

Analysis of the Ethnic Mode Style Elements of the Piano Piece “Numa Ame”

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Abstract: With the development of modern piano music composition and performance in China, the application of ethnic music elements in contemporary works has received increasing attention. The piano piece "Numa Ame" was composed by Zhang Zhao. During the creation process, the folk song melody largely originated from the characteristics of the dialect pronunciation tones, and at the same time, it also formed the basis for the composer's innovative application of folk song elements. This study conducts an in-depth exploration of the work from the perspective of ethnic modes, revealing the origin of its melody. Meanwhile, by quantitatively presenting the characteristic layout of the musical mode and structure, the national characteristics of "Numa Ame" can be analyzed and discussed.

Keywords: Numa Ame; Zhang Zhao; National character.

1. INTRODUCTION

"Numa Ame" showcases the unique charm of music from China's ethnic minorities. The composer ingeniously combines ethnic modes with Western musical language, presenting the musical characteristics of the Hani and Yi ethnic groups through regionally distinctive scales, melodic directions and harmonic colors. This not only enriches the expression of the music but also endows the work with a stronger national character, successfully creating a rich rural sentiment and cultural atmosphere.

2. THE APPLICATION OF THE YI ETHNIC GROUP'S HAICAI TUNE INTONATION STYLE

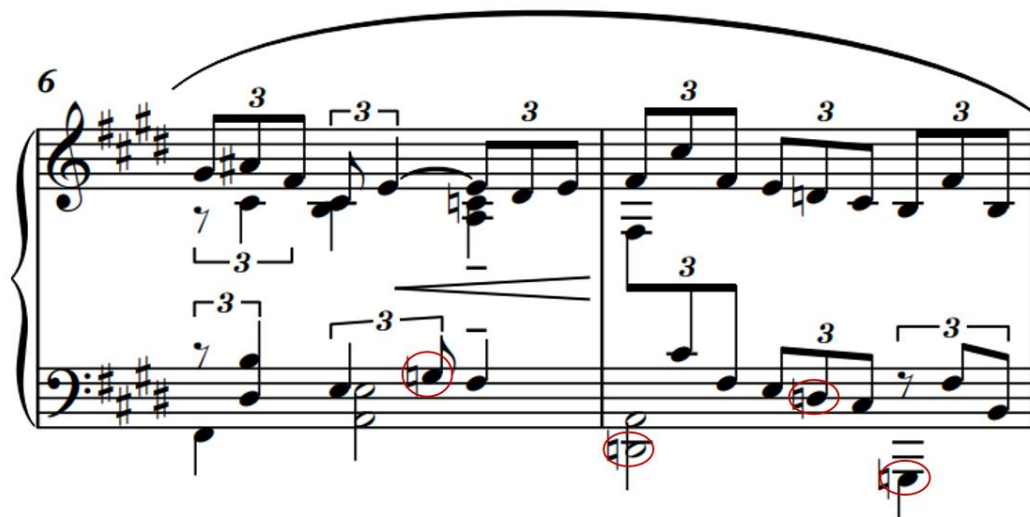
2.1 Qingyue and Yayue modes

The Hani ethnic group's tone and the Yi ethnic group's sea cuisine tone in the same area of Honghe Autonomous Region are different. Although both the Hani and Yi ethnic music use the pentatonic scale, the Hani music is more diverse and complex, with more varied melodic lines, while the Yi music has a more stable tonality and a more smooth and flowing melody. In terms of style, Hani ethnic music is more characteristic of mountain songs and labor songs, with delicate emotional expression and distinct regional features. Yi ethnic music stands out in terms of diversity, featuring both passionate dance music and lyrical folk songs, with music closely integrated with social life and rituals. The main mode of the Hani ethnic group is the pentatonic Zhi mode with semitones. Semitones appear between Zhi and Yu. The original major second is adjusted to a minor second in the Hani mode. Therefore, on the basis of the main note remaining unchanged, a second flat appears. In addition, in the actual singing of the Hani ethnic mode, the horn notes are sometimes too low, thus showing a trend of semitone between the Shang and the Jue. In the bass score of measures 6-7, the reduced C that appears is the sixth flat note (bVI) in the #C feather mode, which is the Jue of the lower semitone. The reduced G in the left hand is the third flat note (bIII) in the #C feather mode, which is the feather of the lower semitone. (As in Example 1)

Example 1: Hani ethnic group #C characteristic mode b II, VI grade



The melody of Measures 6-7 of the piano piece "Numa Ame"



The musical modes of the Hani ethnic group and the Yi ethnic group in Die Shi Village are mostly in the Zhi mode. From the very beginning, "Numa Ame" selected a large number of characteristic ethnic music elements of Yunnan's ethnic minorities - the Yi ethnic's Haicai tune - for its creation. The traditional "Haicai tune" generally has two scale modes: the Qingyue Yu mode and the Yayue Yu mode. That is, to sing the clear horn or variant feature on the sixth note in the seven-tone feather mode (as shown in Example 2 of the score).

Example 2: Qingyue #C Yu Mode Haicai Tune Scale

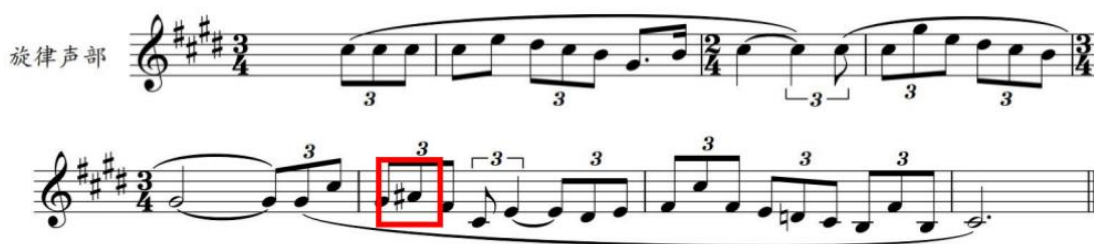


Yayue #C Yu Mode Haicai Tune Scale

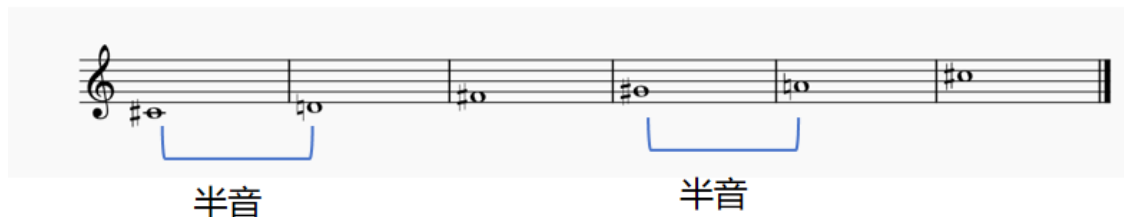


The theme melody of the first section of the piece "Numa Ame" adopts the Yi ethnic group's Haicai tune style and the Hani ethnic group's mode. This melody is in the #C feather mode, and the la note in the sixth measure is the characteristic note of the sea vegetable cavity mode. As shown in Example 3 of the staff.

Example 3: The melody of Measures 1-8 of the piano piece "Numa Ame"



Example 4: The #C characteristic pentatonic mode of the Hani ethnic group with semitones

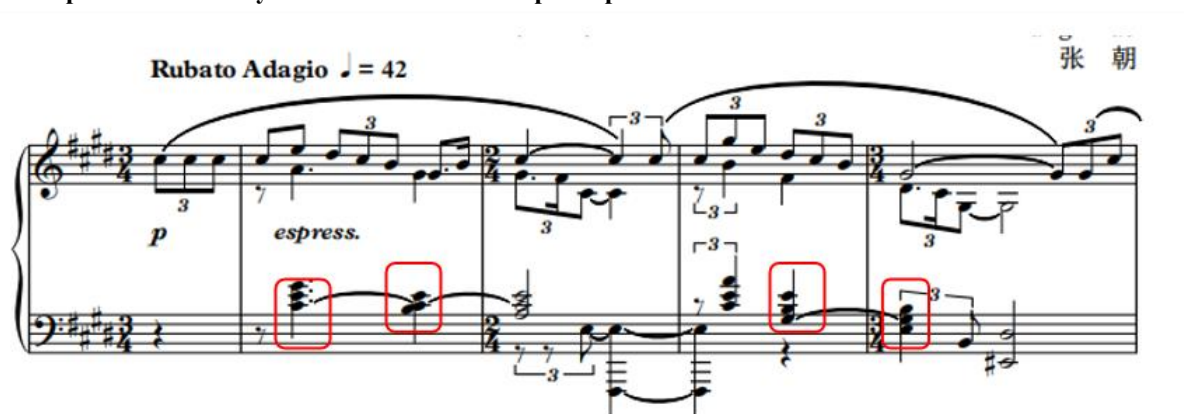


In contrast to the melodic parts of "Numa Ame" (measures 1-8), the variation in the Haicai tune appears as A temporary #A note in the 6th measure on the score. The temporary restoration of D in the sixth measure of the second half of the melody is a characteristic of the Hani pentatonic scale. It restores the melody of the first phrase with a descending semitone, presenting a wavy undulation. Its part develops gradually in a progressive manner, which also demonstrates the melodic style of the "Haicai Tune". The dense undulations of the melody above and the long notes and chords of the accompaniment create a static and dynamic sound effect, leaving people with a lingering sense of wanting more.

Among the seven tones of the Hai CAI cavity, the key notes are in the fifth tone. Specifically in the C-sharp minor (#C minor), these five key notes are: Yu (#A), Gong (#C), jue (#D), Zhi (#F), and Yu (#A). The column chords on the left hand precisely reflect the characteristics of the sea vegetable tone, as shown in the red box in the following figure, which are the first chord of #C minor (#C-E-G), the original position of the sixth chord (#A-#C-#F), the first inversion of the sixth chord (#C-#F-#A), and the original position of the third chord (E-#G-B). The arrangement of these chords precisely reflects the backbone notes of the seaweed cavity.

2.2 Live tones and semitones

Example 5: The melody of Measures 1-5 of the piano piece "Numa Ame"



Example 6: The melody of Measures 6-9 of the piano piece "Numa Ame"



The minor seventh chord in the left hand part of the 4th measure uses the feature of the large leap line of the Yi ethnic group's Haicai tune (as shown in Example 5), while in the high voice melody of the 6th measure, the change note #A in the right hand part is the "living note" of the Haicai tune [living note: Due to the characteristics of oral music transmission and individual differences among singers, there may be deviations in the interpretation of the same note, which is unstable due to auditory aberration.] The Haicai tune of the Yi ethnic group has the characteristic of incorporating variant sounds (as shown in Example 6). This feature not only enhances the fun of the melody but also enriches the fullness and layering of the sound effect. It is particularly worth noting that the arrangement of left-hand harmony has distinct characteristics of Chinese harmony. For instance, the first sentence expands on the horn note (#D), while the second sentence combines the feather note (#A) and the horn note (#D), using the harmonic structure of an empty fifth and omits the third note in the chord. This arrangement technique is quite common in Chinese folk music, emphasizing the simplicity and spaciousness of the harmony. This arrangement not only highlights the characteristics of the pentatonic scale but also further deepens the ethnic music style of the work.

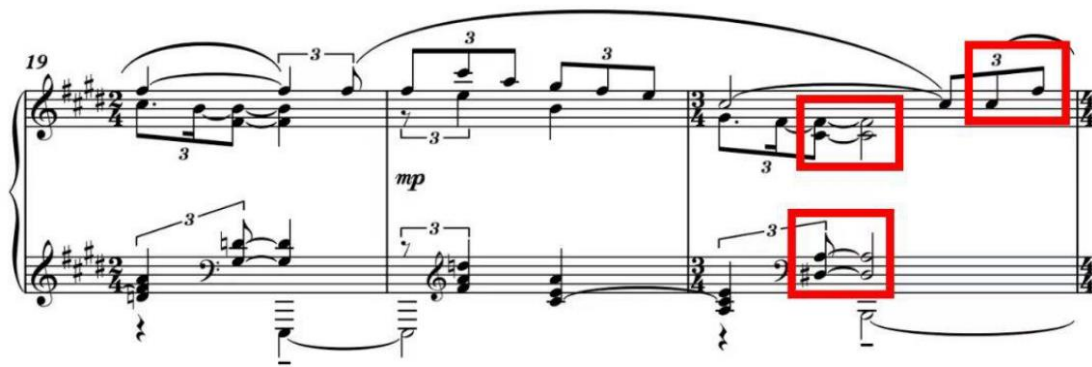
In the 8th measure of the work, #E as a characteristic note of the Yi ethnic group's music, enriches the tonal color of the melody and forms a sharp sound contrast with the subsequent Hani ethnic group's mode. Through the alternation of bright and dark tonalities, it enhances the unique charm of the music. (As in Example 7)

Example 7: The melody of Measures 6-9 of the piano piece "Numa Ame"



Starting from the 18th measure, the tonality of the work shifts to the #fYu mode, where the melody incorporates the #C note, which is the horn in the Yi ethnic group's Hai CAI intonation mode. It provides support for the #f note of the yu and promotes the development of the melody. In Example 13 of the score, the reduction of D can also be seen, which is the situation where the fourth note of the Hai CAI intonation has a clear corner. And the #D note that appears in the left hand part in the 21st measure is a variation of the fourth note in the Haicai intonation pattern. (As in Example 8)

Example 8: The melody of Measures 19-21 of the piano piece "Numa Ame"

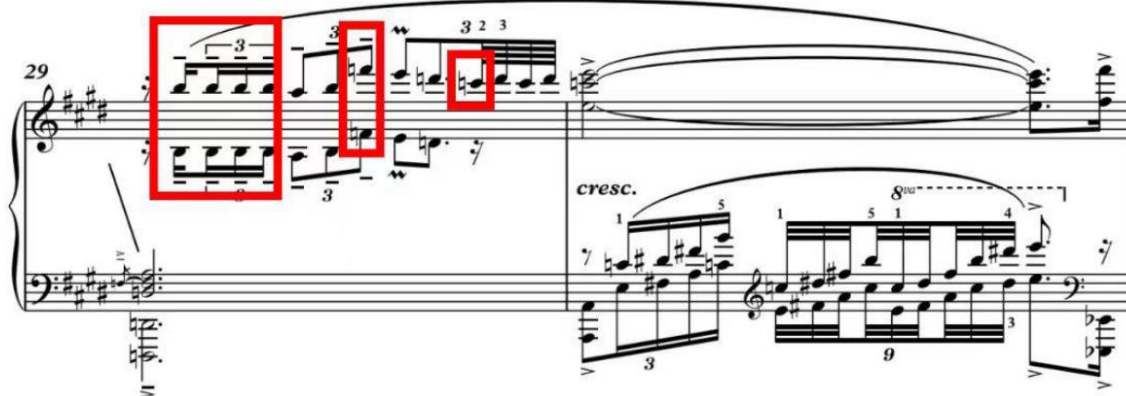


3. THE FUSION OF HANI ETHNIC MODES

3.1 A semitone mode

In the 29th measure of the piece (Example 9), the characteristic tone of the Hani ethnic minority music in Yunnan Province - the Hani mode - is adopted. The Hani mode is mainly based on the pentatonic scale and is characterized by the diverse forms of scales in its composition. The most common three-tone series in the Hani mode are so, la, do or la, re, mi, and four-tone series are sol, la, do, re or so, la, do, mi. The mode used in this section is highly characteristic of the Hani mode, enriching the national character and the richness of the musical color that the work aims to highlight.

Example 9: The melody of Measures 29-30 of the piano piece "Numa Ame"



3.2 Triatonic sequence imitation

From measures 111 to 120 (Example 10), the tempo of this section is rapid. The rhythm design here is in triple time, similar to the musical characteristics of playing the trichord. The trichord is an instrument used by the ethnic minority people in Honghe Prefecture, Yunnan Province during traditional festivals. Here, the bass notes #F-#D-#C are imitating the sound of the trichord, and they are also in the Hani mode. The entire melody is designed with a strong sense of rhythm and is highly enjoyable to listen to, creating a sharp contrast with the colors mentioned earlier.

Example 10: The melody of Measures 108-121 of the piano piece "Numa Ame"

108 *accel.* *Presto* ♩ = 160

113 *mf* *dim.*

118 *p*

Because the mode and color of the allegro section frequently alternate, and Zhang Zhao incorporated musical elements of the Yi ethnic group. So in the melody of measure 115 of the piece, the first three eighth notes, $\sharp F$, are the equivalent of the rising third note $\sharp E$ while $\sharp A$, as a variant note, showcases the characteristics of the Yi ethnic group's sea cuisine intonation. Among the last three eighth notes, the falling second note D is a characteristic note of the Hani ethnic group's mode. (As in Example 11)

Example 11: The melody of Measures 113-117 of the piano piece "Numa Ame"

113 *f* *dim.*

4. NATIONALIZATION TREATMENT OF HARMONIC VOCABULARY

4.1 Break through the traditional third superimposed chord

Technically speaking, neither the structural form nor the connection relationship of chords is constrained by traditional functional harmony. The structure of each group of harmonies is the result of natural combination during the movement process.

We can see that at the beginning of the piece, the accompaniment pattern of the bass part of the left hand still maintains a third superposition as the basis. Such an interval progression and harmonic function do not focus on functionality as in traditional Western music, but rather pay more attention to the balance and symmetrical beauty within harmony, as if it were a coordinate in a geometric figure.



This kind of continuous third and fifth harmonic method is very commonly used in Chinese works and has a wide variety of forms. Similarly, it is often added and parallelized in chord notes and is mostly used in parts of the work.

The melodic scale of this part has been expanded in the music visualization section of this article. While the composer innovates the melody, it still maintains the general direction of the folk melodic movement.



4.2 Four-degree stacking is carried out in parallel

The connection structure adopted in the piece is based on the harmonic method of fourth superposition, which not only breaks through the traditional harmonic function system but also highlights the colorfulness techniques of the late Impressionist and national schools in the work, while showcasing the national characteristics of "Numa Ame".

In the work, the technique of "Playing may not constrained by the specific notes" is boldly used, adding some accidental harmonic factors to the traditional sheet music, thereby breaking the "restrictive" playing thinking in the music.



Overall, as a musical form that integrates harmony, the Haicai tune combines the Yi ethnic group's drawstring tones with the Han ethnic group's rapping tunes, presenting the characteristics of being lingering, gentle and melodious. This melodic feature is manifested in the work through specific techniques such as interval relationships, melodic directions and rhythmic patterns. The integration of these elements enriches the musical language and expressiveness of the work.

5. CONCLUSION

To sum up, through the analysis of composition techniques based on the theory of composition techniques in this article, it can be known that the piano piece "Numa Ame" employs musical elements of the Hani and Yi ethnic groups, reflecting the musical style characteristics of China's ethnic minorities. Zhang Zhao ingeniously incorporated these elements of ethnic music into his piano pieces, endowing them with distinct ethnic characteristics. In addition, he also introduced the pronunciation and intonation of ethnic voices, as well as the singing methods of Hani and Yi folk songs. The integration of these elements greatly enriched the creative techniques of Chinese piano works. In the application of harmonic vocabulary, Zhang Zhao made the vertical construction and horizontal development of harmony full of the unique ethnic tonal characteristics of the Hani and Yi ethnic groups. Overall, the piano piece "Numa Ame" conveys the unique ethnic melodies and charm of Chinese folk music. Zhang Zhao used music as a medium to convey folk music elements to the audience and convey profound national cultural emotions. The work promotes the rich ethnic music culture of the Hani and Yi people on the south bank of the Red River in Yunnan Province, allowing one to experience Zhang Zhao's unique style in music creation and his pursuit of originality.

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