

Analysis of Beethoven's Piano Sonata "Dawn" First Movement Emotional Characteristics and Performance Techniques

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Abstract

Ludwig van Beethoven is one of the most representative figures of the Vienna Classical School. The 21st "Dawn" Piano Sonata is one of the most emotionally rich and contrasting works. The work uses unique artistic creation techniques, clever compositional structure layout makes the piece has a unique artistic charm. In this paper, we will interpret the compositional style, compositional structure, emotional characteristics, performance methods, etc., and combine them with our own personal experience in playing practice to make a comprehensive discussion. In the study of Beethoven's "Dawn" sonata, combined with their own personal experience of playing practice to interpret, this work is the most passionate feelings of a movement, shaping a distinctive image of nature, creating a majestic momentum, expressing the delicate emotions, representing the dramatic image of the dawn is also the Beethoven contradictory feelings. The dramatic image representing the dawn is also an expression of Beethoven's conflicting emotions.

Keywords

Beethoven "Dawn" Sonata; Performance Technique; Emotional Characteristics.

1. Compositional Style

The first movement of "Dawn" is an energetic Allegro movement, C major, 4/4 beat sonata style, a total of 304 bars, the structure of the piece is divided into four parts: Presentation, Expansion, Reproduction and Finale. This is a solemn and majestic, extremely hallowed movement, it is well developed sonata form of the various parts, passion and wit to make the movement full of dynamism, a variety of rhythms give the work the inner meaning. (Zeng Wanling, 2019).

Beethoven not only strengthened the contrasting factors within the sonata structure, enlarged the conflicting and developing dynamics of the unfolding section, but also demanded a more dramatic musical effect for the piano sonata, enlarged the playing range of the piano, augmented the contrasting strength, and improved the skills of the fingers.

2. The Structure and Emotional Analysis

The first movement of Beethoven's "Dawn" Sonata is in sonata form, which is divided into three parts: Presentation, Expansion and Repetition.

2.1. Presentation

Presentation section is mainly composed of four parts: the main part, the connecting part, the secondary part and the end part. The task of the sonata presentation section is to present the two most contrasting musical themes, which are the most important musical images and contents of the whole piece. (Situ Xiaoxi, 2020)

The presentation section initially uses a tightly performed homophonic repetition, with a dry string of notes in the urgent atmosphere created by the two bars. Toward the end of the section,

the tempo picks up along with the intensity, giving the piece a broader audiovisual feel and creating an atmosphere of pre-dawn tension. Afterwards, the overall range turns from high to low, and the sound gradually weakens, returning to the calm and peaceful "dawn".

2.2. Expansion

In comparison with the Exposition section, the range of intensity is more dramatic. The rich and varied phrases add a lot of jumping colors to the unfolding section, just like a beautiful butterfly dancing. Next, the triple tones with a wide range of undulations create a joyful scene for the unfolding section, as if the river is tinkling and running.

2.3. Reproduction

The emergence of the reproduction section in a different key makes the theme of this part take on a new color, and the appearance of new material greatly enriches the original theme, making the tone of the whole theme brighter and more passionate.

2.4. Coda

The coda is based on the original unfolding section, and the mood and developmental techniques are expanded many times over. The continuous upward scale brings the whole piece to a climax and perfectly illustrates the power of nature that the author has given to the Dawn Sonata.

The first movement of the Dawn sonata is a unique sonata movement in that it develops the various parts of the sonata to their fullest potential, infusing the movement with passion and intelligence, and the pulsation of the work connects these varied rhythms, bringing a richness of meaning to the work. (Han Bingyu,2023). As a whole, the first movement is the overall emotion belongs to the solemn and majestic, there is the performance of the natural scenery at dawn, but also the darkness before the dawn, it sets the tone for the emotion of the work.

3. Performance Technique

In the first movement, Beethoven tried to use chords and repeated vibrato, which were rarely used at that time, as well as some decomposed octave jumps, and also let the music cross a range of more than five octaves. (Guo Wei,Xuan Yan. 2023)

The last eighth note of the right hand is the gentle end of the phrase, and the eighth note of measure 31 conceals a diatonic quarter-note melodic line in the progression of the eighth note, which shows a slight imitation between the high and low voices, with a clear break. The sub-theme (bars 35-50): the sub-theme appears in the upper alto key of E major with a clear melodic sense. The tempo cannot be slowed down, and the music moves from eighth notes to calm second and quarter notes, creating a sharp contrast with the main theme. The strings are played without interruption, and this theme is a repetition of the variations, with a half termination and a full termination. 74 bars of the second ending theme begin, and the end of the presentation section is changed to a minor key, and these scale-type sixteenth notes should be very even and light, and the chordal weave in the left hand should be moved to play them out.

Expanded section (bars 92-157): first, the motif of the main theme in the soprano voice is compressed, with frequent tonal changes and a reduced melody, and the sixteenth notes of the left hand should be played very evenly and consistently. bar 113 expands the second part of the sub-theme, which is a kind of extension of the development, and is based on the phrases of the sub-theme, which are written in wavy triplets, with due attention to the expression of the phrases and the proper pedaling of the pedals. Pay full attention to the expression of the phrases and to the proper pedaling of the pedal.

The recapitulation (bars 158-247): the notes on the presentation apply to the recapitulation as well. 198 bars of the sub-theme in the key of A major is a repetition of the variation. These broad

chords are to be played very softly, and the highest notes of the chords are to be distinct and clear.

According to the elaboration and analysis of these three parts, the following aspects should be done well in order to play the tune itself.

3.1. Handle diversified Rhythms

There are many rhythmic variations in this movement, but they are relatively regular. All of the varied rhythms must be harmonized organically in the case of a single beat. This requires the player to practice slowly, to clarify the timing and relationship of the various rhythms, and to complete them at a uniform tempo. This is a slow to fast process. The entire movement does not use *mf*, *mp* similar strength symbols, the music is very big ups and downs. *ff*, *sf* this kind of strong play can be found everywhere, it is required to have a large enough volume, but by no means a hard knock, with the strength of the shoulders, or even the strength of the whole body, using the relaxation of the downward send, but the hand frame, fingertips should have a strong support, play out the full and elástica timbre.

3.2. Variation of Strength

It is the vibrant melody that makes the lines of the whole movement obvious and sharp. In this movement, *PP* appears 20 times, *p* 31 times, *fp* 6 times, *f* 21 times, *ff* 7 times, and *sf* 35 times. Immediately after a period of calm (*P*), the music grows more and more tense until a loud octave shout reaches a crescendo of sharp sounds in the upper register. The full movement utilizes *pp* and *P* in many places, suggesting the coming of dawn. It contains many subtle changes of crescendo and diminuendo. To express the strength of these expressions, you should first have a calm heart, i.e., visualize the sound effects of the fingers, and only music played with the heart is music with vitality. With this inner feeling, you can find the appropriate elástica technique according to the different themes and rhythms, so that you can express the music better.

3.3. Tone Control

In Beethoven's music, there are a lot of symphonic elements in it, so the association of the piano works is not only limited to the piano as an instrument, but also sometimes imitates the timbre of a certain instrument in the symphony (Bai Yuqi, 2019). In the main theme, the left and right hands play intervals of thirds and fifths, starting from the *PP*, and should also emphasize the soprano voice of the right hand. In the secondary theme, the palm of the hand and the fingertips should be kept under some tension, and the chords should be sent downward by using the keys. While keeping the keys neat and the inner voices unified, shift the center of gravity to the little finger to emphasize the melodic voice. In addition to this, the control of the left hand tone is also very important. Such as the main theme, the interval of the left hand is a kind of dark accompaniment, showing the darkness before the dawn is coming, then the tone of the left hand should be controlled within the *PP*, requiring the fingertips to touch the keys gently, giving a kind of hazy feeling. By the 43rd measure of the subpart, the theme is in the soprano voice of the left hand, and is also present in the triplet progression of the soprano voice of the right hand. With the palm of the left hand slightly taut and the fingers pressed against the keys, send each chord downward with force, slightly favoring the soprano voice, i.e., the left thumb, in order to emphasize the melody, while the triplets in the right hand should not be too prominent, so as not to confuse the melody. In order to do this kind of tone control, the player must have good finger control as well as the ability to hear and recognize by ear.

4. Conclusion

We learned that Beethoven his life created a large number of excellent works, all of which have a very important influence on the world of music, leaving a valuable treasure for future

generations, it is worthwhile for us to learn, carry forward and innovate, and he has brought us valuable artistic value. Through the study of this most representative work, we have a more comprehensive understanding of the interpretation techniques of Beethoven's sonatas, and through this thesis more let us feel Beethoven's contribution to the piano playing techniques as well as the artistic value of the music behind the difficult techniques.

References

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