

## STYLISTIC ORIGINS OF CHINESE PIANISM

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**SUMMARY.** The majority of foreign observers recognize that the most important aspect of Chinese pianism is its technical perfection, which can be explained in two ways: first, by social factors (the close resemblance between the traditional Confucian conception of education and the foundations of learning to play the piano, parents' interest in their children's success as pianists, the competitive nature of Chinese society), and second, by the classical setting of children's piano education to develop strict finger technique. Though it was unable to gain traction at all levels of Chinese piano teaching, the image of "singing on the piano" was also important for the development of Chinese pianism. The monosyllabic nature of the contributes language, as well as the dynamic brokenness and temporal syncopation of its intonation contribute to the specificity of the "singing on the piano" tradition in Chinese music culture. In general, the performing image of the piano in China is comparable to the image of the "salon piano," just as the current piano boom in China is comparable to the "golden age" of the piano in Europe and America at the close of the 19th century.

**Keywords:** Chinese pianism, Chinese piano education, image of the piano, singing on the piano, musical intonation, piano performance.

Throughout the 20th century, the piano – which Arthur Loesser describes as "the perfect symbol of Western civilization"<sup>2</sup> – spread from its European birthplace to the most remote regions of the globe, demonstrating its cultural, political, intellectual, and economic significance. In the history of piano art, the cultural appropriation of a musical instrument gave rise to a number of very distinctive and little-known phenomena that were closely associated with

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<sup>2</sup> Loesser, Arthur. *Men, women & pianos: a social history*. Preface by Jacques Barzun. New York, Dover Publications, 2011. P. xiii.



complex and frequently contentious socio-political processes. Specifically, we can mention the Burmese sandaya piano<sup>3</sup> and the phenomenon of the Iranian (Persian) piano<sup>4</sup> as examples of the process of appropriation of the piano by the local national culture, accompanied by significant adaptation of the instrument to the local musical tradition. The piano is modified for the performance of traditional national music in both of these cross-cultural phenomena by being tuned to the corresponding musical modes and using unique playing techniques that imitate the sound of folk instruments. The repercussions of the piano's cultural absorption in the Far East, particularly in China, Japan, and South Korea, were somewhat less exotic but much more potent. Today, piano performance and teaching are highly established in each of these nations, and each has a composer legacy that blends transnational and national elements. The contemporary world performance piano scene is unimaginable without pianists of Far Eastern descent.

We think it's possible to identify some common stylistic characteristics shared by Chinese pianists as an ethno-cultural community, even though each exceptional pianist has his own unique playing style. It should be highlighted that an average perception of Chinese pianism has already been formed due to the extraordinary rise in Chinese piano performance both domestically and internationally, particularly at piano contests. To address the question of how justified such a perception is, we believe it is necessary to trace how the sound images of the piano<sup>5</sup> – romantic, post-romantic,<sup>6</sup> the

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<sup>3</sup> The piano first appeared in Burma at the court of King Mindon Min at the end of the 1800. The court musicians enthusiastically accepted the new instrument, but adapted it to the performance of the "*Maha Gita*" – the traditional music of the royal court. They developed a special two-fingered method of playing the instrument that mimics the methods used to play the Burmese drums, *patt waing*, and xylophone, *patala*. The piano was specially tuned to play Burmese music modes (Webster, 2013).

<sup>4</sup> The piano was introduced in Tehran around the same time as it was in Burma, and the courtiers and members of the royal family were its initial listeners. Like in Burma, court musicians modified the piano to play traditional Persian music by altering its tuning and copying the style of playing the *tar* and *santoor*, two Iranian folk instruments. Based on traditional national art and performance techniques, "Persian piano" continued to coexist with Western playing styles (Farshadfar, 2017).

<sup>5</sup> Famous American composer Aaron Copland coined the phrase "sonorous (sound) image of the instrument" (Copland, 1953). Subsequently, the notion of the "sound image of the piano," emerged as the central theme in Leonid Gakkel's book "Piano Music of the 20th century" (Gakkel, 1990), which had a significant impact on numerous other Eastern-European studies in the history and theory of piano performance.

<sup>6</sup> Ukrainian scholar Nataliya Ryabukha differentiates four primary categories of sound images of the piano: classicist, romantic, post-romantic (consists of two defining principles of pianistic style formation: symbolist and neoclassical) and avant-garde (Ryabukha, 2017, P. 200). In Western piano art, classical, romantic, and post-romantic sound images of the piano had developed by the 1930s, when Chinese professional performance and education started to actively take shape.

tradition of “singing on the piano”,<sup>7</sup> etc. – that were already formed at the time Chinese piano performance began to take shape were reflected in the development of piano art and education in China.

The common misconception about Chinese pianism that persists in Europe and America is that Asian musicians are technically flawless but lack emotional and musical depth. The well-known Japanese violinist Kyoko Takezawa observes that in Europe “there is a stereotype of Asian musicians as technically very reliable, and that may be why they are good at competitions, <...> other things like musicality is often considered lacking in Asian musicians.”<sup>8</sup> Analyzing the Western public’s perception of Lang Lang and his performance image Shzr Tan mentions “an ethnically and politically tinged stereotype of the (Asian – O. B.) performer as machine. This image has more recently been underpinned by fears over the gradual rise of an economically expanding and politically active China.”<sup>9</sup> Young Chinese pianists have been accused of “borrowing, copying, lack of originality and independence,”<sup>10</sup> according to Xu Bo. The researcher gives a comment from an interview with renowned pianist and teacher Eliso Virsaladze as an example of how some European professionals regard Chinese pianists negatively: “Our art is going through not the best times, and maybe it will be even worse today. Imagine that we are surrounded by an army of 25 million Chinese professional pianists who are all aspiring to be as successful as Lang Lang. Unfortunately, nothing positive is predicted here.”<sup>11</sup> The emphasis on “reproduction of famous interpretations” that permeates professional piano instruction in modern China, according to the study, is what’s causing the problem.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> According to Liu Fan, “the illusion of “singing on the piano”, creation of which requires the efforts of composer, performer and listener, is one of the most interesting, meaningful and productive “images of instrument” in the history of musical art” (Liu, 2017a, P. 135).

<sup>8</sup> Yoshihara, Mari. *Musicians from a Different Shore: Asians and Asian Americans in Classical Music*. Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 2007. P. 61

<sup>9</sup> Tan, Shzr Ee. *New Chinese Masculinities on the Piano: Lang Lang and Li Yundi*. In *Gender in Chinese Music*, edited by Rachel Harris and Rowan Pease. New York, University of Rochester Press, 2013. P. 139.

<sup>10</sup> Xu, Bo Сюй Бо. *Fenomen fortepiannogo ispolnitelstva v Kitaye na rubezhe XX–XXI vekov Феномен фортепианного исполнительства в Китае на рубеже XX–XXI веков (The phenomenon of piano performance in China at the turn of the 20th–21st centuries)*. PhD thesis abstract. Rostov-na-Donu, 2011. P. 3.

<sup>11</sup> Xu, Bo Сюй Бо. *Kitayskiy “fortepianny bum” v nachale XIX veka Kumaïskiy «фортепианный бум» в начале XIX века (The Chinese “Piano Boom” at the Beginning of the 19th Century)*. Майкоп, Vestnik Adygeyskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta, 2011, issue 2. P. 188–189.

<sup>12</sup> Xu, Bo Сюй Бо. *Fenomen fortepiannogo ispolnitelstva v Kitaye na rubezhe XX–XXI vekov Феномен фортепианного исполнительства в Китае на рубеже XX–XXI веков (The phenomenon of piano performance in China at the turn of the 20th–21st centuries)*. PhD thesis abstract. Rostov-na-Donu, 2011. P. 20.

When the negative stereotypes about Chinese pianists are disregarded, we find that most observers agree that technical perfection – which is sometimes absolutized at the cost of other aspects of interpretation – is considered to be the major value of Chinese pianism. To understand the origins of this approach, it is necessary to examine the objective facets of the history of Chinese piano art and education, where the development of strict finger technique was valued from the beginning. Thus, Mario Paci's<sup>13</sup> pedagogy – which Chinese pianists naturally adopted – is described by Bian Meng as being founded “on the methods of the old school, with an emphasis on the strength and independence of the fingers.”<sup>14</sup> Zhou Guangren recalled the demanding technical training and finger exercises at the Italian pianist's lessons.<sup>15</sup> When the pupils were playing, Paci insisted that they keep their hands still. From Fu Tsong's memoirs we find out that, “Paci always put a coin on the back of Fu's hand while Fu was playing. If the coin dropped, Paci would hit Fu's hand and order him to repeat the same procedure.”<sup>16</sup> Huang Ping, who credits A. Yesipova<sup>17</sup> with creating this practice<sup>18</sup>, claims that B. Zakharov<sup>19</sup>, a pupil of the renowned pianist, also employed it, “emphasizing the need to train the fingers.”<sup>20</sup> Lin Chi further points out that

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<sup>13</sup> China's first-ever piano concert was performed by Italian pianist Mario Paci. He established a Shanghai Symphony Orchestra in 1919 and taught piano in private classes. The later-famous Chinese pianist Fu Tsong (昉遼) was one of his final pupils, having studied with him from 1941 until 1944. M. Paci also taught well-known pianists and educators Wu Yili, Zhu Gongyi, and Zhou Guangren.

<sup>14</sup> Bian, Meng Бянь Мэн. *Ocherki stanovleniya i razvitiya kitayskoy fortepiannoy kultury Oчерки становления и развития китайской фортепианной культуры (Essays on the formation and development of Chinese piano culture)*. PhD thesis abstract. Saint-Petersburg, Saint-Petersburg Rimsky-Korsakov State Conservatory, 1994. P. 8.

<sup>15</sup> Lin, Chi. *Piano teaching philosophies and influences on pianism at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, China*. D. M. A. dissertation. Louisiana State University, 2002. P. 20.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, P. 20-21.

<sup>17</sup> Anna Yesipova (1851 – 1914) was a pupil of Teodor Leszetycki. From 1893 to 1908 she was professor of piano at the Saint Petersburg Conservatory. Among her students were Sergei Prokofiev, Maria Yudina, Leonid Kreutzer, Isabelle Vengerova, Leo Ornstein, Thomas de Hartmann.

<sup>18</sup> This approach is cited by Ye. Liberman as an illustration of the technical education practices that dominated the first half of the 19th century and “were centered principally on the mechanical development of the fingers.” (Liberman, 2003, P. 5).

<sup>19</sup> Boris Zakharov (1887–1943) was a pianist who studied under A. Yesipova and L. Godovsky. He left Russia during the Civil War and immigrated to China. He received an invitation to become the dean of the Shanghai Conservatory's piano faculty in 1929.

<sup>20</sup> Huang, Ping Хуан Пин. *Vliyaniye russkogo fortepiannogo iskusstva na formirovaniye i razvitiye kitayskoy pianisticheskoy shkoly Vлияние русского фортепианного искусства на формирование и развитие китайской пианистической школы (The influence of Russian piano art on the formation and development of the Chinese piano school)*. Saint Petersburg, Asterion, 2009. P. 31.

the only way Chinese teachers were trained to practice in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was with high fingers and still hand. “Under the circumstances, Chinese pianists could only play small pieces because their shoulders, arms, and wrists were very tight. This led to exhaustion of the hands when they performed. Touch and tone color were not considered to be important aspects of piano performance”.<sup>21</sup>

Chinese piano culture developed and became more professionalized with the People’s Republic of China established in 1949. The new state’s so-called “unilateral” foreign policy, which sought a broad rapprochement with the USSR and the communist bloc, had a significant influence on the development of musical, and particularly piano, culture in China throughout the 1950s. Soviet textbooks on harmony, music theory, and the analysis of musical compositions, together with methodical guides and piano textbooks, were translated and incorporated into educational practices.<sup>22</sup> The finest Chinese students were sent to study in socialist nations like the USSR, and Soviet educators were dispatched on two-year professional trips to China. Soviet teachers (the most notable among them were A. Tatulian<sup>23</sup> and T. Kravchenko<sup>24</sup>) sought to impart to their students the art of “singing on the piano,” to free their pianistic apparatus using the so-called “weight” playing, to focus on appreciating the beauty of the piano tone. Keli Xu mentions also a Polish pianist Ryszard Bakst<sup>25</sup> who in 1953 gave a lecture entitled “Playing the Piano with Weight” at the Northeast Professional Music School “which made a great impact on piano circles in China”.<sup>26</sup>

According to pianist Li Ruixing, who studied under A. Tatulian, “one key aspect of his approach is that he asks pupils to perform the melodies with nuances, breathing, and phrasing, just like a vocalist would. A lovely tone, pure hand gestures, technical virtuosity, and cantabile melody all work together

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<sup>21</sup> Lin, Chi. *Piano teaching philosophies and influences on pianism at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, China*. D. M. A. dissertation. Louisiana State University, 2002. P. 15.

<sup>22</sup> Zhang, Min 张敏. *Gangqin yishu jian shi 钢琴艺术简史 (A brief history of piano art)*. Henan, 2008. P. 236.

<sup>23</sup> Aram Georgiyovich Tatulyan (1915–1974) was a Soviet pianist and teacher, a student of A. Goldenweiser, laureate of the All-Union Pianist Competition. He taught at the Music Pedagogical Institute and School named after Gniesinykh.

<sup>24</sup> Tetyana Petrivna Kravchenko (1916–2003) was a pianist and teacher, a student of L. Oborin. In 1960–2000, she worked as a professor and head of the chair at the Kyiv and Leningrad Conservatories.

<sup>25</sup> Ryszard Bakst (1926–1999) was a Polish pianist and teacher. He studied with J. Turczyński, A. Lufer, K. Igumnov, G. Neuhaus and Z. *Drzewiecki*. Laureate of the Fourth Chopin Pianist Competition. Later he emigrated to Great Britain.

<sup>26</sup> Xu, Keli. *Piano teaching in China during the twentieth century*. D. M. A. thesis. Urbana, 2001. P. 27.

to flawlessly convey the musical ideas in the pieces.”<sup>27</sup> Zhou Guangren recalled: “It was only after I learned from the Soviet expert Tatulyan that I truly understood what the playing with the weight meant.”<sup>28</sup> T. Kravchenko also focused her teaching on issues related to musical expressiveness. Zhou Guangren recalled that “Kravchenko was a straightforward, enthusiastic person who always patiently explained the work’s artistic elements, historical background, and employed playing techniques. She also provided a detailed description of the composition’s musical image.”<sup>29</sup> Studying the perception of the Polish composer by Chinese pianists, Yi Tian comes to the conclusion that it was Soviet teachers who “instilled in Chinese students a sensitivity to singing that solved the main problem in their interpretation of Chopin’s music.”<sup>30</sup>

Achieving the illusion of “singing on the piano” remains one of the main requirements of professional Chinese piano pedagogy to this day. It should be highlighted, however, that the image of the piano as a singing instrument in this instance runs counter to the notions of piano virtuosity, which are still prevalent at the elementary music education level and are based solely on finger technique with insufficient consideration for the expressiveness of phrasing and the beauty of sound. Therefore, among the pedagogical issues found in the examination of students’ performance at music school exams, Zhou Guangren highlights that “our children are not good at producing singing tone on the piano and consequently do not know how to play legato, instead striking the keys with high fingers in a mechanical manner and producing a harsh, ugly sound.”<sup>31</sup> The drawback noted by the famous pianist and teacher is, obviously, the reverse side of the widespread rather strong technical development of Chinese children who practice the piano. Xu Bo attributes this phenomenon to the extremely early start of studies (5 years old, occasionally even 3–4 years old) and the orientation “from an early age on the strict formation of the technical apparatus.”<sup>32</sup> Sociocultural factors related

<sup>27</sup> Yi, Tian. *La reception et l'enseignement de la musique de Chopin en Chine*. Thèse de doctorat. Lausanne, 2018. P. 122.

<sup>28</sup> Huang, Ping 黄平. *Vliyaniye russkogo fortepiannogo iskusstva na formirovaniye i razvitiye kitayskoy pianisticheskoy shkoly* Влияние русского фортепианного искусства на формирование и развитие китайской пианистической школы (*The influence of Russian piano art on the formation and development of the Chinese piano school*). Saint Petersburg, Asterion, 2009. P. 49.

<sup>29</sup> Zhou, Guangren 周广仁. *Zhongguo gangqin shiren gushengying* 中国钢琴诗人顾圣婴 (*Chinese poet of the piano Gu Shengying*). Shanghai, 2001. P. 134.

<sup>30</sup> Yi, Tian. *La reception et l'enseignement de la musique de Chopin en Chine*. Thèse de doctorat. Lausanne, 2018. P. 124.

<sup>31</sup> Xu, Keli. *Piano teaching in China during the twentieth century*. D. M. A. thesis. Urbana, 2001. P. 64.

<sup>32</sup> Xu, Bo 徐波. *Fenomen fortepiannogo ispolnitelstva v Kitaye na rubezhe XX–XXI vekov* Феномен фортепианного исполнительства в Китае на рубеже XX–XXI веков (*The*

to piano education in Chinese society, such as competitiveness, thoroughness, and diligence, deriving from the traditional Confucian ideas of the educational process, also play a major role in the development primarily of the technical aspect of performance, as the speed and clarity can be easily judged by untrained or insufficiently professional listeners – who are typically students' relatives – and can thus provide a visual representation of the efficacy of the teacher's instruction.

As I suggested in my earlier research, national language intonation played a determining factor in the establishment of the tradition of “singing on the piano” and its great significance for East Slavic pianism. The impact of national language intonation, communicated through vocal art, specifically influenced variations in understanding of singing in the instrumental music performance during the 18th and 19th centuries. It was during the Romantic era that the *bel canto* style of singing – which is based on Italian intonation – spread throughout Europe and gave rise to the present idea of singing on the piano, which is essentially tied to *legato* performance.<sup>33</sup> The influence of native language intonation also helps to explain the long-standing tradition in Russian and Ukrainian piano schools of viewing some of Bach's compositions as related to Slavic folklore.<sup>34</sup>

The rhythm and melody of the Italian and Slavic languages differ greatly from those of the Chinese language. In contrast to the European languages, raising or lowering the voice in Chinese has a content-recognizable role rather than emphasizing the expressive and emotional content of the phrase because the lexical meaning of the syllable changes along with the change in intonation (the Chinese language has four tones). Therefore, in the Chinese language, melody is not the primary factor in phrasal intonation; instead, dynamic and temporal characteristics play a more significant impact in an utterance's intonational expressiveness. In regard to the Chinese language's temporal structure the impression of syncopation of the Chinese language can be explained by examining its phrasal rhythm, which has syllables as its primary units instead of words.<sup>35</sup>

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*phenomenon of piano performance in China at the turn of the 20th–21st centuries*). PhD thesis abstract. Rostov-na-Donu, 2011. P. 18.

<sup>33</sup> Bezborodko, Oleg Безбородько Олег. *Osobennosti i evolutsiya pevuchey traktovki klavishnykh instrumentov ot J. S. Bakha k romantikam* Особенности и эволюция певучей трактовки клавишных инструментов от И. С. Баха к романтикам (*Characteristics and development of keyboard instrument singing interpretation from J. S. Bach to the Romantics*). Kyiv, Kyivske muzykoznavstvo, 2005, issue 18. P. 220.

<sup>34</sup> Bezborodko, Oleg Безбородько Олег. “*Russkiye*” fugi J. S. Bakha “*Русские*” фуги И. С. Баха (*“Russian” Fugues by J. S. Bach*). Kyiv, Naukovy visnyk Natsionalnoyi muzychnoyi akademiyi Ukrayiny im. P. I. Chaykovskogo, 2005, issue 48. P. 231.

<sup>35</sup> Sofronov, Mikhail Софронов Михаил *Prosodiya osnovnykh yedynits kitayskogo yazyka* Просодия основных единиц китайского языка (*Prosody of the basic units of the Chinese*

In addition to the obvious relationship between speech and musical intonation, the differences in the prosody of Chinese and European speech are easily noticeable to the untrained ear and pose a significant challenge for Chinese learners of European languages. These factors have led many observers and researchers to propose that the unique characteristics of Chinese musical and performance intonation can be explained through the analysis of national linguistic intonation specificity. Thus, one of the primary causes of the observed deficiency of “singing performance, expressiveness of intonation” among Chinese pianists, according to Xu Bo, is a foreign language system.<sup>36</sup> Comparing how Ye. Kissin and Lang Lang interpret A. Grünfeld’s “Die Fledermaus” paraphrase, Xu Bo compares the latter’s virtuoso bravado the declamatory intonation of Kissin who sings out all the minor melodic motifs. When S. Ayzenshtadt contrasts the performance renditions of R. Schumann’s “Papillons,” which were made by S. Richter, W. Kempf, and Fu Tsong, he discovers that the latter’s intonation qualities match “the characteristics of the Chinese language – sharply rhythmic and rich in sharp dynamic “bursts”.”<sup>37</sup> The researcher identifies the identical agogic and dynamic factors of intonation in Lang Lang’s rendition of “Dumka” by P. Tchaikovsky. They seem to be, however, far less appropriate for the interpretation of this work, which is replete with folk vocal-linguistic intonations.

Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that Chinese musical culture generally places a strong emphasis on individual sound. N. Yofan highlights how Chinese culture influenced medieval Japanese music theory and notes how common the idea of “recognition of the determining role of a single sound, that is, a sound taken separately, was in Ancient East nations. This was the main distinction between ancient music theory in most Ancient East and Ancient European cultures, where the ratio of sounds is given primacy.”<sup>38</sup>

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language). *Slavistika. Indoevropеistika. Nostratika. K 60-letiyu so dnya rozhdeniya V. A. Dybo Slavistika. Indoevropеistika. Nostratika. K 60-letiyu so dnya rozhdeniya V. A. Dybo* (Slavic studies. Indo-European Studies. Nostratica. To the 60th anniversary of V. A. Dybo). Moscow, 1991. P. 115.

<sup>36</sup> Xu, Bo Сюй Бо. *Fenomen fortepiannogo ispolnitelstva v Kitaye na rubezhe XX–XXI vekov Fenomen fortepiannogo ispolnitelstva v Kitae na rubezhe XX–XXI vekov* (The phenomenon of piano performance in China at the turn of the 20th–21st centuries). PhD thesis abstract. Rostov-na-Donu, 2011. P. 22.

<sup>37</sup> Ayzenshtadt, Sergey Айзенштадт Сергей *Fortepiannye shkoly stran Dalnevostochnogo regiona (Kitay, Koreya, Yaponiya). Problemy teorii, istorii, ispolnitelskoj praktiki. Fortepiannye shkoly stran Dalnevostochnogo regiona (Kitay, Koreya, Yaponiya). Problemy teorii, istorii, ispolnitelskoj praktiki* (Piano schools of the countries of the Far Eastern region (China, Korea, Japan). Problems of theory, history, performing practice). Doctor thesis. Novosibirsk, 2015. P. 192.

<sup>38</sup> Iofan, Nataliya Иофан Н. *Iz istorii yaponskoj muzyki VII – XIX vv. Iz istorii yaponskoj muzyki VII – XIX vv.* (From the history of Japanese music of the 7th - 19th centuries). *Isskustvo Yaponii Искусство Японии* (Art of Japan). Moscow, Nauka, 1965. P. 28.

Here we can also draw comparisons with Chinese speech and hieroglyphic writing, where each sign is a symbol and represents an entire syllable or, more frequently, a whole word, especially in classical Chinese.<sup>39</sup> Naturally, this aspect of the national musical culture and perception also poses some challenges to the understanding of musical intonation, or more precisely, European musical intonation, which is the foundation of a major tradition of European and, particularly, East Slavic pianism, known as “singing on the piano.”

Thus, the tradition of “singing on the piano”, which was initially introduced to Chinese piano art by A. Tatulyan and T. Kravchenko, is, on the one hand, the most significant stylistic reference point for Chinese teachers. However, due to the short-lived period of cultural exchange between the USSR and China, the long-term suspension of the development of piano art in the country caused by the dramatic events of the Cultural Revolution, this tradition was not able to take root in Chinese piano education at all levels, in the same way as it happened in the USSR and the post-Soviet countries. Furthermore, Chinese pianists naturally display distinctive performance intonation characteristics, which run counter to the image of the piano as a singing instrument. The elements causing this phenomenon include the Chinese language’s distinct intonation, which combines temporal syncopation and dynamic brokenness, with monosyllabic nature of the language and hieroglyphic writing.

At the same time, Chinese musicians and listeners are particularly responsive to melodic expressiveness which can be explained by pointing to the basic monodic nature of traditional Chinese musical culture. “Singing on the piano” as a symbol of a deep interpretation filled with inner spiritual content is reflected in the work of Chinese performers and in the imagination of their listeners in the image of the piano as, first of all, an instrument for revealing virtuosity, an instrument for delivering exquisite pleasure, which brings it closer to the image of a “salon piano”<sup>40</sup>, which was common in 19th-century Europe. Undoubtedly, a primary distinction between 19th-century salon virtuosos and current Chinese pianism appears to be the meticulous adherence to the author’s text, which was not seen a mandatory attribute of romantic performance. However, it should be noted that Chinese pianists’ repertoire includes piano transcriptions<sup>41</sup> of traditional and folk music as well

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<sup>39</sup> Ninety percent of classical Chinese is monosyllabic, according to philological studies.

<sup>40</sup> Examining the social and cultural aspects of the image of the piano, particularly that of the “salon piano,” Liu Fan believes that this phrase can be used as a metonymic variant of the concept of “salon pianism.” To support this claim, he cites the words of renowned 19th-century music critic and musicologist Wilhelm von Lenz, who refers to Friedrich Kalkbrenner as “Salon-Pianoforte Gioconda.” (Liu, 2017b, P. 224).

<sup>41</sup> Between the 1950s and the 1970s, transcription was the most popular *nytky* of Chinese piano music.

as revolutionary songs written in the style of “pentatonic romanticism.” These transcriptions, which are like virtuoso romantic transcriptions, allow the best Chinese pianists to fully express their desire for performing freedom.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> This is demonstrated, for instance, by Lang Lang's rendition of Sun Yiqiang's "Spring Dance".

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