

Analysis of Artistic Features and Performance Skills of Bartok's Piano Sonata

Jingyi Fu

Nanjing Normal University, The School of Music, Nanjing, Jiangsu 210097, China

ABSTRACT. Bartok is one of the greatest musicians, performers and composers of the 20th century. His piano sonatas have left a deep mark in the history of world music. The piano sonata is a fusion of Hungarian national music and modern music. It has a high degree of artistry and diversity. In this sonata, it contains not only romanticism, but also primitivism, neoclassicism, etc.. It also has extremely high appreciation and learning value in the art form and performance features. This article analyzes the artistic characteristics and playing skills of Bartok's piano sonata. Hopefully, this paper can better grasp this great piano piece, and better explain and interpret the emotions and thoughts expressed in the piano piece.

KEYWORDS: *Bartok, Piano sonata, Artistic characteristics, Performance skills*

1. Introduction

Bartok's piano performances are deeply influenced by Hungarian national music. The overall rhythm of the music is very characteristic of Hungarian national music. The artistic expression and ideological feelings are full of strong national and patriotic colors. Bartok's consistent style is more rigorous and serious, as can be seen in the musical structure of the piano sonata. Bartok's piano sonata adopts the classical structure of fast-slow-fast three movements, and also develops Bartok's artistic creation on the basis of classicism. From the standpoint of a single movement, the first movement is a very classical sonata style, the second movement is a trilogy style with three tones in the middle, and the third movement is a gyrating sonata style with changes. The three movements are integrated into a whole, but they have their own distinct characteristics in the specific use of artistic techniques and the creation of tunes. There are also gaps in the ideological attitudes and artistic feelings expressed in the three movements. Bartok's music creation techniques and elements of national music are integrated, showing a distinctive Bartok characteristic.

2. The Artistic Features of Bartok's Piano Sonata

2.1 Melody

The melodic features of Bartok's piano sonatas have obvious Hungarian styles, such as the short motives, melodic progression, and homophonic repetitions contained in the music.

Bartok uses the three-tone motive composed of #G, #A, and B, and uses, transposition, modulation, octave and other forms to continuously change, repeat and develop. At the same time, every theme of Bartok's piano sonatas is extremely confrontational, using the dotted rhythm on the F point in the lower range, making the music sound short and thick. This technique completely imitates the characteristics of Hungarian national music, simply and vividly makes the rhythm of the movement flow out naturally, showing the unique charm of national music.

Melodic progression is also one of the very important and obvious characteristics of Bartok's music. Melodic progression is presented in all three movements. For example, in the first movement, the relationship between the three-tone motives is progressive ascending, and the theme of the sub-part is also the progressive ascending and descending of the C sound. The three inserts in the unfolding part are also progressive, and they are in the relationship of reflection and variation development.

Homophonic repetitions is also an artistic technique widely used in Bartok's music. The application of homophonic repetition in a movement is very extensive, but the musical roles in it are different. In the second movement, the artistic technique of homophonic repetition is used many times, as many as 20 times. At this time, the purpose of homophonic repetition is not only for accompaniment or set off, it is itself the protagonist of the movement. In the third chapter, the sense of existence of homophonic repetition is weakened, mainly to create musical rhythm and enhance the musical atmosphere.

2.2 Harmony

The harmonic part of Bartok's piano sonata mainly includes three whole steps, two-degree stacked chords, four- and five-degree stacked chords, additional note chords, and symmetrical chords. Three whole tones refer to intervals that include three whole tones, specifically referring to intervals of increasing fourth and decreasing fifth. In the history of classical music, increments and decrements were rarely used in the Middle Ages. At the same time, the second degree superimposed chord is very common in this work, including major second and minor second. The use of second-degree overlapping chords will add tension to the music, making the rhythm of the music close and thicke. Among them, the second degree is very common in Hungarian folk music, and the minor second degree is a product of modern music harmony. The use of 4th and 5th superimposed chords also reached its peak in Bartok's piano sonatas, which enhanced the overall musical effect. Supplementary note chord is the addition of external notes in the chord function to replace the chord notes, breaking the original rhythmic law, and causing the natural

part of the music to be “destroyed”, thereby creating a sense of tension and uniqueness in the music, then expressing artistic ideas from different variations. Finally, symmetrical chords refer to a sound as the central axis during the progression of the rhythm, and the syllables on both sides form a symmetrical effect around this central syllable, thus making the movement of the movement more regular and full. The harmonies of Bartok’s piano sonatas have both destruction and construction, which fully demonstrates the musical characteristics of Bartok’s piano sonatas.

2.3 Rhythm

For the rhythm analysis in Bartok’s sonata, we can start with three movements to analyze separately, so as to better grasp the rhythmic artistic characteristics in Bartok’s piano sonata.

Throughout the first movement, the left-hand bass is dominated by continuous eighth notes, which pushes the entire music forward. The right hand has many rests on the front shot, which is in sharp contrast with the left hand. The music of the first movement is very characteristic of Hungarian folk music. Bartok has incorporated a lot of the characteristics of Hungarian folk dances in the creation process, emphasizing the simple and extensive, free and direct music and rhythm, and has obvious characteristics of country music.

Compared with the first movement, the second movement’s music is more quiet and melodious. The melody of this movement is based on quarter notes, and the number of beats per measure is actually arranged according to the melody, with the phrase tone as the basis for the rhythm arrangement. The overall musical rhythm of the second movement is relatively slow, and the music narrative is more inclined to the “folk song type” narration and the implicit expression of the chest, rather than the simple, extensive and enthusiastic directness of the “drum point type” in the first section.

The music rhythm of the third movement is also fast. In music narrative, the fast-paced keyboard beating of the third movement is more like the warmth and diversity of Hungarian folk dance. In the application of music creation techniques, the third movement is not complicated. It uses the fusion of eighth notes and quarter notes. The changes are diverse and frequent without being messy. It is done in one go and full of continuity.

3. Analysis of Bartok Piano Sonata’s Playing Skills

3.1 Percussion Sound

The Bartok piano sonata draws on most of the characteristics of Hungarian folk music and is known for its short and powerful rhythm. Therefore, during the performance, it takes ten minutes to pay attention to the piano's percussion sound

and restore the originality and percussiveness of piano music.

The short and powerful characteristics of music determines that players need to pay great attention to the strength of the arm during the performance, and they must be good at using a series of performance techniques to transmit the strength of the arm directly to the fingertips, acting on the keys, and let the piano sound the art of percussiveness. Thus, the pianists should fully stretch their shoulders and arms when playing, and use the strength of the arms to the extreme. In addition to the strength of the forearm, pay attention to the strength of the wrist, palm, and fingers. The wrist must be stable, the palm must be firm, and the fingers must be flexible and strong. We need to focus on blending these aspects together, use the arm to press the keys vertically without unnecessary movements and arcs, and the short and powerful touch keys can achieve the percussive sound.

3.2 Dynamics and Accent

The musical characteristics of the first movement tend to be gradual, so you should focus on the gradual increase of the playing strength and pay attention to the strength of the fingers and the rhythm of the keys when playing. In the process of gradually entering the music, pay attention to the mastery of the speed of the rhythm, so that the music is intrusive in the rapid flow of the music, adding to the overall rhythm of the music.

The music of the second movement tends to be relaxed, but at the same time the tone changes are also very changeable, and the sound is also very calm and heavy. Therefore, the penetrating power of the sound and the heaviness of the music are emphasized during the piano playing. In the music of the second movement, many bars are repetitions of music. However, these repetitive music bars must have a different sense of music during the playing process. It is necessary for players to control their own strengths and master the transfer relationship between different measures of music.

Compared with previous ones, the music characteristics of the third movement are more obvious with Hungarian dance characteristics, and the melody is intense and fast. Bartok's musical expression marks are very few, and they are basically distinguished by the dynamics mark. Among the few musical expression marks, most of them are tempo and dynamics marks. In the AS section, Bartok used expression marks such as *pesante*, combined with the dense cluster of his left hand, highlighting the importance of the low voice. It plays an important role in supporting the melody, and also paved the way for the upcoming musical climax.

3.3 Special Grace Notes

Special grace notes are the key to innovation and personal characteristics in the progress of the music. In Bartok's piano sonatas, Bartok used a variety of classical styles of adding accompaniment sections, and at the same time innovative elements are added on the basis of accompaniment sections to make Bartok's piano sonata

more nationalistic. In Bartok's piano sonatas, Bartok creatively uses the appoggiatura, arpeggio and glissando of the music.

For the performance of appoggiatura, the performer should pay attention to the existence of rests during the performance, focus on the lightness of fingering and the flexibility of the wrist, so that the rise and fall of each note are in the right position, making the overall presentation of the music more consistent and beautiful. Regarding the performance of arpeggios, arpeggios is a sound that imitates the tone of a plucked stringed instrument, and Bartok added his own style to the ordinary arpeggios, using the form of lower arpeggios, which forms a symmetrical effect compare with the original tone and makes the sound richer. In the process of performing, the player should pay attention to the coordination of the left and right hands. The two hands present different musical effects. The primary and secondary must be distinguished, and both parts must be vividly presented. For the performance of glissando, attention should be paid to the position and role of glissando in the overall music shaping process. Generally speaking, the performance of glissando is a test of the player's skill. Bartok pushed the use of glissando to the extreme in the first movement, and used glissando to finish the first movement, reflecting a more unique charm of Bartok music.

4. Conclusion

Bartok's piano sonata is the product of the upsurge of people's national sentiment against the background of the end of World War I. Bartok's piano sonata has a strong Hungarian national music, at the same time combined with modern piano art to form one of the most dazzling music of the 20th century. As a music learner, when we come into contact with this wonderful music work, we must first have a clear understanding of the entire score, and secondly, we must deepen our understanding of this piano based on how we understand the background of the tie-up song, and related music analysis in order to increase the understanding of this piano piece. Finally, we must grasp the overall music style and strengthen the refinement of the details when playing to make the whole performance process integrated.

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