order to add the expressive power of Guangxi's "ethnicization", the composer's rhythm of this work is tight and loose, which is also the basic premise of the work, and the same as the heart beats with fast and slow changes, breathing with long and short. The player needs to touch the keys slowly using the gravity of the fingers falling naturally about 1 cm from the keys. As the tempo gets tighter and stronger, keep your fingers on the keys and play with a wheeling fingering, relaxing your fingers and paying attention to the feel of the keys bouncing back. Be careful not to miss a note during a fast finger rotation. It follows that any melody made up of notes creates a different musical image. Then the keystrokes used will also be adapted according to the character of the musical image and the mood of the music.



**Figure 5:** *The Bamboo Hat* (Department of Composition and Composition Technology Theory, Guangxi Arts University. 2020)

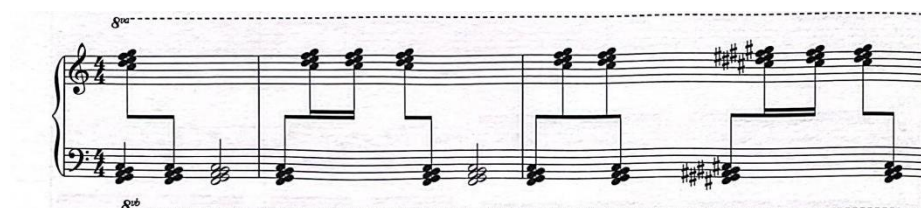




**Figure 6:** *The Village Caproccio* (Department of Composition and Composition Technology Theory, Guangxi Arts University. 2020)

## 2.6 Utilization of Pedals

When playing a piece, the way of touching the keys is not only the technique of piano playing, but also the soul of playing. The way of touching the keys is adjusted according to different styles and expressive moods. Therefore, in order to better express the flavor of Guangxi ethnic, the technique of pedal is essential. In piano performance, the use of pedals can make the melody of Guangxi ethnic modern piano works play the role of embellishment, so that the harmony of the sound is also more in line with the temperament of Guangxi ethnic. Through comparison and analysis, the works in Guangxi ethnic modern piano works are almost unmarked in their use of pedals. That is to say, the performer needs to analyze the work according to their overall perspective of the work, reasonably use the pedal technique, respect the composer's musical expression of the work as much as possible, and show the Guangxi ethnic flavor in the work. As shown in Figure 7, it is taken from *The Eight Instruments and the Bronze Drum*. This part of the melody simulates the sound of the bronze drum striking in rhythmic meter. The score here does not mark the use of pedals, but in the sound the player needs to add pedal playing in order to simulate the reverberation of the bronze drum strikes. When playing, the performer can switch the pedal according to the harmonic change of the chord or the duration of the chord as the basis, so that the tone in the pedal plays the role of embellishment and will not be muddy. Whether to use the pedal or not in the performance is a rule, and it is possible to understand the folklore and the life of Guangxi people from various ethnic groups in various aspects. Increase their own experience and feelings, in order to better grasp the characteristics of ethnic works, so that works better reflect the Guangxi ethnic flavor.



**Figure 7:** *The Eight Instruments and the Bronze Drum* (Department of Composition and Composition Technology Theory, Guangxi Arts University. 2020)

There are different degrees of creation of musical works between composers, performers and listeners. The composer transforms thoughts and feelings into musical notation to create a piano work in the form of a musical score. Thus, the composer is a once-created composition. The performer translates the score into sound and interprets the piano work in the form of sound. Thus, the performer is the second creation. The listener transforms the sound into thought and emotion and has their own appreciation and understanding of the musical work as the process of accepting the piano work. Therefore, the listener is the third creation. In

this process, since the listener gets the musical information from the sound and performance delivered by the performer, rather than from the composer through the way the score is written, the listener may be in complete agreement with the composer's intentions. To a certain extent, the performer and the listener may agree completely or partially on the composer's intentions. All of this depends on the performer's presentation of the piano work according to their own personality, their understanding of the work, and their style of playing. Therefore, when playing the modern piano works of Guangxi ethnic, the performer should understand and analyze the musical characteristics of the score correctly, have a certain understanding and feeling of Guangxi ethnic music, and then finally interpret the works completely according to their own performance skills. If conditions permit, the performer can interview the composer to understand the composer's intentions for the work and the style of the music. In this way, the performance can more accurately express the composer's intentions. Of course, it is also necessary for the performer to add their own understanding and emotion to the piece, so that the performance can reflect the performer's own musical understanding and style of playing.

In a word, when players play Guangxi ethnic modern piano works, they must first understand the Guangxi ethnic characteristics embedded in the works and feel the sound changes produced between phrases and sections during practice. On the basis of understanding the works, the playing techniques of the works are reasonably arranged from the key touching method, sound characteristics, intensity control, harmonic layers, musical imagery and pedals, in order to better interpret and deduce the national emotion and national spirit expressed by Guangxi ethnic modern piano works.

## Discussion

The research results of this paper found that Guangxi ethnic modern piano works are all based on different ethnic elements of Guangxi as musical materials. The composer collects Guangxi's ethnic elements, such as folk stories, folk instruments, folk songs, landscapes, etc., and combines them with the piano using traditional or modern compositional techniques. The composer collects Guangxi ethnic elements, such as folk stories, folk musical instruments, folk songs, landscapes, etc., and uses traditional or modern composing techniques combined with the piano to create a composition, which not only retains the traditional ethnic characteristics but also integrates modern composing techniques, making the music nationalized and personalized. Therefore, the work not only shows the characteristics of Guangxi's folk music culture, but also lets the listener feel the charm of Guangxi's folk music culture through the piano music. The composers and performers use piano music to build an emotional connection with the audience, creating a deeper feeling for Guangxi folk music among each other. Guangxi ethnic modern piano works increase the infectiousness of Guangxi music and culture through such emotional communication, and also convey Guangxi's ethnic characteristics and humanistic feelings for more people. This corresponds to Zhong, J. & Liu, R. (2013).

As a whole, the performance technique is to better express the music. The musical expression of Guangxi ethnic modern piano works has similarities and differences with traditional performance techniques in terms of performance techniques. The similarity lies in the fact that when playing, the performer analyzes how these performance techniques are used in the piece in terms of these aspects of the music: intensity, sound, rhythm, harmony, and pedals. In music processing, these are the parts that players need to focus on. At the same time, only by grasping these musical elements can the imagery in the music be expressed. Different

countries, different cultures, different periods and different composers express music differently. The compositional techniques, musical images and musical emotions in the works are different, and so are the performance techniques used. Some works use special chord structures in the compositional technique to express the sound and performance characteristics of folk instruments, and also use special parts of the strumming in the performance to express the uniqueness of folk instruments. The composers have integrated ethnic elements, rhythmic characteristics and performance techniques, and are able to show the unique charm of Guangxi ethnic music from piano music to a greater extent. This corresponds to Li, J. & Liu, Y. (2020).

Of course, the research sample for this paper was selected from piano works composed between 2013-2019. With a developmental perspective, there is still a certain lack for the constantly updated musical works. However, in the future, I will continue to study and research continuously to make more and more favorable information for the creation and performance of Guangxi ethnic modern piano music works as much as possible.

## Conclusion

In order to promote Guangxi's ethnic music culture to China and the world, Guangxi's composers personally go to the local field to learn about the folk festivals of Guangxi's various ethnic groups, border villages, humanistic landscapes and other ethnic elements, which are used as the material for music creation. Early Chinese national piano music works were created using traditional compositional techniques, and nowadays, with continuous innovation, Guangxi ethnic modern piano works combine traditional compositional techniques and modern compositional techniques. This also reflects that nationalized piano music is historical and propulsive. Piano works can better present the most realistic natural environment of Guangxi, and the living customs of various ethnic groups. Through the performance and promotion of these works, it has far-reaching significance for the dissemination and development of Guangxi folk music.

From a performance point of view, the technique of playing the piano is the basis of musical expression. Only by constantly updating the playing technique and the way of utilizing the musical expression, can we have a better and more accurate representation of the continuous change of musical works. Composers are trying new ways of musical expression, so that the musical effect is produced by the combination of folk music and modern piano. For example, the use of special keystrokes to express the sound effects of Guangxi bronze drums mentioned in this article shows that the piano is no longer limited to using only the finger parts to play. The innovation of Guangxi ethnic modern piano music is also a challenge for the performers. Performers should not only understand the ethnic characteristics of the musical work, but also analyze the common points between the musical image of the work and the ethnic characteristics. In order to make a perfect presentation of the work in the performance art, it is indispensable to excavate the characteristics of the work from the basic elements of music such as sound, rhythm, and strength, and to use these as the basis for thinking about the use of techniques in the performance.

The research from this paper found that Guangxi ethnic modern piano compositions are more and more modernized and nationalized. The composer is hoping that more people can pay attention to and appreciate the musical language and musical pursuit of Guangxi folk music works. Performers convey Guangxi's folk music to a wider audience by learning and playing Guangxi's ethnic piano music pieces. I believe that through more people's performance and

exploration, Guangxi ethnic modern piano music will be more widely promoted and show the cultural significance of Guangxi ethnic music cultural heritage.

## **Recommendations**

### **1. Theoretical Recommendation**

With regard to exploring the musical analysis of Guangxi piano works, it is recommended to analyze more deeply the combination of Guangxi ethnic music culture and modern piano music creation, and to reveal the aesthetic pursuit behind the works. It is best to combine other disciplines from musicology, ethnology, anthropology, etc. to conduct interdisciplinary theoretical discussions, which will help to broaden the research horizons and deepen the understanding of Guangxi ethnic modern piano works. Based on this, the theoretical system belonging to Guangxi ethnic modern piano music performance technology is gradually constructed to provide theoretical support for future research.

### **2. Policy Recommendations**

From the point of view of ethnic music education, it is suggested that the government and the education department can strengthen their support for ethnic music education and encourage schools to offer relevant courses, such as performance or teaching courses for Guangxi ethnic piano works. Schools are able to invite composers and performers to conduct lectures and demonstration teaching to improve students' ethnomusicological literacy. From the perspective of cultural exchanges, it is suggested that the government and relevant departments hold activities such as concerts or music festivals of Guangxi ethnic modern piano works to promote the cultural exchanges and cooperation between Guangxi and other regions or even countries, so as to show the ethnic charm of Guangxi ethnic modern piano works and enhance the cultural influence of Guangxi.

### **3. Practical Recommendations**

From the perspective of performance practice and promotion, it is hoped that performers will actively play Guangxi ethnic modern piano works and deepen their understanding of Guangxi ethnic piano works through practice. Performers can play these works in concerts or festivals to expand the influence of Guangxi ethnic modern piano works in social life. From the point of view of teaching resources development, as the performance and teaching resources of Guangxi ethnic modern piano works are still relatively lacking, it is recommended to develop teaching resources of Guangxi ethnic modern piano works, such as music scores, teaching videos, audio materials, etc., to provide learners and other players with learning and research as more references. This paper also aims to expect scholars and performers to pay continuous attention to the development of Guangxi ethnic modern piano works. It is hoped that the dissemination and development of Guangxi ethnic modern piano works can be promoted through the organization of relevant seminars, forums and other activities to promote exchanges and cooperation between scholars and performers.



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