

Arranging and Performance Techniques of Traditional Chinese Musical Works for the Electone

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Abstract

The electone, which was introduced to China in the 1980s, is often referred to as a "one-man symphony" due to the gradual application of electronic technology in a variety of fields. Its ability to mimic the sounds and playing styles of Western musical instruments has reached such a high level of perfection that it is often regarded as a "one-man symphony". In recent years, the emergence of China's Nine Moon Wonders has led to a gradual understanding of the electone by the majority of Chinese families. However, its popularity in China remains limited compared to that of Western classical instruments such as the piano and violin. In contrast to the piano work "Piccolo for Shepherd Boys" by Mr. He Luting, which exhibits a distinctive and mature Chinese style, and the violin concerto "Liang Zhu" by Mr. He Zhanhao and Mr. Chen Gang, which is based on the Yueju opera "Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai", the electone lacks similar ethnic music works that have a distinctive Chinese style and are based on ethnic tunes. In concerts and major music competitions, competitors tend to select works that are more oriented towards Western music or Japanese pop music, with a corresponding lack of opportunities to showcase and promote Chinese folk music.

Keywords: Arranging; Performance; Techniques; Traditional Chinese; Musical Works; Electone

Introduction

Chinese traditional culture serves as the cultural foundation of the Chinese nation. In recent years, an increasing number of musicians have begun to recognize the significance of Chinese traditional music and culture, resulting in the arrangement of Chinese traditional culture for vocal or instrumental music. In the domain of vocal music, numerous exemplary arrangements have been created by integrating ancient poems into lyrics and interpreting their underlying meanings. Similarly, the Cile Songs, as documented in China's "Lefu Poetry Collection," represents a folk song of China's Northern and Southern Dynasties. It extols the courage and wisdom of the nomadic people in northern China. The composer takes the original text as the theme of the song and rewrites the lyrics in accordance with its prevailing mood, thereby creating a sung form that not only facilitates memorization of the ancient poems through repeated listening but also enables the listener to comprehend their inner meaning through the momentum of the tunes. The audience is able to comprehend the intrinsic meaning of the ancient poems through the rhythmic structure of the music.

In contrast to the more established approach to arranging vocal music, traditional Chinese music arrangements have gradually emerged in the domain of electone performance, exhibiting distinctive characteristics that diverge from those observed in vocal music. However, the quality of the works for the electone is affected by the differing specialties of the arrangers, their lack of understanding of the electone, and even their own understanding of traditional music. Furthermore, the musicianship of the performers has an impact on the effect of the performance of the electone. In order to circumvent the aforementioned issues, this paragraph will examine and investigate the following three areas: 1. How to arrange traditional musical pieces suitable for performance on the electone ; 2. Analyzing the special techniques of traditional instruments in electone performance ; 3. Technical application and emotional expression of the electone in the performance of traditional music . The following section will present a detailed analysis of these topics using the Yamaha ELS-02C modern electone as a case study.

Arranging and Performance Techniques of Traditional Chinese Musical Works for the Electone

In the process of adapting traditional musical works, it is essential to consider the third layer of the electone keyboard, which differs from that of other keyboard instruments. This additional layer, known as the foot keyboard, requires particular attention when adapting existing music. The challenge lies in adapting and integrating the musical score to create a songbook suitable for the electone, as well as in orchestrating the positioning of the instrumental voices and the selection of timbres.

As a collection of instruments with a variety of timbres and techniques, the electone provides a novel platform for the performance and creation of works with ethnic styles. The combination of Chinese ethnic music elements with the electone has the potential to revitalize traditional music and enrich the musical expression of the electone, facilitating a more diverse and nuanced musical experience. Moreover, this combination will contribute to the global visibility of Chinese music, facilitating its integration into the international musical landscape (Zhang, 2023).

From its modest origins in academic settings to its current prevalence in millions of households, the electone's artistic influence and potential are considerable. The electone is a one-person ensemble instrument with a vast range of timbres, encompassing nearly all types of instruments, and a profound musical expressiveness that enables it to perform a diverse array of musical styles.

As an instrument that integrates keyboard performance and computerized arranging, the electone not only possesses a rich musical expressiveness in performance but also provides an unlimited number of possibilities for music creation due to its unique instrumental performance. In recent years, a significant corpus of high-quality musical works has been produced for the electone, reflecting the efforts of numerous scholars. The instrument's diverse timbre, impressive sound, and sophisticated capabilities enable the performance of a diverse range of musical styles and genres, contingent on the quality of the interpretation. However, the majority of extant works are of a classical or pop music nature. Additionally, some Chinese works have been orchestrated by Western ensembles, and there is a dearth of ethnic orchestral works presented on the electone, which is a matter of great regret. Chinese folk orchestral music is characterized by distinctive national traits. In this era of cultural

proliferation, it is imperative to utilize this sophisticated instrument to preserve and advance the traditional music that encapsulates the collective wisdom and cultural heritage of the nation (Song, 2023).

Analysis of scores in arranging traditional musical works for the electone

In the broader sense of electone music composition, arranging can be considered a second-degree creation of the compositional work. It represents the interface between the compositional work and the production work. Additionally, the broader sense of arranging encompasses the work of production. Accordingly, the creative work constitutes the object of arranging. In order to more effectively complete the work of arranging, it is essential to have a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter before embarking on the arranging process. This understanding should encompass a multitude of perspectives, including those drawn from music anthropology, the humanities, and the history of music, as well as those related to composing technology, performance technology characteristics, and other relevant domains. In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the historical and humanistic context of the creation of the work, it is essential to consider the characteristics of the cultural circle, the ideological connotations, the artistic style, the language of the work, the image of the music, the performance technology and the means of forming a comprehensive understanding of the work at the local or even the detailed level. An understanding of the compositional history and humanities background, cultural circle characteristics, ideological connotation, artistic style, creative language, musical image, performance technology and means, etc. will be formed from a comprehensive overview to the most detailed aspects, and will serve as the foundation for the development of the specific arrangement (Wang, 2023).

The melody and lyrics of "Why Are the Flowers So Red" originate from a Tajik folk song that has been passed down for an extended period. Mr. Lei Zhenbang then quoted the song and created a series of re-compositions, encompassing the lyrics, music, and orchestration, for use as the interlude of the motion picture "Guests on the Iceberg." It is crucial to acknowledge that film and television music represents a distinct category of title music. In essence, the function of film and television music is to enhance the visual narrative, establish a tangible presence, and evoke an appropriate ambience. Consequently, the arrangement of music in film and television compositions must consider the intricacies of the plot and the prevailing mood of the film or television series. The Tajiks depicted in the film represent one of the minority ethnic groups in China. They are classified as belonging to the Pamir type of the Europa race, which is indigenous to India. They are a small population with a long history. The Tajiks in China utilize a distinctive Pamir dialect, possess a plethora of unique musical instruments, demonstrate proficiency in improvisational singing, and have inherited a vast array of macramé works. The film represents a classic cinematic work that effectively synthesizes revolutionary heroism and romanticism, while also showcasing distinctive national characteristics and regional nuances. The interlude, "Why Are the Flowers So Red?," portrays a poignant love story between Amir, a People's Liberation Army border guard stationed in the Tanggula Mountains of Xinjiang, and Gulandam, a local girl. The snow lotus, which blooms on the snowy plains of the high mountains, is regarded as sacred and pure, symbolizing the romantic love between Amir and Gullandam. The seamless integration of the film's narrative with the musical composition conveys the notion that love can be a profoundly enriching experience, as exemplified by this ancient and exquisite melody.

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The Pipa Concerto "Little Sisters of the Grassland" employs a sonata structure, combining Chinese and Western musical structures in a distinctive manner. The entire piece is divided into five sections: the introductory section, "Grazing on the Grassland," the expansive section, "Fighting with the Blizzard," the interjected section, "Advancing in the Cold Night," "The Care of the Party," and the concluding section, "Ten Million Red Flowers All Over the Land." These sections demonstrate a synthesis of ethnic and modern elements.

This article presents an analysis of the initial section of the arranging pipa concerto, "Little Sisters of the Grassland," entitled "Grassland Grazing." The initial section of "Little Sisters of the Grassland" is subdivided into two distinct parts: the presentation section, which constitutes the inaugural narrative segment of the entire composition, and the subsequent narrative section. The introduction employs the "loose plate" technique, and the G major modulation beat is free and irregular, thereby facilitating the advent of the initial theme of the presentation section. The presentation section is comprised of two distinct themes. The principal section of the piece is in the style of an Inner Mongolian short tune, which serves as the primary theme of the entire work. It is marked by a brisk tempo, with four variations in total. The musical image evokes a sense of cheerfulness and vitality, portraying the idyllic lifestyle of the Little Sisters of the Grassland. The secondary part is in the style of the Inner Mongolian long key, from G major to D major. The melody is fluid and tranquil, evoking the affection that the people hold for the awe-inspiring landscapes of their homeland and their appreciation for the Party.

The original work comprises the pipa and symphony, with the author's principal focus being the orchestral concerted voice parts. In the process of arranging, it is first necessary to make a general categorization of the symphony's score that is suitable for the voice parts of the electone. This is followed by the implementation of various techniques, such as tonal transplantation, timbre production, score adaptation, and the drawing of timbres, in accordance with the characteristics of the electone's instrumental performance and function. Furthermore, it is essential to gain an understanding of the instrumentation employed in the pipa concerto "Little Sisters of the Grassland " in order to facilitate a more seamless integration and arrangement with the electone.

Concerto "Little Sisters of the Grassland" Orchestra Composition

Woodwind section: piccolo (second flute and), flute (two), oboe (one), B-flat clarinet (two)

Brass Section: Tuba (one), F Horn (two), Bb Trumpet (one)

Percussion group: timpani, triangle, snare drum, wooden fish, horse bells, cymbals

Strings: Harp, First Violin, Second Violin, Viola, Cello, Double Bass

In the process of arranging, it is advisable to incorporate all the voice parts that appear in the general score in the electone performance. Additionally, there are instances where the instrumentation is particularly complex. In such cases, the conventional categorization of the arrangement may prove inadequate. In these instances, it may be necessary to utilize the capabilities of the organ to address the intricacies of the musical texture. One potential approach is to record the accompaniment parts in advance and import them into the MIDI software integrated with the organ. This allows for the simultaneous playback of the recorded parts, facilitating the fulfillment of the vocal demands inherent in the original composition.

Nevertheless, regardless of the intricacy of the musical structure, it is composed of fundamental and comparatively subordinate, auxiliary elements. The expression of the musical message is contingent upon its fundamental components. It is therefore essential to gain an understanding of the main theme, harmony, and basic rhythmic patterns employed to convey the fundamental message of the piece. In some cases, secondary and auxiliary components may be eliminated or disregarded if they cannot be simultaneously satisfied. The specific situation should be subjected to analysis and determination in accordance with the parameters of the live performance. This process may entail the exclusion of certain elements that are deemed inconsequential, which can be conceptualised as a form of "trade-off" between the constituent parts (Li, 2019).

Prior to reducing the general score to a double-keyed score, it is necessary to undertake certain preparatory steps. It is essential to ascertain pertinent information regarding the work, including an introduction to the composer and the background of the composition. It is essential to analyse the orchestration employed in the work and the compositional techniques utilised by the composer. In order to evaluate the orchestration of the piece, it is vital to consider the direction of the melody of each voice, whether the tonality has altered, whether the volume of each voice is balanced with that of the accompaniment, and whether it is aligned with the accompaniment's weave, among other factors. This enables the identification of a clear beginning and end to the progression and the orchestration of each voice (Yang, 2024).

Selection of timbre in arranging traditional musical works for the electone

The performance of the electone can be considered analogous to that of a symphony orchestra, with the timbres it produces imitating the sound effects of real instruments. Consequently, the player must possess a high level of performance and possess comprehensive knowledge of the timbres, enabling them to accurately imitate the timbres as if they were the sounds of authentic instruments. In the process of arranging for the electone, a compromise must be reached. This is the criterion by which the suitability of the timbre selected for the arranging process is evaluated.

The electone is a contemporary electronic keyboard instrument that employs multiple voices playing simultaneously with distinct timbres. It is capable of combining players to independently complete the interpretation of large-scale symphonic works. As the electone has evolved, it has become an increasingly prevalent medium for disseminating musical works. In electone compositions, a greater proportion of the music is drawn from Western classical and modern popular genres. Many learners are attempting to adapt Chinese original works into large-scale symphonies with an orchestral sound. An electone performance may be considered analogous to that of a symphony orchestra. The timbres it displays are capable of imitating the articulation of real instruments. Consequently, the player must possess a high level of performance and a comprehensive understanding of each timbre, enabling them to accurately imitate the timbre as if it were a sound effect of a real instrument. Furthermore, when modifying the timbre of the electone, it is essential to consider not only the technical aspects of playing the electone but also the appropriate matching of the timbre. In the process of selecting timbres, the objective is to achieve a sound that is as realistic as possible. This approach can be seen as an embodiment of the Confucian principles of moderation, impartiality, and compromise. In the process of editing each tone, it is essential to engage in active listening, simultaneously attending to the nuances of the soundscape. When selecting a tone block on the piano, it is crucial to contemplate the optimal means of matching it to achieve a neutral and aurally pleasing effect. This approach reflects not only an attitude of moderation and balance in one's actions but also a methodology of harmonious sound production. If the original represents the effect of rubbing the strings of the stringed orchestra, and this is transformed into a very soft tone, the intrinsic beauty of the music will be lost. It is this kind of harmonization that gives the final embodiment of the beauty of quietness and peace (Wu, 2023).

An understanding of the choice of timbre is a prerequisite for the successful orchestration of a work that fully utilizes the advantages of the instrument's sound source. The author's orchestration of "Why Are the Flowers So Red?" is a large-scale orchestral work with Chinese national characteristics, in which the timbral elements of national instruments are configured in a manner that is both logical and appropriate. Chinese folk music has a long history, during which it has undergone significant changes in form due to the influence of various factors, including regional, cultural, historical, and evolutionary factors. All regions and nationalities in China have their own forms of band compilation, and many minority bands also have their own special instruments. These include the Mongolian horse-head qin and huqin; the Uyghur dutar and zhevafu; and the Kazakh dongbura and kubuz. Chinese ethnic bands employ a variety of instruments, which can be broadly classified into four main categories: wind instruments, plucked instruments, stringed instruments, and percussion instruments. These categories are distinguished by their respective principles of sound

generation, playing styles, and timbres.

Wind instruments include: flute, suona, shawm, sheng, pipe and xiao.

Pipa, Guzheng, Liuqin, Yueqin, Sanxian, Da Ruan, Zhong Ruan, etc. are the main plucked instruments; Yangqin, a percussive stringed instrument, is also customarily categorized as a plucked instrument.

Stringed instruments mainly include: erhu, banhu, jinghu, zhonghu, gaohu, etc. In the modern Chinese national orchestra, in order to enrich the bass part of the orchestra and make it more symphonic, western bowed instruments such as cello and double bass are often added.

Percussion instruments include: drums, drums, drums, drums, gongs, gongs, gongs, gongs, point gongs, cymbals, cymbals, cymbals, bells, plates, clappers, wooden fish, etc. Western percussion drums, cymbals, gongs, etc., are often used in the Chinese folk orchestra.

Each of these groups of instruments can be played on the electone. It is important to note, however, that even the most diverse ethnic orchestras do not typically feature all of the aforementioned instruments simultaneously, particularly when performing highly stylized works that showcase the distinctive characteristics of different musical traditions. In the majority of ethnic orchestral compositions, the percussion section is frequently characterised by a vibrant palette of sounds, with the huqin, pipa, yangqin, suona and flute representing the most commonly employed melodic instruments.

In planning the orchestral timbre compilation for "Why Are the Flowers So Red," the author employed a scheme that was largely based on the orchestration scheme of a Western orchestra. This scheme incorporated percussion configurations that reflected national characteristics for the rhythm section and orchestrated color treatments for the melodic section, which included Western strings, woodwinds, and ethnic plucked instruments.

It is important to recognize that, in addition to the melodic method, harmony, structure, and other specific technical aspects of musical creation, the expressive power of music is also reflected in the acoustic properties of sound, which are mainly focused on the range, pitch, dynamics, and instrumental timbre of the fusion of the degree. The reason why orchestras are typically composed of instruments that produce high, middle, and low tones is to expand the range of timbre within a single instrument category, thereby increasing the expressive power of the ensemble. The matching of violin, viola, cello, and string bass is a particularly common example. The Tajik and ethnic minority populations in the Xinjiang region possess a distinctive array of musical instruments, which exhibit pronounced ethnic nuances and distinctive acoustic properties. These include the Satar and Gijak instruments, among others. It is also possible to perform these instruments on the electone; however, the range of the electone is considerably less than that of a combination of Western orchestral instruments. Similarly, the eagle flute, which has only three tone holes and can only produce a five-degree range of notes when played in the normal manner, exhibits the same characteristics. Dynamics can be defined as a high level of generalization of acoustic intensity, encompassing not only the range of changes in musical strength but also the requirement for instantaneous changes in strength. The Tajik nation is renowned for its vocal abilities, with instrumental use primarily confined to vocal accompaniment. The inherent limitations of large dynamics render this application incompatible with the evolutionary trajectory of these instruments, and thus, users have not permitted the development of such capabilities. In regard to meter, Tajik instruments are not equal-tempered. Consequently, when played in conjunction with Western orchestral instruments, a pronounced sense of dissonance is inevitable, thereby compromising the musical integrity in terms of intonation (Chen, 2022).

It bears reiterating that this arrangement of "Why Are the Flowers So Red" is conceived as a large-scale orchestral work imbued with Chinese national characteristics. It is not intended to present a piece of original folk music. The expression of national characteristics is a multifaceted endeavor, and in addition to orchestral characteristics, the use of vertical and horizontal compositional techniques, such as harmony, melodic method, weave construction, and work structure, can achieve the same purpose. The exclusive focus on orchestration nationalization may have a detrimental effect on the musical performance. From the standpoint of contemporary national aesthetics, it is reasonable to select and exclude the musical elements that align with an aesthetic perspective.

The ELS-02C modern electone provides eight tone programs for violin solo scenarios. The "Violin 1" program features a slightly heavier tone and a more decisive binding, corresponding to the violin's split or continuous bow. The "Violin 2" to "Violin 4" programs exhibit a clear start and a more crisp binding at varying degrees, corresponding to different degrees of staccato. The "Violin 5" program demonstrates a heightened sensitivity to intensity, incorporating aftertouch technology, corresponding to different degrees of staccato. The tone programs for violin solo scenarios, ranging from "Violin 2" to "Violin 4," exhibit a discernible onset, with varying degrees of crispness, corresponding to different degrees of staccato. "Violin 5" displays a heightened sensitivity to force, with a pronounced impact on overtones through aftertouch technology, and a nuanced, flexible, and intricate sound. The "Violin 5" is more sensitive to force, with a significant effect on overtone production through the aftertouch technique, and has a flexible, delicate, and varied sound, which corresponds to a singing legato. The "Violin 6" to "Violin 8" have a more granular start, with a lighter and cleaner finish, which corresponds to different degrees of jumping bows.

In the event that a monophonic instrument is employed in the melody position, it would be prudent to consider situating the tone program in the Lead voice position. In the design of an electone, the Lead Voice is configured to respond to a single polyphony, or a single musical note at a time, in contrast to the other normal positions. In addition to conventional sampling-based programs, the Lead Position can be assigned to play acoustic instrument programs synthesized by physical simulation. This allows for a more prominent and penetrating sound in the orchestra, as the synthesized instruments are placed in the Leader Position. The lead position can be configured to respond exclusively to the highest-pitched tone received by the keyboard or the most recent tone played. This configuration diverges from the conventional understanding of keyboard division, enabling a single hand on a separate layer of the keyboard to simultaneously control a multitude of timbres while accounting for the performance of the melody and the supporting voices. However, the violin can only be played in two tones, and its simultaneous performance of these two tones is not arbitrary but rather based on harmonic and stylistic considerations. In order to arrange the actual acoustics, it is necessary to consider the harmonic and stylistic characteristics, as well as the primary and secondary relationships in terms of actual acoustics. In this configuration, positioning the "Violin 5" tone program in the lead position enables the full exploitation of the lead position's functionality, thereby accentuating the melodic element and enhancing the perception of hierarchy.

The production of electone timbres is a complex process that involves a multitude of factors and techniques. The electone is capable of producing a multitude of timbres, encompassing the fundamental timbres of diverse instruments, as well as timbres generated

by disparate playing techniques and combinations thereof. To illustrate, when imitating string breaks, one may select the desired string group on the piano and choose the appropriate string rubbing effect for the combination of tones. The selection and matching of timbre is a complex process, and there are numerous timbres available on the electone, with flexible matching options. This requires the arranger to possess a comprehensive understanding of the timbre characteristics of the electone, to have heightened auditory sensitivity, and to gain experience through continuous operation. Additionally, the arranger must learn from the timbres of similar arranging songs, draw inspiration from them, and then apply this knowledge in a creative manner when producing and arranging their own interpretations.

In the context of *Little Sisters of the Grassland*, percussion instruments are classified into two principal categories: pitched percussion instruments and pitchless percussion instruments. In the context of orchestral works, percussion instruments are employed with considerable regularity. Pitched percussion instruments are capable of participating in a variety of interweaving patterns with other instruments. In contrast, pitchless percussion instruments, functioning as a fixed rhythmic pattern, can serve to accentuate the musical atmosphere, promote the musical climax, and elicit a pronounced and impactful aural effect. In the pipa concerto, two principal methods may be employed for the programming of pitchless percussion instruments. The first entails the designation of the pitchless percussion timbre to specific keys via the keyboard percussion setting option. The second involves the rhythmic programming of the rhythmic pattern set on the instrument or the generation of percussion rhythmic audio through the utilisation of an external soft sound source (Lu, 2023).

Conclusion

The article explores the arrangement and performance techniques of traditional Chinese musical works for the electone, emphasizing the fusion of Chinese ethnic music with the modern capabilities of the Yamaha ELS-02C electone. While Chinese traditional music arrangements are well-established in vocal music, their application to the electone presents unique challenges due to the instrument's multi-timbral and foot keyboard structure. The article discusses key areas such as adapting traditional music for electone performance, analyzing the performance techniques of traditional instruments on the electone, and addressing the emotional and technical expressions of the electone. By examining specific case studies like the Pipa Concerto "*Little Sisters of the Grassland*" and film music like "*Why Are the Flowers So Red?*", the analysis highlights how traditional Chinese music can be revitalized and globalized through innovative arrangements for the electone, integrating both ethnic and modern musical elements. The electone's rich expressive capabilities offer immense potential for showcasing Chinese folk music, yet its current repertoire remains limited, urging the need for more ethnic-focused compositions.

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