

## *Original Paper*

# Performance Analysis of the Piano Work “Three Lanes of Plum Blossoms” Exploration

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### **Abstract**

*The piano work “Three Lanes of Plum Blossoms” is a representative piano adaptation of Wang Jianzhong. It was composed in the 1970s and has certain originality in its composition techniques. From the perspective of a pianist, this article will compare the technical differences between guqin performance and piano performance from the perspective of the creation background, musical structure, and timbre performance of the work, and conduct research and analysis on the technical skills of the work. Sharing from it makes the interpretation of the work more perfect.*

### **Keywords**

*Wang Jianzhong, three plum blossoms, performance skills*

### **1. Preface**

Mr. Wang Jianzhong is a representative composer who adapts traditional Chinese folk music to the piano. The piano work “Three Lanes of Plum Blossoms” he created and adapted is based on Guqin music. In addition to inheriting the artistic conception of Guqin music, it also embodies the essence of piano works. The unique rhythm shows the artistic charm of traditional Chinese folk music through the artistic expression of the piano. Predecessors have done in-depth and detailed research on the artistry and music aesthetics of the piano piece “Three Lanes of Plum Blossoms”. From my own perspective, combined with my own experience in learning and playing, I have made a comprehensive analysis of the creation background, music structure, timbre layout and composition of the work. Therefore, this article mainly discusses the emotional expression of the works and the playing techniques that are prone to appear.

### **2. About Mr. Wang Jianzhong and His Creation of Piano Works**

Wang Jianzhong (1933-2016), the piano works adapted and created by him have a national style that is both full and delicate, rich and elegant. He used western piano writing skills to adapt and re-create

Chinese national music works, endowing these piano works with new vitality and character, and the appreciation effect is excellent. In the performance and study of these piano works, we will explore and study his piano creation ideas and performance techniques, and at the same time combine the characteristics of national folk music, which is of great significance for promoting my country's advanced traditional culture and art and developing my country's piano music creation significance.

The creation of Mr. Wang Jianzhong played a role in promoting the development of domestic music. The most outstanding contribution is his adaptation of a large number of traditional Chinese folk music into excellent piano works, and the perfect combination of Chinese national culture and foreign instruments, the love for the motherland is revealed everywhere in his works, which is the result of the combination of foreign art of that era and the profound connotation of the Chinese nation. A large number of piano works he adapted and created perfectly combined Chinese national folk music with western piano writing skills, and won the love of audiences at home and abroad. In addition to the music industry, many non-music lovers are also familiar with it.

### **3. Introduction to the Guqin Song “Three Lanes of Plum Blossoms”**

#### *3.1 A Brief Introduction to Guqin Techniques*

Guqin master Xu Shangying, the representative of the Yushan School, expounded the traditional performance theory of “Pull into the wood as you want, and play like a broken string” in his treatise “Xishan Qin Kuang”, in the performance, it is necessary to be “rigid but not dry, weak but not weak, hard and soft, and affectionate.” “Press your desires into the wood” means to press the sound deeply and meticulously; on the other hand, the player should be natural, relaxed, agile and flexible according to the content of the music.

In guqin playing, the basic techniques of the left hand include: chanting, kneading, Chuo, Zhu, up, down, forward, complex, etc. This is a way to express thoughts and feelings in piano music, and it is an important key to success. When playing Guqin, the fingering of the left hand is similar to the brushing in calligraphy. Different fingering techniques will produce different effects, which is very important for playing.

In the inheritance of Guqin culture, Qin people not only conduct detailed research on playing techniques, but also pay more attention to the artistic experience and feelings obtained in the research. Ancient qin masters paid attention to the taste of music and the perception of artistic conception in their learning. In the teaching and performance of the piano, learning the charm of Guqin art, emphasizing on the connotation of music and the combination of the content of the piano music and the deep heart of the performer, makes the artistic level of music teaching and piano performance to a higher level.

#### *3.2 The Artistic Conception of the Guqin Piece “Three Lanes of Plum Blossoms”*

There are two basic techniques for playing the guqin: pan, san, and press. This piece mainly uses the “panqing playing method”. It embodies the noble character of plum blossoms, proud of frost and snow. In our language, there are “one and then, and then three”; It comprehends the Chinese sense of form and

aesthetic standards.

This work is an excellent work expressing plum blossoms in Chinese folk music. According to legend, it was the earliest flute music composed by Huan Yi in the Eastern Jin Dynasty. Huan Yi's flute plays the tune of plum blossoms three times, which is incomparably wonderful, and later generations introduced it to the qin. In terms of structure, the method of repeated reproduction is adopted, and the theme is repeated three times, echoing the title of "Three Lanes". At the same time, every time it is repeated, the pan-green playing method is used, which reflects the noble character of plum blossoms, proud snow and frost.

A musical theme is reproduced many times, which not only allows the audience to remember, but also conforms to the length that the audience can bear. The span is just right. This may be the reason why many Chinese music adopts three sections. Plum blossoms, lofty and clean, pure and clean, proud of snow and frost, have been praised by literati throughout the ages. "Three Lanes of Plum Blossoms" was originally a flute or xiao tune, but was later adapted into a qin tune. "San Nong" is to repeat the same tune three times. This repetition is intended to be a metaphor for the heroic appearance, indomitable character and rising temperament of plum blossoms blooming in the cold wind.

#### **4. Discuss the Creative Style of the Piano Work "Three Lanes of Plum Blossoms"**

##### *4.1 The Era Background of the Combination of Chinese and Western in National Instrumental Works and Piano*

In 1709, the Italian organ maker Bartolomeo Cristofori made a piano that could play soft and forte at the same time, which opened the historical era of the piano. Although it was not born for a long time, But it already has the reputation of "King of Musical Instruments".

There are many musical instruments in the history of Chinese folk music, the representative ones are guzheng, pipa, erhu, flute, Xiao, etc. These musical instruments often appear on the screen, reminding us that music is closely connected with life. When the Opium War broke out in 1840, the Qing government was forced to end its closed-door policy. Foreign powers poured into China one after another. Western ideas strongly impacted Chinese traditional culture. We had the first cultural exchange with the West.

Western musical instruments are quite different from national musical instruments. They have different styles and express different emotions. In the fusion of piano and Chinese folk music, most pianos imitate the timbres of Chinese folk instruments, such as the bright and gorgeous guzheng, the crisp and long flute, the transparent and tactful erhu, and the ethereal and elegant Xiao. The timbres of different musical instruments have their unique flavors, and they also express different contextual connotations through different performance methods and techniques, which mostly reflect the Confucianism and Taoism of traditional Chinese culture.

The fusion of the two shows that national music pays attention to the expression of melody, while in piano, it pays more attention to the matching of texture and harmony in melody, which makes the melody more layered. In the adaptation, the author fully demonstrated the connotation of the piano's musical

context to the pentatonic mode.

#### *4.2 The Style Expression of “Three Lanes of Plum Blossoms”*

The ancients said that “plum blossoms are the clearest flowers, and the clearest things are written with the clearest voice, and it is better to have the rhyme of Lingshuang”. This song uses things to sing aspirations, and praises people with high morals by praising plum blossoms such as whiteness, fragrance, tenacity, and elegance. In 1972, Mr. Wang Jianzhong adapted it into a piano solo “Three Lanes of Plum Blossoms” based on his feelings. During this time, he was inspired by Chairman Mao’s poem “Bu Suanzi” - Yongmeizhong “It’s a cliff with hundreds of feet of ice, but only beautiful flowers and branches”.

From the perspective of the whole work, the guiding ideology of the adaptation respects and preserves the artistic realm, emotional content, theme melody, and culture of the times of the original song. These are the basic principles that the adaptation of musical works should abide by. The work adopts the structural layout of “presentation of the theme - re-presentation of the theme - presentation of the theme change”. Through the “three lanes” to sing the same theme repeatedly, the plum blossoms stand proudly in the wind and snow, their tenacious and tenacious character and the theme of the work, the melody is more prominent.

Strictly abiding by the theme arrangement of ancient tunes, it presents the moving image of the theme: it is presented for the first time in the bright high-pitched area of the F palace mode, showing the fresh and beautiful image of plum blossoms. The second time presents a more lyrical theme, with exquisite and clear double tones, setting off the noble character of plum blossoms. Presented for the third time, it turns to the E-gong mode and appears on the super high-pitched range. The gorgeous texture creates a red plum standing proudly in the cold wind.

### **5. Analysis of Playing Skills of Piano Music**

#### *5.1 A Lane of Plum Blossoms—The Simple Melody Theme Expresses the Fresh and Beautiful Image of Plum Blossoms*

The introduction is led by the appologia, which imitates the plucking action of the Guqin, and elicits a breath of winter.

Appitiative tone is a tone written in small notes and connected with the basic tone by connecting lines. The main points of playing are that the ornamental tone has a light sound, short duration, and weak strength, and the melodic main tone has a deep sound, full duration, and strong strength. The left hand is soft and rapid, while the right hand is coherent and prominent melody sound, and the left and right hands are like echoes in the valley.

The continuous descending sextuplet sixteenth notes are ethereal and exciting. Among them, the main point of playing the sixteenth note is to pay attention to the average sound and the accuracy of the rhythm. The accuracy of the note is related to the integrity of the melody line of the whole piece of music and the smooth progress of the music.

The second variation is a polyphonic polyphonic performance.

The main point of playing is to strive for clear and comfortable melody lines in multiple voices. The left and right textures have a sense of unity and harmony. In the practice of layered timbre, special attention should be paid to the adjustment of the wrist, so as to make the melody more deep and lyrical. In addition, the rhythm of different parts of this theme is a technical difficulty, which needs to be practiced separately, and the rhythm should be natural and smooth when playing in an ensemble. This kind of processing can make the voice part clear, the melody line smooth and the timbre beautiful, depicting the image of plum blossoms that are fresh and beautiful quietly protruding.

### *5.2 A The Second Lane of Plum Blossoms - the Crystal Clear Double Tone Sets Off the Noble and Clean Character of Plum Blossoms*

The fourth variation is a softer theme played by the left hand, while the right hand uses exquisitely carved parallel fourth-degree double tones in the treble area to support the noble and clean character of plum blossoms.

The technique of the right hand is mainly two-tone continuous staccato. The main point of playing continuous staccato is to keep the voice coherent, but also to have flexibility and vitality. The dotted notes in the connecting line are not played with staccato. It is not a staccato in the traditional sense of Western classical music, but a melody line with a sense of direction. Here it is necessary to make the nonlegato on the fingers, and at the same time match the main melody line of the left hand, and lower the key to highlight the beautiful and moving melody.

Variation 5 presents a thirteenth-note 13-note crossover.

Quick note playing should be distinguished from singing touch keys. On the premise of coherence, pay attention to the initiative of the fingers. Get a consistent sound. The main point of playing with both hands is to play the high-pitched area across the right hand from left to right, with quick movements, sensitivity and accuracy, and accentuated accents.

### *5.3 Three Lanes of Plum Blossoms—Bright Decomposed Chords are Like Red Plum Blossoms Standing Proudly in the Cold Wind*

The melody appears in the texture of broken chords, like a red plum standing proudly in the cold wind. The three variations of 7, 8, and 9 form the climax of the whole piece, with a larger development. The piano plays a broad and joyful melody from the rich texture changes and grand and vast momentum, as if people can see the sun shining on the earth in spring beautiful scene.

Variation The main point of decomposed octave playing is to play repeated notes, which should be average.

After familiarizing yourself with the position of the octave chords and establishing a “sense of position”, the action of playing should be like a seesaw, swinging on both sides. The main point of playing is that the palm should swing from side to side, like a seesaw in children’s games, and at the same time, the fingers ready to play touch the keys while swinging back and forth, and the fingers themselves do not need to be particularly active.

Variation Eight is a fast broken chord and octave chord.

The performance of octave chords must first avoid the problem of uneven playing of one finger and five fingers caused by heavy thumb or collapsed playing. The main point is to be familiar with the positions of various chords, and gradually establish a “sense of position”. The second is to grasp firmly with the fingers, hold the chord position, and support the wrist, so that the power can be transmitted to the middle. The third is to keep each finger of the chord sound on the same horizontal line and touch the key at the same time, so that the pronunciation is neat, and the non-playing finger is naturally lifted to ensure that it does not touch other keys when touching the key. The fourth is lowering the upper arm, falling naturally, and playing with a thick and mellow sound. Fifth, the shoulders, elbows, and wrists need to be relaxed to a certain extent, the strength is concentrated on the fingertips, and the big and little fingers must be supported to be firm and elastic. The left hand is the main theme, advancing layer by layer, indicating that the red plums standing proudly in the cold wind are about to open.

Then the sixteenth note octave chords from weak to strong by the left and right hands push the music to the highest point. The high-pitched and fast chords of the right hand echo the continuous high and low sixteenth notes of the left hand, vividly depicting a snowy scene. And the vigorous scene of Hongmei blooming proudly.

## 6. Conclusion

The piano piece “Three Lanes of Plum Blossoms” is the composer’s attempt to create and adapt the original guqin piece, and it is also a challenge to express the artistic conception of the ancient piece on the piano. How performers interpret Chinese piano works, first of all, we should base ourselves on tradition and understand the meaning and culture of the original works. Secondly, the work should be carefully analyzed and deeply understood. In the end, the Chinese works are interpreted with more characteristics by referring to the performance techniques of western pianos.

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