

## CHINESE NATIONAL PIANO STYLE IN “TWO POEM CLASSICS OF THE TANG DYNASTY” BY XU ZHENMIN

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**SUMMARY.** “*Two Poem Classics of the Tang Dynasty*” by Xu Zhenmin is a bright example of the Chinese national piano style. We analyze its main features using S. Tyshko’s theory of national style and the concept of the sound image of the instrument by L. Gakkel as the theoretical and methodological basis of our research. We introduce and define the concept of the national sound image of the instrument. Chinese piano music is characterized by the purposeful activity of composers both in stylistic adaptation and in stylistic generation. The European historical and stylistic sound images of the piano are adapted and act as the “foreign” material. The “native” material is generated both from folk and traditional Chinese music, its mode, intonation, and instrumental specifics, as well as from the rich artistic, philosophical and historical heritage of China.

**Keywords:** National music style, piano music, Chinese piano music, Chinese national piano style, sound image of the instrument, Chinese national sound image of the piano.

Almost the entire history of Chinese piano art was accompanied by the demand to create music with a pronounced national character. For example, “*Shepherd’s Pipe*” (“*牧童短笛*”) composed in 1934 by He Luting and considered to be the “China’s first mature piano work”<sup>2</sup> became famous after

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winning the first prize at the competition organized by Alexander Tcherepnin<sup>3</sup> with the support of Xiao Yumei (萧友梅), rector of The National Conservatory of Music in Shanghai. The goal of the competition was to create “a piano piece based on Chinese traditional music or folklore” and it was specifically stated that the competition was “freely open to all Chinese composers”<sup>4</sup>.

Since 1940s, the demand for a national coloring of art (including music) have been clearly articulated by Chinese social and political leaders. In his speech at the Literature and Art Forum in Yan’an in 1942 Mao Zedong defined the subordinate and functional place of art in relation to politics: “In the modern world, any culture, which means both literature and art, belongs to certain classes and adheres to a certain political direction. Art for art’s sake, art beyond class, art that develops apart from or independently of politics, does not really exist”<sup>5</sup>. Mao Zedong indicated that art should be a tool of the state and serve the broad masses (workers, peasants, soldiers). The task to create art for masses drew attention to folk songs and a special committee was organized to collect folklore<sup>6</sup>. In the 1950s this attitude was reflected in the statement by the musicologist Meng Wentao who expressed the general mood of that time: “We can only create Chinese music. Any modern composer should write music in the national style. Whatever instrument or musical form is used, you must under no circumstances write any music other than ‘Chinese’”<sup>7</sup>. For several decades this doctrine guaranteed the prevalence of the transcription genre which perfectly corresponded to the main idea of Mao’s cultural policy – subordination of art to politics.

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<sup>3</sup> Aleksandr Nikolayevich Tcherepnin (1899–1977) was a Russian and American composer, pianist, music theorist, son of composer N. Tcherepnin. He arrived in Shanghai in April 1934 planning to end his Chinese tour in three months but stayed in the country for three whole years. One of the reasons for such a long stay in China was his extraordinary interest in folk music in the music of the Far East.

<sup>4</sup> Korabelnikova, Ludmila Корабельникова, Людмила. *Aleksandr Tcherepnin. Dolgoye stranstviye Александр Черепнин. Долгое странствие (Alexander Tcherepnin. A Long Journey)*. Moscow, Yazyki russkoy kultury, 1999. pp. 145–146.

<sup>5</sup> Mao, Zedong 毛, Цзэ-дун. “Vystupleniya na soveshchaniy po voprosam literatury i iskusstva v Yan’ani” Выступления на совещании по вопросам литературы и искусства в Яньани (Speeches at the conference on literature and art in Yan’an). *Mao Tsze-dun. Izbrannyye proizvedeniya Мао Цзэ-дун. Избранные произведения (Mao Zedong. Selected works)*. Vol. 4. Trans. from Chinese. Moscow, Izdatelstvo inostrannoy literatury, 1953, pp. 119–173. p. 150.

<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that until the New Cultural Movement, that is, until the 1920s a superficially contemptuous attitude towards folk music prevailed among the Chinese intellectual elite.

<sup>7</sup> Meng, Wentiao 孟文涛. “Zhongxi bingcin” yi jie “中西并存”一解 (The problem of the coexistence of Western and Eastern musical arts). *Renmin yinyue 人民音乐 (People’s Music)*, 1956, № 9, pp. 28–29. p. 28.

Since the beginning of the 1980s serial and other Western compositional techniques of the 20th century begin to appear in Chinese piano music. The genres of "absolute" non-program music become more frequent too. Most of these works, however, continue to be associated with Chinese national culture in one way or another. A good example is "*Tai Ji*" by Zhao Xiaosheng which won a prize at the First International Chinese Style Piano Music Competition held in Shanghai in 1987. The pitch organization of this piece is built on the system of 64 hexagram symbols from the "*Book of Changes*"<sup>8</sup>.

The very subject of this competition, as well as the titles of the works related to Chinese traditional culture in all its manifestations (folk and court music, mythology, classical literature, painting, and calligraphy)<sup>9</sup>, testify that contemporary Chinese music (including piano music) cannot dispense with the national originality. This main direction of the musical discourse in China is encouraged by state policy. Thus in 1980 at the celebrations dedicated to the 170th Chopin's anniversary the president of the Society of Chinese Musicians Liu Ji said: "A national musician should strive to create music with a true national character, to absorb the healing element of traditional and folk music based on his own experience of encountering it, to be unique in the general sound of world music"<sup>10</sup>. Despite familiarity with modern musical trends and absorption of them the slogan "serving the people", as Barbara Mittler claimed, "is still well-known to every Chinese composer, even the youngest"<sup>11</sup>. In the conditions of modern stylistic pluralism, which is also relevant for China, this call is realized not in its original class meaning, but in the nationalistic sense, in the desire to create music that is tangibly connected to the national roots.

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<sup>8</sup> Bian, Meng 卞蒙. *Zhongguo gangqin wenhua zhi xingcheng yu fazhan* 中国钢琴文化之形成与发展 (*The formation and development of Chinese piano culture*). Beijing, Nianhua le chubanshe, 1996. p.131–132.

<sup>9</sup> Among the most striking works of this period which have firmly entered the concert repertoire should be named "*Do Ye*" ("*多耶*" – a folk rite in Guangxi province) by Chen Yi (陈怡), "*Wu Ku*" ("*五魁*" – a dance of hunters from the North-Eastern China) by Zhou Long (周龙), "*Combination of the Short and the Long*" ("*长短组合*" – a suite in three parts, the title of which appeals to the rhythmic patterns in Korean folk music and the Korean language) by Quan Jihao (关肇华).

<sup>10</sup> Zhang, Xian 张弦. Xiaobang danchen 170 zhounian jinian hui zaijing juxing 肖邦诞辰170周年纪念会在京举行 (Chopin's 170th Birthday Celebration Held in Beijing). *Renmin yinyue* 人民音乐 (*People's Music*), 1983, № 3, p. 35.

<sup>11</sup> Mittler, Barbara. *Dangerous tunes: The politics of Chinese music in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the People's Republic of China since 1949*. Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz Verlag, 1997. p. 49.

Already in the 21st century, in 2013, Li Yundi<sup>12</sup> recorded an album with the telling name “*Red Piano*”, released for both the Chinese and international markets. It is noteworthy that the recording of this CD was timed to celebrate the 90th anniversary of the Chinese Communist Party. Several pieces were specially written by a contemporary composer Zhang Zhao (张朝). Their inclusion in this album reveals the purposeful efforts of the state to stimulate the development of stylistically recognizable and nationally colored Chinese piano music. According to the composer the first case of his cooperation with the pianist – the arrangement of a folk song – happened at the request of the President of China Hu Jintao for the BRICS summit “as a demonstration for China’s soft power to be introduced to the top leaders”<sup>13</sup>. The main idea of “*Red Piano*” for Zhang Zhao is that “no matter how many Chopin prizes we win, <...> only if our own music is being recognized by the world, <...> will we automatically become the maestros”<sup>14</sup>.

The requirement to create music with a pronounced national character always posed before Chinese composers the question how to adequately reflect in piano writing the national image of the world, specifically Chinese worldview and aesthetics. The extremely rich philosophical, religious, aesthetic and musical traditions of China provide contemporary musicians with inexhaustible material and a source of inspiration for creating compositions in which the national spirit of China is present. Different in its mental and aesthetic essence from European culture, Chinese culture possesses the unlimited potential of those “driving forces” for the development of any national style which Serhiy Tyshko calls “dynamic components of national style.” The Ukrainian scientist defines the dynamic components of the national style in music as “the evidence of the newly consolidated contents in it, the transition of extra-musical, extra-stylistic phenomena (mentality, traditions etc.) – for the first time or once more – into a style, innovative discovery of means of musical expressiveness adequate to these phenomena”<sup>15</sup>.

During its relatively short history the piano music of China gave rise to many examples of the consolidation of extra-musical specifically Chinese cultural phenomena in it, the manifestation of which in writing for the originally European instrument required special compositional solutions. Given the original foreignness of European musical culture in general, and piano culture, to the Chinese musical tradition, we believe that the functions of the

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<sup>12</sup> Li Yundi (李云迪, born 1982) is a Chinese concert pianist most well known for being the youngest pianist to win the 2000 XIV International Chopin Piano Competition in Warsaw.

<sup>13</sup> Li, Jingdi. Politically Influenced Music in Post-Reform China. PhD dissertation. University of York, 2014. p. 172.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 173.

<sup>15</sup> Tyshko, Sergey Тышко Сергей. *Problema natsionalnogo stilya v russkoy opere Проблема национального стиля в русской опере (The problem of national style in Russian opera)*. Kyiv, Muzinform, 1993. p. 10.

national style distinguished by S. Tyshko – stylistic adaptation and stylistic generation – should have been particularly vivid in Chinese piano music.

Starting from the 1930s and until today Chinese piano music is characterized by the purposeful activity of composers both in terms of stylistic adaptation of piano writing, i.e., according to S. Tyshko, in the search for “points of contact between ‘native’ and ‘foreign’ material”<sup>16</sup>, and in stylistic generation – the creation of “new stylistic features based on one’s own national material in the conditions of its certain opposition to extra-national”<sup>17</sup>. The historical and stylistic sound images of the piano<sup>18</sup>, which represent all the diversity of the genre-style system of European piano music, formed at the time of acquaintance with them by Chinese musicians, act as “foreign” material. The “native” material is drawn both from folk and traditional Chinese music, its mode, intonation, and instrumental specifics, as well as from the rich artistic, philosophical and historical heritage of China, from the foundations of the national worldview, the uniqueness of which is determined, first of all, by religious and philosophical traditions.

“*Two Poem Classics of the Tang Dynasty*” (“唐人诗意两首”) was written by Xu Zhenmin<sup>19</sup> in 1998. Four years later, the work was awarded the Silver Prize of the most prestigious national music award, the Golden Bell (金钟奖), and in 2004 it was selected as the assigned piece for the Third China International Piano Competition in Beijing, one of the most important music contests organized by the Ministry of Culture of China. So, Xu Zhenmin’s minicycle became for most of the foreign participants of the competition (as well as for their teachers) a kind of Chinese piano music visit card which embodied the national Chinese sound image of the instrument<sup>20</sup>.

“*Two Poem Classics of the Tang Dynasty*” was written after the poems by Chen Zi-ang (陳子昂) and Chang Jian (常建) who lived in the 7-8th centuries. Chen Zi-ang’s poem is titled “*Upon Ascending the Parapet of*

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 7

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>18</sup> The term “sonorous (sound) image of the instrument” was first introduced by a famous American composer Aaron Copland (Copland, 1953). Later the idea of “sound image of the piano”, or even simpler – “image of the piano”, became the main concept in the book by Leonid Gakkel “*Piano Music of the 20<sup>th</sup> century*” (Gakkel, 1990) which influenced many further Eastern-European studies in history and theory of piano performance. Gakkel, as his followers, concentrates mostly on describing images of the piano typical for different composers, although he also defines two general images of the piano in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (“percussive-pedallness” and “illusory-romantic”) and briefly states the existence of various national images of the piano (Russian, Polish, Bulgarian, Hungarian).

<sup>19</sup> Xu Zhenmin (徐振民, born 1934) is a composer, professor at the Central Conservatory in Beijing. The author of numerous orchestral and chamber works.

<sup>20</sup> We understand the national image of the piano as a certain collective unity of ideas about the sound and expressive capabilities of the instrument, which are capable of embodying nationally recognizable qualities, phenomena and characteristics, both musical and extra-musical.

*Yuzhou*: “Before me, unseen are the ancients, / Behind me, unseen those to come. / Thinking of this infinite universe / Alone, in my sorrow, I shed tears”<sup>21</sup>. Chang Jian’s poem describes the experience of visiting an abandoned temple: “First rays of morning sunlight / Stream through lofty bamboo groves. / I enter the old temple, following the path/ To where the meditation hall is hidden deep beneath the flowering trees. / As mountain scenes invite the song of birds, / Images in the pond empty the human mind. / Everything is vanished now into the heart of silence / Except the sounding of bell and chime”<sup>22</sup>.

As we can see the attention of the poets is focused on the incomprehensible secrets of the universe immensity, the inexorable flow of time and the beauty of the surrounding world. So it can be assumed that in both pieces the poetic program is inextricably linked with the concept of Dao (the way). Chou Wen-chung, considered to be one of the first composers who was able to combine authentic Chinese motives with the modern compositional techniques, understood Dao as “the identification oneself with nature or the universe”<sup>23</sup>. As musicologist Xiaole Li put it, “calm as a deep ocean, a Daoist would be alone without being troubled by worldly loss or excited by ordinary gain. The aloof attitude toward worldly desire and appreciation of natural things separates Daoists from the formalist doctrine of the Confucians”<sup>24</sup>. The demand for naturalness and dispassion in knowing the “way” is being transformed from art into images of carelessness and alienation. “*Two Poem Classics of the Tang Dynasty*” is one of the many examples in Chinese music of program piano works of a contemplative nature, the main theme of which is the unity of nature and man<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> Xu, Zhenmin. *Two Poem Classics of the Tang Dynasty*. Beijing, People’s Music Publishing House, 2003. p. 3.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>23</sup> Chew Seok-Kwee. *Analysis Of The Selected Music Of Chou Wen-Chung In Relation To Chinese Aesthetics*. PhD. dissertation. New York, New York University, 1990. p. 38.

<sup>24</sup> Xiaole, Li. *Chen Yi’s piano music: Chinese aesthetics and Western models*. PhD dissertation. University of Hawai’i, 2003. p. 50.

<sup>25</sup> Among other such compositions we can name the transcriptions “*Silver Clouds Chasing the Moon*” (“彩云追月”), “*Red Lilies Crimson and Bright*” (“山丹丹花开”), “*A Hundred Birds Paying Respect to the Phoenix*” (“百鸟朝凤”) by Wang Jianzhong (王建中), “*Flute and Drum at Sunset*” (“夕阳箫鼓”) by Li Yinghai (黎英海), “*Paintings of Ba-Shu*” suite (“巴蜀之画”) by Huang Huwei (黄虎威), “*In That Distant Place*” (“在那遥远的地方”) by Sang Tong (桑桐), as well as the piano poem “*Moonlit Night in Fuyang*” (“潯陽月夜”) by Jiang Wenye (江文也), “*Impressions of Paintings by Higashiyama Kai*” (“高山流水”) by Wang Lisan (汪立三), Preludes “*Bamboo in the Wind*” (“箏”) and “*Sound of Valley*” (“幽谷”) by Chu Wanghua (储望华).

In the formation of the Chinese national image of the piano Dao acts as a "driving force" that produces "native" material. Among the historical and stylistic sound images of the instrument which were already well established when Chinese piano music only began its development, we can highlight two most relevant to the Daoist worldview. One is the post-romantic sound image of the piano, distinguished by Natalya Ryabukha in Debussy's work<sup>26</sup>. Close to it stands the other one – the illusory-romantic image of the piano of the 20th century according to Leonid Gakkel's classification. These sound images of the piano became the key "points of contact" between the nationally determined intentions of Chinese musicians and all the riches of the European piano art thesaurus. As known, some features of the Debussy's piano works language as well as their imagery were formed under the direct influence of Eastern (including Chinese) art and aesthetics. Chen Rongxuan singles out impressionism as one of the leading stylistic trends in Chinese piano art. But unlike European (French) impressionism which is characterized by an anthropocentric interpretation of "the embodiment of an artistic vision of the world with a pronounced dominance of the subjective (self) over the world", in Chinese impressionism the researcher notes the dominance of a nature-centered interpretation where "a dialogue between man and the universe most often is accompanied by the dissolution of the subjective (self) in the universe"<sup>27</sup>.

The action of the dynamic component "Dao" in Chinese piano music caused the presence of a large number of program pieces of the pictorial type. Having a program is a property generally characteristic of Chinese instrumental music. It became one of the most important tools for the assimilation<sup>28</sup> of the sound image of the piano as a universal European instrument by the national Chinese musical consciousness. Many observers noted the fundamental thematic nature of Chinese music-making practice. For example, Han Kuo-huang states that «it is uncommon to find Chinese instrumental pieces without some sort of descriptive or suggestive title. In a printed concert program or a book containing instrumental compositions, nine out of ten pieces are fully annotated, some even accompanied with poems"<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> Ryabukha, Nataliya Рябуха Наталия. *Transformatsiya zvukovoho obrazu svitu v fortepianniy kulturi: onto-sonolohichny pidkhid Трансформація звукового образу світу в фортепіанній культурі: онто-сонологічний підхід (Transformation of the sound image of the world in piano culture: the onto-sonological approach)*. Doctor thesis. Kharkiv, 2017.

<sup>27</sup> Chen, Rongxuan Чень Жуньюань. *Mirovozzrencheskiye i stilevyye osnovy impressiionizma v muzyke Kitaya Мировоззренческие и стилевые основы импрессионизма в фортепианной музыке Китая (Worldview and Stylistic Foundations of Impressionism in Chinese Piano Music)*. Kharkiv, Visnyk Kharkivs'koyi derzhavnoyi akademiyi dyzaynu i mystetstv, 2012, № 14, pp. 159–163. p. 162.

<sup>28</sup> According to S. Tyshko the assimilation is the most general principle of national style formation.

<sup>29</sup> Han, Kuo-huang. *The Chinese Concept of Program Music*. Asian Music, 1978, Vol. 10, No. 1, pp. 17–38. p. 18.

In the piano writing of “*Two Poem Classics of the Tang Dynasty*” the concept of Dao is realized through such stylistic features as the improvisational nature of composition, many arpeggiated chord figurations, metrical ambiguity, the significant role of pedalization in creating coloristic effects of “dissolution”. The use of the pentatonic scale system plays an important style-forming role too as it soothes out the sharp tensions between tones that are characteristic of European music.

E.g. 1

The musical score is presented in four systems. The first system begins with a tempo marking of *Lento* (♩ = 52) and a dynamic of *pp*. The second system includes a *rit.* marking and a dynamic of *p*. The third system starts with a tempo change to ♩ = 56 and a dynamic of *p*. The fourth system concludes with a *rit.* marking and a dynamic of *mp*. The score features complex arpeggiated chord structures and a consistent use of the pentatonic scale.

Xu Zhenmin. *Two Poem Classics of the Tang Dynasty*.  
 2. “The Zen Meditation Hall behind Broken Hill Temple.  
 Poem by Chang Jian”. Measures 1–11.

Moreover, tonal centers around which pentatonic scales are built change frequently. The appearance of additional tones that are not included in the pentatonic system is mainly related to the parallel movement of intervals and chords, mostly of a non-third structure, which also eliminates the harmonic functionality inherent in European tonal music. The change of tonalities occurs through arbitrary and improvisational movement of tonal centers and their corresponding scales.

The parallelisms call to mind the texture of Debussy's piano works, but the persistent use of pentatonics, primarily in fast arpeggiated figurations that resemble either the breath of a light breeze or the sound of the Chinese folk instrument *guzheng*<sup>30</sup>, appears to be the result of stylistic generation, a new specifically Chinese stylistic feature. The same applies to the arbitrary movement of tonal centers, which by its frequency and seeming illogicality contradicts the basic principles of European tonal-functional music. No tonality is maintained for more than a few measures, which is often emphasized by the change of key signatures.

However, such variability is connected not only with the desire to express the mysteriousness and elusiveness of Dao, but also with the specificity of Chinese traditional and folk music, first noticed by Alexander Tcherepnin, a kind of godfather for Chinese piano music. In his notes, the composer left an accurate description of its tonal, melodic, rhythmic and timbre features: "Chinese music is built on a natural pentatonic scale; it is very melodic, lyrical, and extremely diverse <...> In the national Chinese music there is no harmony or counterpoint how we understand it. In an orchestra, each musician must play the same melody, but taking into account the volume and register of his instrument. As a result, this leads to 'false duplication, which, together with many syncopated rhythms played by percussion instruments, forms a special kind of polyphony characteristic of Chinese music. The form of the local melody-motif is built on the constant variation of the same material, the musical phrase is never exactly repeated, the melody is always evolving, the change of basic tones replaces the modulation"<sup>31</sup>. In Xu Zhenmin's piece, as in many other piano works of Chinese composers, we can see how the "false duplication" as a characteristic feature of traditional music making transforms into many non-third parallelisms, and how the change of basic tones turns into a frequent change of modal-harmonic tonal centers.

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<sup>30</sup> Guzheng (古箏) or zheng (箏) is a Chinese string-plucked lute-type instrument. It has 16 to 21 strings.

<sup>31</sup> Korabelnikova, Ludmila Корабельникова, Людмила. *Aleksandr Tcherepnin. Dolgoye stranstvie Александр Черепнин. Долгое странствие (Alexander Tcherepnin. A Long Journey)*. Moscow, Yazyki russkoy kultury, 1999. p. 144.

The predilection of Chinese composers for various kinds of parallelism has roots both in folk music making and in the more general quality of Chinese artistic aesthetics – the brevity of expression. The origins of this property of Chinese art can be traced to the visual and sound brevity of the Chinese language. Chen Rongxuan points out the connection of hieroglyphic thinking with a specific vision of the world built on symbols. Thus, a composer symbolically interprets individual sounds in a special conceptual system, which differs from the main European principle of composing – the development of musical material<sup>32</sup>. One of the most important qualities of Chinese poetry is also meaningful brevity, symbolism, and incompleteness, which leaves room for the search for a hidden, mysterious meaning. Similarly, in Chinese painting, a large part of the canvas often remains unpainted. According to art critic Michael Sullivan, “the Chinese painter deliberately avoids complete statements because he knows that we never know everything”<sup>33</sup>.

In music, this quality of incompleteness manifests itself on the one hand in the brevity of music phrases, on the other – in the linearity of texture, which can also be observed in the above example. The theme is mostly presented in parallel chords, and the phrases last no more than two measures. Practically the entire piece lacks the wide-breathing phrases that are often found in European music.

Moreover, Chinese musical themes are characterized by the multiplicity and repetition of melodic peaks, which, again, can be traced to the peculiarities of the Chinese language and its tones. Since the tones of the Chinese language have a lexical meaning, the intonation curve of the Chinese language is more capricious than in European languages and rhythmically syncopated which affects the melodic patterns of Chinese songs and, as a result, those of instrumental music. A similar thematic structure (relatively short pentatonic phrases in a small range with repeated melodic peaks and syncopated rhythmic patterns) can be found in most Chinese piano works that are transcriptions of folk songs. The example from Xu Zhenmin’s piece is interesting because, not being a transcription and going far beyond the stylistic framework of traditional “pentatonic romanticism”, it shows that the composer was guided by the same principles of structure and textural presentation of thematic musical material.

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<sup>32</sup> Chen, Rongxuan Чень Жуньюань. *Mirovozzrencheskiye i stilevyye osnovy impressionizma v tuzyuke Kitaya Mirovozzrencheskiye i stilevyye osnovy impressionizma v fortepiannoy muzyke Kitaya (Worldview and Stylistic Foundations of Impressionism in Chinese Piano Music)*. Kharkiv, Visnyk Kharkivs'koyi derzhavnoyi akademiyi dyzaynu I mystetstv, 2012, № 14, pp. 159–163. p. 162.

<sup>33</sup> Sullivan, Michael. *A Short History of Chinese Art*. Berkeley, University of California Press, 1967. p. 103.

Therefore, Xu Zhenmin’s “*Two Classical Poems of the Tang Dynasty*” is a vivid example of the embodiment of the Chinese national sound image of the piano, which was formed in the process of perception by Chinese musicians of the sound images of the piano already formed at the time of their acquaintance with European musical culture. These sound images were modified under the influence of such defining phenomena for Chinese culture as the philosophical-aesthetic concept of “Dao”, the syncretic understanding of musical art, the brevity and incompleteness of expression associated with the laconism of Chinese language and writing. The musical factors of national style formation, namely traditional and folk music making, also had a huge impact.

In piano writing, the influence of these dynamic components caused the formation of the following stable stylistic features: textural linearity and parallelism, improvisational nature of composition, a large number of arpeggiated chord figurations, metrical ambiguity, a significant role of pedalization in creating coloristic effects of “dissolution”, non-third chordal structure, brevity and melodic capriciousness of music phrases, syncopation of the rhythmic patterns, the use of the pentatonic scale system, which is traditional for Chinese musical culture and which soothes out the sharp tensions between tones characteristic of European music, harmonic movement based on pentatonic scales that leads to the leveling of the harmonic functionality familiar to European music.

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