

Shande Ding: An Examination of His Compositional Style and Influences
from Western Composers

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to uncover connections between Chinese composer Shande Ding and Western composers, as found in the development of Ding's compositional style.

Ding's solo piano pieces are representative of his overall stylistic tendencies. As an innovative composer, Ding's experiments in combining various and bold musical materials with Chinese traditional styles became the model for contemporary Chinese composers and those of the next generation.

There is little research, and few recordings of Ding's work available in the United States. Most of the research remains in China, including his biography, styles, the analyses of specific pieces, etc. To date, Yuefang Liu has contributed the only dissertation on the merging of Eastern and Western Music Cultures that mentions Shande Ding, and it cites only Ding's early piano works. Some articles have suggested that Ding may have been influenced by western composers, but there is no actual exploration of the proposition. This paper will offer some pedagogical suggestions by dividing Ding's solo piano works into different levels of difficulty, along with tips on performance and teaching approaches. Both the connection between piano works of Western composers and Shande Ding, and Ding's resultant compositional style, will be explored. It is hoped that the project will expand further interest in Ding's solo piano works.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I. Brief History of Keyboard Music in China

While China is a country with a very long history, Western music and instruments were not introduced until the last half of the 19th century. In 1840, China was forced to open up to Western powers following the Opium War, who then influenced the Chinese economy and politics. The first known keyboard instrument in China was a harpsichord, sent by Matteo Ricci as a gift to the Emperor Xi Kang of the Qing Dynasty.¹ Unavailable to the common people, the instrument remained secluded as part of the Emperor's collection until it became damaged and eventually lost during the 19th century war years.² Meanwhile, Western missionaries brought medical and educational services to China. By the close of the century, many churches had been established that were equipped with the harmoniums to lead congregational singing. There were also church-sponsored schools that offered music study, and eventually piano lessons.³

Under the leadership of Yat-sen Sun, all Western thoughts were accepted in China by the beginning of the 20th century, leading to further westernization. A great number of Chinese students went to Japan to study western music, returning with first-hand knowledge of both music and instruments. Others studied in the United States and European countries. Together they formed the music pioneers of China. Among them was You-mei Xiao, who studied piano, pedagogy and voice in Japan, later taking on piano,

¹ Yulu Gu, *The Past and the Present of Catholicism in China* (Shanghai: Academy of Social Science Press, 1989), 4-9.

² Youmei Xiao, "The Introduction of Keyboard Instruments into China," *Lin Zhong* (June 1939): 25.

³ *Ibid.*, 26.

theory, and composition in Germany where he earned a Ph.D. at the Leipzig Conservatory. Upon returning to China, Xiao obtained permission to establish the National Conservatory in Shanghai (1927), which was the first Chinese institute offering professional training in composition and instrumental studies. Courses were based on Western musical systems, including “music history, theory, harmony, counterpoint, orchestration, music appreciation and Chinese traditional instruments and literature.”⁴ All of the faculty members Xiao recruited in the 1930s were either Chinese musicians who had studied abroad, or European musicians who escaped from the Russian Revolution and Nazi persecution. Boris Zakharov became head of the piano department training many future concert pianists and piano teachers. Among his students was Shande Ding.

The popularity of the piano increased, as Chinese musicians experimented in the composition of new works combining Western styles with Chinese national idioms. Youmei Xiao, Yuanren Zhao and Zi Huang were the first generation of Chinese composers who created piano works fusing Western harmonic languages with Chinese pentatonic scales. Students of the National Conservatory who took composition, including Luting He and Shande Ding, also contributed to the pool of original Chinese piano works. *Cowherd's Flute*, composed by Luting He, won first prize in the 1934 Shanghai International Music Competition for Piano Music in Chinese Character, sponsored by Alexander Tcherepnin.⁵ With the efforts of Tcherepnin, this work along with other award-winning pieces constituted the first Chinese piano pieces to be heard in

⁴ Rongsheng Wang, “A Study of Five Chinese Piano Pieces with A Review of the Introduction and Development of the Piano in China” (D.M.A. diss., Ball State University, 1995), 30.

⁵ Ibid., 4.

countries of the West.⁶ Shande Ding’s piano compositions cover varied musical genres (Table 1), combining traditional Chinese elements with bolder Western harmonic languages he learned in France. The output of He and Ding set the pace for the next generation of Chinese composers wishing to successfully combine Western and Chinese traditional skills. After the founding of the People’s Republic of China (1949), more conservatories and music schools were established. All included European and Chinese musicians, similar to the National Conservatory.

Table 1. Musical Genres in Ding’s Piano Works.

Year of Composition	Names of Piano Works	Opus No.	Genres
1945	<i>Spring Trip</i>	Op. 1	Suite
1946	<i>Piano Sonata in E Major</i>	Op. 2	Sonata
1948	<i>Three Preludes</i>	Op. 3	Prelude
	<i>Variations on a Theme of Chinese Folk Songs</i>	Op. 4	Variation
1950	<i>Xinjiang Dance No.1</i>	Op. 6	Dance
1953	<i>Happy Holidays</i>	Op. 9	Suite
1955	<i>Xinjiang Dance No.2</i>	Op. 11	Dance
1958	<i>Toccata</i>	Op. 13	Toccata
1984	<i>Piano Trio in C Major</i>	Op. 21	Chamber Music
	<i>Piano Concerto in B-flat Major</i>	Op. 23	Concerto
1987	<i>Eight Piano Pieces for Children</i>	Op. 28	Character Piece
1988	<i>Four Little Preludes and Fugues</i>	Op. 29	Prelude and Fugue
	<i>Sixteen Easy Etudes</i>	Op. 31	Etude
	<i>Sonatina</i>	Op. 32	Sonatina
	<i>Rondo</i>	Op. 33	Rondo
1989	<i>Six Preludes</i>	Op. 34	Prelude
1989	<i>Scherzo</i>	Op. 35	Scherzo
1992	<i>Three Pieces on Chinese Folk Songs</i>	Op. 36	Arrangement

⁶ Keli Xu, “Piano Teaching in China during the Twentieth Century” (D.M.A. diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2001), 82.

During the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) music institutes were forbidden to teach Western music and instruments, and composers were only permitted to compose music which praised the country and pleased the Communist Party. All composed piano pieces were thereby arrangements of pre-existing traditional Chinese music. The piano concerto *Yellow River*, transcribed from Xinghai Xian’s cantata of the same title (1939) in the late 1960s by pianist Chengzong Yin in collaboration with five other Chinese composers, is probably the most famous work of the period. When the Revolution ended and restrictions were lifted, a number of Western musicians began visiting Chinese conservatories to conduct master classes and share their research with Chinese music educators. Composers became bolder in trying out new techniques, styles and sonorities. In 1978, the first “Shanghai International Music Competition for Composition and Performances in Chinese Style” was a milestone in the promotion and development of Chinese compositions mixing various styles. With the “open door” policy, more Chinese composers went abroad for study, and some captured international awards. Among these were Dun Tan, Long Zhou and Xiaogang Ye. Currently Chinese piano music is heard and recognized around the world, and Chinese pianists are winning top prizes in international competitions.

II. Shande Ding: Pianist, Composer, Educator, Theorist

Shande Ding (1911–1995) is a prominent Chinese pianist, composer, educator, and theorist. He was born in 1911 in Kunshan, a place famous for a version of Chinese opera known as Kun Opera. At the age of four, Ding developed a passion for music after hearing the rhythmic sound of chanting and Chinese wooden bell during a religious rite.

He first learned to play drums and gongs but wanted to play more instruments as his interest in music grew.⁷ Among these instruments was the pipa. He gained his preliminary knowledge of pipa playing from a family member and mastered basic playing skills under Bushan Zhang, (a famous Pingtan artist). Ding observed Zhang's extraordinary fingering skills and imitated his methodology in his own playing.

At the age of seventeen, Ding entered the National Conservatory and majored in pipa with piano as his minor. Despite a lack of experience in piano playing, Ding found himself sufficiently adept thanks to his diligence and flexible fingers that were well trained from pipa playing. The realization that his experience and skills in pipa could be naturally transferred to the piano helped his decision to pursue higher goals in piano. During his second year in the Conservatory Ding switched his major to piano, becoming a student of Boris Zakharov, a Russian pianist who had taught at the St. Petersburg Conservatory. With six years of study under Zakharov's strict instruction, Ding's performing skills improved tremendously, and he earned the highest degree in piano. Ding held his graduation recital in 1935, becoming the first Chinese pianist to play a solo piano recital in China. The repertoire covered mostly Western music with works by Beethoven, Debussy, Weber, Grieg, Liszt, and Tchaikovsky, in addition to two works by Chinese composer Luting He. This recital marked the first time that a Chinese composer's piano works had ever been presented publicly.⁸

Ding is a significant contributor to Chinese music education. Upon his graduation from the National Conservatory in 1935, he was appointed to teach piano and pipa in the

⁷ Penghai Dai, *A Musical Chronicle of Shande Ding* (Beijing: Central Conservatory of Music, 1993), 6–8, translated by the author.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 34–35.

music department at Hebei Women's Normal University, Tianjin. While there he made great efforts to popularize the piano and Chinese traditional music through encouraging his students to perform on various occasions. The outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937, however, abruptly interrupted Ding's early career and prevented him from returning to Tianjin. At the proposal of two of his friends, Ding co-founded a music school in Shanghai where he taught piano for eight years.

Apart from instrumental study at the National Conservatory, Ding had also learned basic compositional skills under Zi Huang's instruction. Huang recognized and praised Ding's potential in composition. So, following his first solo piano recital Ding decided to dedicate his career to composition and create more Chinese piano works. In 1941 he got the opportunity to study composition with Wolfgang Fraenkel, who had been a student of Arnold Schönberg. During five years of study with Fraenkel, Ding composed *Children's Piano Study*, a piano method book for beginners containing approximately fifty small piano pieces.⁹ It is his first published work. In 1945 he also wrote his first two solo piano works, *Spring Trip*, Op. 1 and *Piano Sonata in E Major*, Op. 2. Two years later, he went to the Paris Conservatory for advanced study. One of his teachers, Tony Aubin, observed that Ding's composition was old-fashioned, advising him to adopt new compositional skills. Aubin also required a stronger understanding of counterpoint and fugue. Under the tutelage of Aubin and other teachers, Ding composed *Three Preludes*, Op. 3 and *Variations on a Theme of Chinese Folks Songs*, Op. 4, both drawing inspiration from French impressionistic music. His final graduation project is a symphonic suite, *New*

⁹ Ibid., 49.

China, Op. 7, inspired by immense excitement for the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949.¹⁰

In 1949, Ding was appointed to the faculty of the Shanghai Conservatory where he taught counterpoint, fugue, orchestration, and composition. He was also able to continue his composition career, and, in the earliest years following his return to China, Ding’s works cover various genres, including solo piano pieces, art songs, symphonies and a choral work. The symphony, *Long March*, Op. 16, is among the most recognized Chinese works in the world (A recording of the work was ranked among the world’s top 15 best sellers in 1986).¹¹ From 1962 to 1976, Ding did not compose anything due to the impact of the Cultural Revolution. When the Revolution was over, Ding became productive again as the restrictions on artistic creation were lifted. Over half of his works were composed from 1977 to 1995. While Ding composed only thirty-six works in total, they cover many musical genres with the exception of opera (Table 2). His compositions set an example for future generations of Chinese composers by emphasizing Chinese national characteristics and innovation.

Table 2. Ding’s Writing in Each Period.

Years	Opus No.	Musical Genres
1945-1946 (Before studying in Paris)	Op. 1-2	Piano works
1947-1949 (In Paris)	Op. 4-5 & Op. 7	Piano and Orchestral works
1950-1961 (Since the founding of People’s Republic of China)	Op. 6 & Op. 8-17	Piano, Vocal, Choral, and Orchestral works (Mainly Vocal works)
1977-1992 (Since the Cultural Revolution)	Op.18-36	Piano, Vocal, Orchestral, and Chamber works (Mainly Piano works)

¹⁰ Ibid., 57–64.

¹¹ Ibid., 145–146.

During Ding's teaching tenure he nurtured many outstanding pianists and composers, including Guangren Zhou, Zhongrong Luo, and Xiaosheng Zhao, all of whom are still active and influential in China. Ding also kept up with the music trends of his time by participating in music festivals, hosting musicians from different countries, and accepting invitations as competition adjudicator (e.g., the Chopin, Schumann, Queen Elizabeth, and Leeds international piano competitions).

As an educator, Shande Ding made a significant contribution by influencing generations of Chinese musicians and working to improve the quality of Chinese music. As a theorist, following his first article *Thoughts on Chinese Music* published in 1934 while still a National Conservatory student, he proceeded to publish more than a hundred articles, most of which have been compiled into *Collections of Shande Ding's Treatises* by Penghai Dai. He also published theoretical books and treatises covering compositional techniques. Among them was *Research on Compositional Skills*, the first Chinese compositional treatise based on the author's own personal experience of teaching and compositional practice.¹² Ding shared his perspectives with Chinese musicians and educators by analyzing the development of Chinese music, performance issues, compositional techniques, and offering suggestions for the improvement of music education in elementary and middle schools.

¹² Ibid., 3.

CHAPTER 2

CHARACTERISTICS OF DING'S SOLO PIANO WORKS

Shande Ding composed thirty-six works during his life: sixteen solo piano pieces, nine folk songs, five chamber works, four symphonies, one choral work, and one piano concerto. The proportion of piano works comprise his largest output, as would be expected from a pianist who studied composition for the expressed purpose of providing more Chinese piano works for pianists to play. Perhaps the solo piano works best represent Ding's compositional characteristics, with their mixture of diverse genres (Table 1) and varying compositional techniques.

I. Programmatic Music

The majority of Ding's works are programmatic, with titles such as *New China*, *Long March* (a symphony), and *Happy Holidays* (a piano suite). Themes of Ding's solo piano works include the war (*Spring Trip*, Op. 1), children (*Happy Holidays*, Op. 9), and liberty (*Xinjiang Dance No. 1*, Op. 6). *Spring Trip* consists of four nature scenes, including *In the Boat* and *On the Shore*. Each scene presents a metaphor for different emotional changes from the Second Sino-Japanese War. The children's suite *Happy Holidays* depicts five activities, including *Skipping* and *Hide and Seek*. *Xinjiang Dance No. 1* describes the joy and happiness in life after being liberated.

Ding's innovation also reached non-programmatic genres, such as the toccata and prelude and fugue. His *Four Little Preludes and Fugues*, Op. 29, for example, comes with titles describing the sentiments of *Sorrow* and *Joy*, among others. He believed "music is the art of expressing people's sentiment and social life. Composition is a

creativity. The purpose of it is to compose works that can express people's sentiment and social life."¹³ Even in Ding's non-programmatic pieces, the musical content is intended to relate to people's sentiment and social life.

II. Melodic, Harmonic and Formal Aspects

1. Melody

The melodies used in a majority of Ding's solo piano works are derived from Chinese folk songs. For example, those of the first and third pieces in *Three Preludes*, Op. 3 are from the Shanbei folk song, Xintianyou, and a Kun opera, Yuzanji.¹⁴ Other melodies were composed originally by Ding himself, such as those found in the *Piano Sonata in E Major*, Op. 2, and *Happy Holidays*, Op. 9. Adopting folk tunes enhances Chinese tradition and popularizes the development of piano music, which in turn builds resonance with listeners.

Melodic sequences of various types, including rhythmic, modified, tonal, and real are extensively applied in Ding's solo piano works (see Ex. 1a, b, c, and d). In Example 1(a), the second and third segments repeat the rhythm of the first, a pair of eighth notes followed by three quarter notes; In Example 1(b), the second segment is embellished by adding new notes and changing rhythm; Example 1(c) and (d) exemplify the difference between tonal and real sequence. Tonal sequence refers to diatonic transposition, resulting in varying the quality of the intervals in the first segment. For instance, in

¹³ Shande Ding, "Research on Compositional Skills No. 8," *Art of Music*, no. 4 (1987): 51, <https://doi.org/10.19359/j.cn31-1004/j.1987.04.015>, translated by the author.

¹⁴ Yiping Qian, *Shande Ding's Composition: Review and Analysis* (Shanghai: Literature and Art Publishing House, 1986), 24–25, translated by the author.

Example 1(c), pitches shown in the second segment are transposed a third up from the first segment and both segments are in the E major scale. Major second (E-F#) in m. 5 becomes a minor second (G#-A) in m. 11. Minor third (G#-B) in m. 6 changes to major third (B-D#). Minor second (F#-G) in mm. 2-3 shifts to major second (B-C#) in mm. 12-13. On the contrary, the real sequence remains the same quality of intervals and it can cause a change of tonality. In Ding's solo piano works, real sequences mostly are applied in atonal pieces, such as *Four Little Preludes and Fugues*, Op. 29. In Dings' prelude *Sorrow*, Example 1(d), the second segment is transposed a minor third up from the first segment.

Rhythmic sequence:

Example 1(a). Ding *Happy Holidays*, Op. 9, No. 4, *Hide and Seek*, mm. 1-3.¹⁵

Modified sequence:

¹⁵ Yiping Qian, *Piano Works of Shande Ding* (Shanghai: Shanghai Music Publishing House, 1997), 52. All examples from the Shande Ding's solo piano works are taken from this edition.

1st segment

2nd segment

Example 1(b). Ding *Happy Holidays*, Op. 9, No. 3, *Skipping*, mm. 15-24.

Tonal sequence:

1st segment

2nd segment

13

Example 1(c). Ding *Xinjiang Dance No. 2*, Op. 11, mm. 5-16.

Real sequence:

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The first staff, starting at measure 12, features a melody in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. A red box labeled "1st segment" highlights measures 13-15. The dynamics are marked *p* and *cresc.*. The second staff, starting at measure 17, continues the melody and bass line. A red box labeled "2nd segment" highlights measures 17-19. The dynamics are marked *mf* and *f*.

Example 1(d). Ding *Four Little Preludes and Fugues*, Op. 29, No. 2, *Sorrow*, mm. 12-21.

Repetitive motives or phrases are another feature of Ding's melodic writing. In his *Xinjiang Dance No. 1*, Op. 6, the first theme, a four-bar melody shown in mm. 7-10 (Ex. 2), is stated four times in section A by alternately changing octaves. In order to avoid tediousness, Ding used a group of five eighth notes as an accompaniment pattern to establish different downbeats for each repetition. Similar techniques can also be found in Ding's *Six Preludes*, Op. 34, No. 3.

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The first staff, starting at measure 5, features a melody in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. A red box labeled "First Theme" highlights measures 7-10. The dynamics are marked *p* and *cresc.*. The second staff, starting at measure 9, continues the melody and bass line. The dynamics are marked *mf* and *mp*.

Example 2. Ding *Xinjiang Dance No. 1*, Op. 6, mm. 5-11.

2. Tonality

The pentatonic scale is employed extensively in Ding's solo piano works, as is the case with many other Chinese composers. In the third piece of *Three Preludes*, Op. 3, mm. 1-4 (Ex. 3), a right-hand pentatonic scale melody (Gb, Ab, Bb, Db, Eb) is accompanied by variable broken chords.

Allegretto con anima ♩ = 88

mp

3

Example 3. Ding *Three Preludes*, Op. 3, No. 3, mm. 1-4.

Sometimes the pentatonic scales are alternated between the hands. Example 4 shows the scale C, D, E, G, A, first in the right hand (m. 1) and then in the left (mm. 2-3). The exchange suggests a conversation between two people.

Lento ♩ = 50

mp *posato* *mf*

Example 4. Ding *Four Little Preludes and Fugues*, Op. 29, No. 1, *Meditation*, mm. 1-4.

Chromaticism is another device Ding used widely in his solo piano works, sometimes making temporary appearances as in *Spring Trip*, Op. 1, No. 4 (Ex. 5). It is the second chromatic scale in this piece.

Example 5. Ding *Spring Trip*, Op. 1, No. 4, mm. 37-39.

In *Six Preludes*, Op. 34, No. 5 (Ex. 6a), a short chromatic motive appears on the first two beats of each measure. In the B section, the motive alternates between the hands (Ex. 6b). A similar example is found in *Sixteen Easy Etudes*, Op. 31, No. 12.

Example 6(a). Ding *Six Preludes*, Op. 34, No. 5, mm. 1-3.

Example 6(b). Ding *Six Preludes*, Op. 34, No. 5, mm. 38-40.

Ding also liked to switch between parallel major and minor keys. In the second movement of *Piano Sonata in E Major* (Ex. 7), the key center stays in A major until the beginning of Section B, m. 17, when it changes to A minor.

13

AM: v_4^6/vi vi vi_3^4 I ii V7 I

Più mosso

17

Am: i V v_5^6 i

Example 7. Ding *Piano Sonata in E Major*, Op. 2, second movement, mm. 13-19.

The use of consecutive repetitive patterns is another tool with which Ding moves through the keys. Example 8 contains continuous sixteenth-note accompaniment patterns modulating down by thirds from A minor to F Major to Db Major. These alternations subtly depict changes of sentiment.

20

A minor F Major

23

Db Major

26

Db Major

Example 8. Ding *Piano Sonata in E Major*, Op. 2, second movement, mm. 20-28.

All of Ding's solo piano works published before 1987 are tonal, with clear key centers. After 1987, his piano pieces are largely atonal.

3. Harmony

To build a diversity of chordal structures, Ding utilized extended chords such as 9th, 11th, 13th, irregular chords structured with fourths or fifths, plus an extensive use of non-chord tones to create dissonant intervals. Major seconds, fourths and fifths are widely applied in Ding's compositions as part of the pentatonic scales representing Chinese traditional characteristics. Example 9 shows that major seconds as main melody intervals are applied frequently.

Andante cantabile
dolce espressivo

Example 9. Ding *Spring Trip*, Op. 1, No. 2, *In the Boat*, mm. 1-5.

Open fourths and fifths are prominent in the first eight measures of *Dragon Dance*, Op. 28, No. 8 (see Ex. 10).

Vivace ♩ = 200
f

Example 10. Ding *Eight Piano Pieces for Children*, Op. 28, No. 8, *Dragon Dance*, mm. 1-11.

In the second piece of *Three Preludes*, Op. 3, the fifth is the main interval applied on every beat except in the last three measures. Continuous parallel fifths as melody are written in the bass staff in mm. 6-8. (Ex. 11). A similar example is found in *Playing Games*, Op. 28, No. 2, where consecutive fourths are applied on both staves (Ex. 12).

Example 11. Ding *Three Preludes*, Op. 3, No. 2, mm. 5-8.

Example 12. Ding *Eight Piano Pieces for Children*, Op. 28, No. 2, *Playing Games*, mm. 1-7.

Ding sometimes employed extended chords, such as the last bar in *Dragon Dance* in *Eight Piano Pieces for Children*, Op. 28 where an F#13th chord omits the 7th and 11th (Ex. 13). *Dragon Dance* also has irregular chords structured as alternating fourths and fifths. In Example 10, quartal harmonies (build of perfect fourths) appear in the first 5 measures—BEA, CF#B and DGC. From measures 6 to 8, “mixed chords” (the combination of perfect fourths and augmented fifths) and quartal harmonies alternate. We can also call these quartal harmonies and “mixed chords” 9th and 11th chords with missing thirds and sevenths.



Example 13. Ding *Eight Piano Pieces for Children*, Op. 28, No. 8, *Dragon Dance*, m. 135.

The use of non-chord tones can create dissonant intervals, such as seconds, sevenths and tritones. The first three measures in the first movement of *Piano Sonata in E Major*, Op. 2 (Ex. 14) shows the center chord in the music is E major tonic chord. F# and C# (2nd and 6th above E) shown as melody and accompaniment can be treated as two non-chord tones added in E major chord, creating major seconds. However, this example can be analyzed in other ways. C# and F# can be considered as notes from E major pentatonic scale, E-F#-G#-B-C#. Or, based on the feature of Ding's compositional techniques, combining pentatonic scales and western harmonic system together, both C# and F# are part of notes from E major pentatonic scale (written on the treble staff) and E major 9th chord by adding additional 6th note, C#.



Example 14. Ding *Piano Sonata in E Major*, Op. 2, first movement, mm. 1-3.

Dissonant chords are sometimes applied by Ding at the end of a piece, such as the first piece of *Three Preludes*, Op. 3 (Ex. 15) in which two chords (circled in red) repeat continuously until the F# diminished triad closes the piece. The effect conveyed is one of anxiety.

The image shows a musical score for Example 15, consisting of two staves. The top staff is marked '8va' and the bottom staff is marked 'accel.', 'mp rit.', and 'p'. Two chords in the top staff are circled in red and labeled 'tritone'. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Example 15. Ding *Three Preludes*, Op. 3, No. 1, mm. 4-10.

4. Meter and Rhythm

Ding applied both simple and compound meters in his solo piano works, including 4/4 and 6/8 and less common meters such as 4/2 and 24/8. There are often frequent meter changes. An example is the third piece, *Skipping*, from Ding's *Happy Holiday*, Op. 9, in which the original 4/8 becomes 5/8 in m. 3, and then alternates for ten measures until a 2/4 appears in m. 15. The employment of such meters shows Ding's interest in use of meter experimental. In the third piece of *Three Preludes*, Op. 3, 4/2 and 24/8 are simultaneously employed on the treble and bass staves (Ex. 16a). In m.10, the meter changes to 24/8 and 4/2 until the original meters returns back in m. 15 (Ex. 16b). Then, both staves start to apply the same meter 24/8 in m. 19 and ends in 4/2. Actually, they can

all be marked as 4/4 with Lento tempo, which is more acceptable notation in common practice. However, if he notated 4/4, the grouping of left-hand notes would become sextuplets, which is not what Ding intended. He wanted to create an even sound with two notes as one group. Applying different meters on each staff is cohesive with the two different moods that Ding wanted to express: longing, and troubled.



Example 16(a). Ding *Three Preludes*, Op. 3, No. 3, m. 1.



Example 16(b). Ding *Three Preludes*, Op. 3, No. 3, m. 10-11.

Rhythms play an important role for the setting of diverse moods and characters in a composition. From Ding’s article, *Research on Compositional Skills*, he wrote “in order to make the music sound interesting, it is better to keep the rhythm frequently changed. Keeping the same rhythmic pattern too long will cause the music to sound too monotonous.”¹⁶ Repetitive melodies occur frequently in Ding’s works, and he used diverse rhythmic patterns in the accompaniment to give the music different characters

¹⁶ Shande Ding, “Research on Compositional Skills No. 4,” *Art of Music*, no. 4 (1986): 41, [https:// doi.org /10.19359/j.cn31-1004/j.1986.04.005](https://doi.org/10.19359/j.cn31-1004/j.1986.04.005), translated by the author.

and richer sounds. In Ding's *Xinjiang Dance No. 1*, Op. 6, the melody in the B section is stated four times while accompanied by three different rhythmic patterns. Ding also believed rhythmic patterns should be designed to serve the music content.¹⁷ *Catching Butterfly* in Children's suite, *Happy Holidays*, Op. 9 is a typical example. It uses continuous eighth notes cast in Presto to set the basic pace. To depict a lively image, Ding added accents on specific notes to create patterns and highlight certain moments of the children's chase.

Triplets are among Ding's most commonly used rhythmic patterns in his solo piano works. Some are seen in both melody and accompaniment, such as the first theme group in the first movement of *Piano Sonata in E Major*, Op. 2 (Ex. 14). Others are extensively applied as accompaniment patterns, such as *In the Boat* from the *Spring Trip*, Op. 1 (Ex. 9).

Additional rhythmic patterns common in Ding's piano works involve syncopation and six-note groups. The third movement of *Piano Sonata in E Major*, Op. 2 has both of these patterns (see Ex. 17a and b).



Example 17(a). Ding *Piano Sonata in E Major*, Op. 2, third movement, mm. 42-46.

¹⁷ Ibid., 40.

Example 17(b). Ding *Piano Sonata in E Major*, Op. 2, third movement, mm. 87-94.

5. Form and Texture

Since Ding's solo piano works cover so many musical genres, a variety of musical forms appear in his compositions, including sonata, variation and rondo. Ternary is Ding's preferred form, used in the majority of his works (e.g., *To the Suburbs* and *Hide and Seek* from *Happy Holidays*, Op. 9).

Homophonic texture and repetitive patterns appear in most of Ding's solo piano works. He also applied polyphonic textures, such as section B in *Xinjiang Dance No.1*, Op. 6 (Ex. 18). The use of different articulations and dissonant intervals (major and minor seconds) deliver the conflicted mood between joy and worry. Ding also wrote fugues, such as *Four Little Preludes and Fugues*, Op. 29.

The image shows a piano score for 'Ding Xinjiang Dance No. 1, Op. 6, mm. 21-26'. The score is written for piano and consists of two systems of staves. The first system covers measures 21-23, and the second system covers measures 24-26. The music is in 2/4 time and features a variety of dynamics and articulation. In measures 21-23, the right hand has a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, while the left hand has a bass line with quarter and eighth notes. Dynamics range from fortissimo (ff) to piano (p). In measures 24-26, the right hand continues with a melodic line, and the left hand has a bass line with quarter and eighth notes. Dynamics range from mezzo-piano (mp) to piano (p). Red circles highlight specific melodic phrases in the right hand, and a red arrow points to a specific note in measure 22.

Example 18. Ding *Xinjiang Dance No. 1*, Op. 6, mm. 21-26.

The variety of elements in Ding's solo piano works serve the purposes of musical expression and national style. He set an example for other Chinese composers by exploring ways to combine western compositional techniques with Chinese national elements. This in turn creates works with both national and international appeal.

CHAPTER 3

CONNECTION WITH WESTERN COMPOSERS

I. Romantic

While studying composition with Zi Huang and Wolfgang Fraenkel, Shande Ding composed his first two solo piano works: *Spring Trip*, Op. 1 and *Piano Sonata in E Major*, Op. 2, considered to be the first suite and sonata for piano by a Chinese composer. Both pieces reflect a combination of Romantic compositional skills and Chinese traditional tunes based largely on pentatonic scales.

In his article *Why Chinese can Accept and Understand Chopin's Music*, Ding explored the reasons for Frédéric Chopin's success with the Chinese public. Chopin's spirit of patriotism resonates with Chinese, who, like Chopin, saw their country taken over by others. Piano works such as Chopin's *Etude in C Minor*, Op. 10, No. 12 ("*Revolutionary*") express the composer's grief and indignation over the invasion of his native Poland. Much of his music reflects his love and longing for the motherland (e.g., the Mazurkas). His music also expresses people's thoughts and feelings, successfully connecting with their experiences. In the words of Ding, "Chopin widely applied folk tunes and elements into his compositions, which not only keep the traditional characteristics, but also create the meaningful ideas with attractive and exclusive tunes."¹⁸

In the article, Ding noted similarities between his and Chopin's music. Both employ traditional folk tunes and elements reflecting national features. The themes from

¹⁸ Shande Ding, "Why Chinese can Accept and Understand Chopin's Music," in *Collections of Shande Ding's Treatises*, ed. Penghai Dai (Shanghai: Shanghai Conservatory of Music Press, 2006), 60–61, translated by the author.

some of their compositions express war and the drastic changes brought to people's lives by invasions. Their music resonates with human suffering.

Romantic piano works incorporate chromaticism, frequent harmonic changes, complex chords, modulation to remote keys, long and melodic phrases. In Ding's early piano solo pieces, the compositional skills he applied are inspired by western Romantic composers including Chopin and Schubert. The influence of both composers will be examined in several areas as listed below:

1. Accompaniment Patterns

Chopin's nocturnes usually have long, lyrical melodies accompanied by repeated or broken chords. In the first two movements of Ding's *Piano Sonata in E major*, Op. 2, similar accompaniment patterns are found. One example is the pattern for the first five measures of the first movement, resembling that of Chopin's *Nocturne in B Major*, Op. 9, No. 3 (Examples 19 and 20). In these examples, both composers used groups of three eighth notes that always begin with the same tone. In Chopin's piece, the second note is stressed by being written as a quarter note, while Ding did the same with the third note of each pattern. Accompaniment groups of six notes are common for Chopin (Ex. 19), beginning m. 6, and this is also found in Ding's compositions (Ex. 21).

Example 19. Chopin *Nocturne in B Major*, Op. 9, No. 3, mm. 1-8.¹⁹

Example 20. Ding *Piano Sonata in E Major*, Op. 2, first movement, mm. 1-7.

Example 21. Ding *Piano Sonata in E Major*, Op. 2, second movement, mm. 9-12.

¹⁹ Carl Mikuli, *Frédéric Chopin's Complete Works for the Piano, Vol. 4* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1894), 11.

Another accompaniment pattern Ding frequently exploited consists of one bass note or octave (chordal tone) followed by repeated intervals or chords. He applied this pattern consistently in the second movement of his *E Major Piano Sonata*, as shown in Example 22, mm. 23-28. Two groups of six sixteenth–notes with different harmonies appear in each measure. A similar pattern can be found in the middle section of Chopin’s *Nocturne in A-flat Major*, Op. 32, No. 2 (Ex. 23). Chopin began using this pattern at m. 27, contrasting with the previous accompaniment to help create a different mood. He changed the harmonic rhythm from every two beats to every beat in each measure (m. 29), which increases emotional intensity. In Example 20, Ding extended the length of repetitive chords from m. 6 to slow the harmonic rhythm based on this pattern.

Schubert was also fond of using repetitive patterns as accompaniment, appearing in most of his compositions and deemed one of his characteristics. The repetitive patterns shown in his works are in various forms. Single notes can be repeated without doublings or chords. Sometimes, Schubert also used tremolo marks to represent repetitive patterns, such as in the first *Impromptu*, Op. 90. At the beginning of the Trio of Op. 90, No. 4 (Ex. 24), Schubert used the same pattern as Chopin and Ding.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for piano accompaniment. The first system, starting at measure 23, shows a bass line with a repetitive pattern of chords and a treble line with a melodic line. A dynamic marking 'f' is present. The second system, starting at measure 26, continues the same pattern with a dynamic marking 'p'. The notation includes various accidentals and articulation marks.

Example 22. Ding *Piano Sonata in E Major*, Op. 2, second movement, mm. 23–28.

Example 23. Chopin *Nocturne in A-flat Major*, Op. 32, No. 2 mm. 23-29.²⁰

Example 24. Schubert *Impromptu*, Op. 90, No. 4, mm. 105-116.²¹

Alberti bass accompaniment is also utilized in Ding’s early compositions, such as the second theme of the first movement of his *Piano Sonata in E Major* (Ex. 25). The combination of Alberti bass and a lively melody sets a faster pace, contrasting with the first theme and depicting a joyful scene. Alberti bass is typically found in the Classic period, but also makes appearances in the Romantic. While Chopin rarely employed it,

²⁰ Theodor Kullak and Hans Bischoff, *Frédéric Chopin: Klavierwerke, Vol. 5* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1881), 36.

²¹ Julius Epstein, *Franz Schubert’s Werke, Serie XI* (Leipzi: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1888), 25.

Schubert made frequent use, especially in the first movements of his piano sonatas, for example, the first movement of *Piano Sonata in E Major*, D. 157 (Ex. 26).



Example 25. Ding *Piano Sonata in E Major*, Op. 2, first movement, mm. 28-30.



Example 26. Schubert *Piano Sonata in E Major*, D. 157, first movement, mm. 42-53.²²

2. Chromaticism

Chromaticism is frequently found in Chopin's works, such as the four Scherzos. Some chromaticism is represented in the motives, or in transition passages linking different sections. Other times it contributes to glorious and excited endings, such as the close of *Scherzo No. I*, Op. 20. Ding often adopted chromaticism at the very beginning of his compositions, such as *Dance of the Morning Breeze* in the *Spring Trip*, Op. 1 and *Piano Sonata in E Major*, Op. 2. In the first movement of his sonata, Example 27,

²² Julius Epstein, *Franz Schubert's Werke, Serie X* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1888), 3.

chromaticism in m. 46 provides a short link to ease the rhythmic patterns and create nice closure in m. 47.



Example 27. Ding *Piano Sonata in E Major*, Op. 2, first movement, mm. 45-47.

3. Mode Mixture and Modulation

In Schubert's *Ständchen*, D. 957 (Ex. 28), the perfect authentic cadence in m. 28 marks that the key has modulated from D minor to D Major. There is a mode mixture in m. 29. A G minor chord is borrowed from parallel minor key of D Major. In the second movement of the Ding's *Piano Sonata in E Major* (Ex. 29), he borrowed a motive from Schubert's *Ständchen* (mm. 28-30) seen on the last beat in m. 53, transposing perfect 5th up. Additionally, Ding used the same way to apply mode mixture in m. 54, D minor chord (iv instead of IV) in the key center, A Major.



Example 28. Schubert *Schwanengesang*, D. 957, No. 4, *Ständchen*, mm. 27-31.²³

²³ Eusebius Mandyczewski, *Franz Schubert's Werke, Serie XX: Sämtliche einstimmige Lieder und Gesänge* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1895), 149.

51

54 Transposing 5th up

Example 29. Ding *Piano Sonata in E Major*, Op. 2, second movement, mm. 51-56.

Ding's music modulates to remote-key area in the same manner as Romantic composers. Alternation of parallel keys is adopted by many composers. Example 30(a) and (b) are excerpts from Chopin's *Scherzo No. 3*, Op. 39. Both marked places share the same pattern but are written in different keys, E major and E minor. Shifting keys between parallel major and minor alters the mood and tone color of the music. This contrasting effect can also be seen in Ding's works. In the first movement of his *Piano Sonata in E Major*, for example, the first theme is in E major (Ex. 14). But instead of following classic sonata form, the key at the beginning of the development section is E minor (Ex. 31).

444

Meno mosso.

mf *sostenuto*

Example 30(a). Chopin *Scherzo No. 3*, Op. 39, mm. 444-454.²⁴

²⁴ Herrmann Scholtz, *Fr. Chopins Sämmtliche Pianoforte-Werke, Band II* (Leipzig: C.F. Peters, 1879), 370.

Example 30(b). Chopin *Scherzo No. 3*, Op. 39, mm. 483-495.

Example 31. Ding *Piano Sonata in E Major*, Op. 2, first movement, mm. 48-51.

II. Impressionistic

The music of Claude Debussy has impacted many other composers. “Ravel and Faurè inherited and developed Debussy’s compositional skills. Moreover, they also inherited Debussy’s compositional and aesthetic ideas, composing thematic works depicting nature scene, myth and religious stories.”²⁵ In Ding’s article *Discussion of Debussy’s Compositional Techniques and How to Simulate It*, Ding indicated that the majority of the music people played and analyzed when he was studying in Paris was composed by Debussy.²⁶

²⁵ Shande Ding, “Why Chinese can Accept and Understand Chopin’s Music,” in *Collections of Shande Ding’s Treatises*, ed. Penghai Dai (Shanghai: Shanghai Conservatory of Music Press, 2006), 90–91, translated by the author.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 93.

Debussy preferred pentatonic and whole-tone scales, creating modes and oriental melodies that are similar to Chinese music. His harmonic language and dynamic ranges are richly varied. He successfully described scenes and images through his many techniques. The works Ding composed in Paris (*Three Preludes*, Op. 3 and *Variations on a Theme of Chinese Folk Songs*, Op. 4) mostly follow Debussy's compositional and expressional techniques.

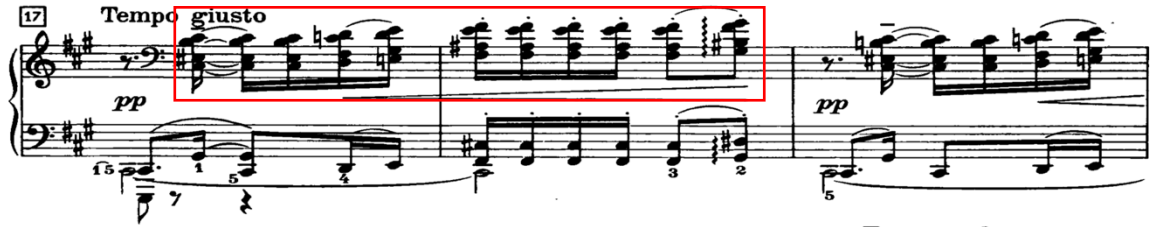
1. Parallelism

Parallel intervals and chords are common in Debussy's music. For example, parallel octaves appear in both hands in *Pagodes* (Ex. 32), while parallel dominant seventh chords are found in *La soirée dans Grenade* (Ex. 33). In Ding's second of *Three Preludes*, Ding's parallel fifths cover most of the piece, appearing both in the accompaniment (mm. 2-5) and melody (mm. 6-8) (see Ex. 34 and Ex. 11).

The image shows a musical score for Debussy's 'Pagodes' from the 'Estampes' collection. It consists of two systems of music, each with a treble and bass clef staff. The first system starts at measure 10 and ends at measure 12. The second system starts at measure 13 and ends at measure 15. The music features parallel octaves in both hands, with various dynamics like 'p' and 'Ped.' (pedal) markings. There are also some triplets and slurs indicated.

Example 32. Debussy *Estampes*, L. 100, *Pagodes*, mm. 10-15.²⁷

²⁷ Claude Debussy, *Piano Music 1888-1905* (New York: Dover Publications, 1974).



Example 33. Debussy *Estampes*, L. 100, *La soirée dans Grenade*, mm. 17-19.



Example 34. Ding *Three Preludes*, Op. 3, No. 2, mm. 1-6.

2. Pentatonic Scales and Church Modes

Not surprisingly, Ding used pentatonic scales throughout his works. As a national element, they are the basis for the majority of Chinese traditional folk songs. Under Debussy's influence, Ding also applied church modes in his compositions. A typical example is the first piece in *Three Preludes* (Ex. 35), where a Dorian mode on A appears throughout.



Example 35. Ding *Three Preludes*, Op. 3, No. 1, mm. 1-3.

3. Dissonant Intervals and Chords

With the use of church modes, dissonant intervals and chords are sometimes formed (e.g., tritone, minor 2nd and diminished chords). In Ding's Op. 3, No. 1, a chord in the second measure contains both a tritone and minor 2nd (Ex. 35). Although the minor 2nd resolves, the tritone does not, sustaining some of the intensity. This dissonant chord imitates the sound of striking gongs (common in Debussy's compositions, such as the open fifths in the bass at the beginning of *Pagodes*.) These two dissonant chords later form a repetitive pattern to extend the gong effect (see Ex. 15, mm. 4-7). Another minor 2nd appears in the last two measures of this prelude, G# and A in the treble, with G# acting as leading tone to the tonic. Surprisingly, in place of the concluding tonic chord is the first inversion of the F# diminished triad, which blurs the tonal center and depicts a worried mood (Ex. 36).



Example 36. Ding *Three Preludes*, Op. 3, No. 1, mm. 7-10.

4. Irregular Meters

Meter changes are common in Debussy's music. For example, 3/4 and 4/4 are alternately applied in *Danseuses de Delphes* (Ex. 37). Ding also changed meter frequently in his music, including the first two pieces of *Three Preludes*. In the initial four bars of the first prelude, for example, the time signature changes back and forth between 4/4 and 6/8 (Ex. 35).

The image shows a musical score for the first six measures of Debussy's *Prelude, Danseuses de Delphes*. The score is written for piano and consists of two systems. The first system (measures 1-3) is marked "doux et soutenu" and "p". The treble staff has a 3/4 time signature, and the bass staff has a 3/2 time signature. The second system (measures 4-6) is marked "pp". The treble staff has a 4/4 time signature, and the bass staff has a 3/2 time signature. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

Example 37. Debussy *Prelude, Danseuses de Delphes*, mm. 1-6.²⁸

Ding also mixed meters in the third piece of *Three Preludes*, which has 4/2 for the treble staff and 24/8 in the bass (Ex.16a). At m. 10 the hands reverse meters, before returning to the original arrangement at m. 15 (Ex. 16b). In m. 19, 24/8 appears in both treble and bass until m. 21, when the meters change to 4/2 to end the piece. Among Ding's solo piano works, this is the only example of simultaneous mixed meters. It indicates his willingness to experiment during this period in Paris.

²⁸ Claude Debussy, *Préludes, Livre I* (Paris: Durand et Cie., 1910), 1.

III. 20th Century

After 1949, Ding broadened and developed his compositional skills by applying the harmonic languages of 20th-century composers to create diversity. The solo piano works written between 1949 and 1966 remain tonal. For those composed after 1987, the tonal center becomes ambiguous and is replaced by atonality.

1. Scriabin

Melody:

The early works of both Ding and Scriabin are influenced by Chopin's compositional style, with an emphasis on creative melodic lines. Scriabin was fond of using intervals such as seconds, fourths and fifths as part of his melodies. These intervals form part of the pentatonic scale which Ding frequently applied in his compositions.

Examples 38 and 39 illustrate melodies from both composer's works with these intervals.

Musical score for Example 38, Scriabin's *Piano Sonata in F Minor, Op. 6, mm. 22-24*. The score is in F minor, 3/4 time, marked "Meno mosso" with a tempo of quarter note = 84. The melody in the right hand features several intervals highlighted with red boxes and labels: 2nd, 4th, and 5th. The bass line also features 4th intervals highlighted with red boxes and labels. The dynamics are marked "p" and "mp".

Example 38. Scriabin *Piano Sonata in F Minor, Op. 6, mm. 22-24*.²⁹

Musical score for Example 39, Ding's *Six Preludes, Op. 34, No. 1, mm. 12-15*. The score is in F minor, 3/4 time, marked "p" and "mp". The melody in the right hand features several intervals highlighted with red boxes and labels: 2nd, 4th, and 5th. The bass line also features 4th intervals highlighted with red boxes and labels.

Example 39. Ding *Six Preludes, Op. 34, No. 1, mm. 12-15*.

²⁹ Konstantin Igumnov and Yakov Milstein, *Polnoe Sobrane Sochinenii dlia Fortepiano, Vol. 1* (Moscow: Muzgiz, 1947), 3.

Harmony:

From Scriabin's early compositions, traditional chords built on thirds gradually lose their dominance and are replaced in his later works by mystic chords built of fourths. The six-note mystic chord consists of augmented, diminished, and perfect fourths between each pair of adjacent notes, for example, G C# F B E A. Mystic chords are utilized frequently in Scriabin's late works. Ding does not have mystic chords in his late compositions but uses three-note quartal harmonies in works like *Sixteen Etudes*, Op. 31, No. 11, and *Dragon Dance* from *Eight pieces for Children*, Op. 28. The etude is composed of nearly all three-note quartal harmonies, except for a few triads. In Example 40, melodic fourths alternate between the two hands to form three-note quartal harmonies built by stacking perfect fourths.



Example 40. Ding *Sixteen Etudes*, Op. 31, No. 11, mm. 1-5.

2. Bartók

Folk tunes:

Bartók used folk tunes and folkloric elements of Hungary, Romania, and other nations in his compositions, such as *Two Romanian Folk Dances* and *Three Hungarian Folk Tunes*. Typical of Chinese composers, Ding also used traditional folk tunes in his compositions, including the melodies of *Xinjiang Dance No. 1*, Op. 6. Xinjiang is an autonomous region of China that contains several ethnic groups, including the Uyghur,

Kazakhs, and Tibetans. Xinjiang people excel at dancing and singing. The themes of *Xinjiang Dance No. 1* are derived from a Uyghur folk song named *Song of the Carter*, which has been arranged into a famous Chinese folk song, *Girls from Dabancheng*.³⁰ Both composers' pieces contain the consistent rhythm and exotic tunes of dance music.

Dissonant Intervals:

In order to create varied sonorities, Ding used many dissonant intervals (seconds, sevenths, and tritones) after 1949. In *Xinjiang Dance No. 1*, the broken tritone (E–A#), minor 2nd (A#–B) and major 7th (B–A#) begin the piece (Ex. 41). Since the left hand maintains the same pattern, the broken minor 2nd shows in each measure until the first blocked minor 2nd (A#–B) in m. 19 (Ex. 42). In m. 20, the Eb–A tritone is added.

Throughout the piece, minor seconds appear in nearly every measure. The blocked intervals create a striking effect, imitating the sound of Xinjiang percussive instruments. Bartók was also fond of using dissonant intervals in his works, especially minor seconds and tritones. In his *Two Romanian Dances*, Op. 8a, these intervals are widely applied (Ex. 43).



Example 41. Ding *Xinjiang Dance No. 1*, Op. 6, mm. 1-3.

³⁰ Yunshu Peng, "Analysis of Shande Ding's Xinjiang Dance No.1," *Music Life*, no. 8 (2014): 76, translated by the author.



Example 42. Ding *Xinjiang Dance No. 1*, Op. 6, mm. 18–20.



Example 43: Bartók *Two Romanian Dances*, Op. 8a, No. 1, mm. 1-8.³¹

Repetitive Accompaniment:

Bartók often used repetitive intervals or chords as accompaniment. Example 43 shows an accompaniment of perfect fifths in the first six measures. Starting from m. 7, each interval adds the octave above the bass, becoming the new continuous pattern. The repetitive accompaniment in the second of *Two Romanian Dances* consists of two single notes an octave apart, with an acciaccatura creating minor seconds with the top note (Ex. 44). In Ding's *Xinjiang Dance No. 1*, the initial continuous accompaniment is a short motive of six notes (E–A#–B–A#–B–A#), changing at m. 7 to a group of five notes (E–B–E–D–A#) with a different note for the downbeat in each measure (Ex. 45).

³¹ Béla Bartók, *Two Romanian Dances*, Op. 8a (Budapest: Rózsavölgyi és Társa, 1910), 1.



Example 44. Bartók *Two Romanian Dances*, Op. 8a, No. 2, mm. 1-4.



Example 45: Ding *Xinjiang Dance No. 1*, Op. 6, mm. 1-8.

Rhythm and Accent:

Most rhythms in Bartók's music are derived from the various types of folk dances. Both composers widely included staccatos and accents in their compositions. In Ding's *Xinjiang Dance No. 2*, Op. 11, many accents appear on the upbeat to exemplify the musical characteristics of ethnic minority groups and increase tension (Ex. 46). Bartók's accents are often on the upbeat as well, although they can appear on any beat when important elements need emphasis, such as dissonant intervals for increased tension or weak beats to offset bar lines (Ex. 47).

Example 46. Ding *Xinjiang Dance No. 2*, Op. 11, mm. 93-100.

Example 47. Bartók *Two Romanian Dances*, Op. 8a, No. 2, mm. 149-153.

Meter, Tempo and Dynamic Range:

Changes of tempo in Ding's works are generally based on the formal structure.

Both *Xinjiang Dances* are in ternary form, and Ding changed tempo at the beginning of the B and A1 sections. Meters are changed frequently. For example, the meter changes twelve times in Section B of *Xinjiang Dance No. 1*. In Bartók's music, meter and tempo are both changed frequently, such as the second piece of *Two Romanian Dances* where the tempo is changed twelve times and the meter fourteen times.

Both composers requested a wide range of dynamics for their music, though Ding is a bit more conservative. While his dynamic range for *Xinjiang Dance No. 1* is *pp* to *ff*,

the range in the first of Bartók's *Two Romanian Dances* is from *ppp* to *fff*. The wide range of dynamics creates infinite possibilities on the piano.

3. Schönberg

Intervallic Patterns:

Before applying serial technique, intervallic patterns are frequently employed in Schönberg's early piano pieces, such as Op. 11 and Op. 19. Example 48 shows major and minor thirds are used to a great extent on both staves. In Schönberg's late solo piano works, intervallic patterns permeate many pieces as one of the main devices. In Example 49, linear intervallic patterns appear in both staves. In most of these patterns, a group of two eighth notes are alternately played by each hand, except that a few of them are aligned against each other. Each phrase contains thirds, fourths and fifths, assuming a pattern: fifths and fourths in the right hand are followed by thirds in the left hand and fourths play against fifths.



Example 48. Schönberg *Six Little Piano Pieces*, Op. 19, No. 2, mm. 3-6.³²

³² Arnold Schönberg, *Six Little Piano Pieces*, Op. 19 (Mineola: Dover Publications, 1999), 132.



Example 49. Ding *Four Preludes and Fugues*, Op. 29, No. 3, *Overjoyed*, mm. 1-8.

Baroque Forms

Both Schönberg and Ding applied forms that were prevalent in the Baroque period. Schönberg's *Suite for Piano*, Op. 25 consists of six movements based on Baroque suite writing, starting with a prelude followed by different dances (gavotte and minuet) and ending with a gigue. Ding's *Four Little Preludes and Fugues*, Op. 29 apply preludes and fugues derived from J.S. Bach's *The Well-Tempered Clavier*. Contrapuntal textures are an essential element in both pieces. In Schönberg's *Suite for Piano*, Op. 25, twelve-tone techniques into contrapuntal textures (see Ex. 50) while Ding employed chromaticism in his *Four Little Preludes and Fugues*, Op. 29 (see Ex. 49).



Example 50. Schönberg *Suite for Piano*, Op. 25, *Prelude*, mm. 1-3.³³

³³ Arnold Schönberg, *Suite for Piano*, Op. 25 (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1925), 1.

CHAPTER 4

PEDAGOGY AND PERFORMANCE

I. Pedagogical Recommendations

Shande Ding's solo piano works can be divided into three levels based on technical difficulty: early intermediate, late intermediate, and advanced. Because his piano works contain a variety of music genres and performing skills, they are suitable as both pedagogical material for student advancement and concert playing. Table 3 lists the levels and technical challenges of each piano work.

Table 3. Different Levels of Technical Difficulties in Ding's All Solo Piano Works.

Names of Works	Levels	Technical Difficulties
<i>Spring Trip</i> , Op. 1	No. 1 & No. 2—Early Intermediate No. 3 & No. 4—Late Intermediate	Voicing, large leaps, crossing hands, octaves, evenness of 32nd notes
<i>Piano Sonata in E Major</i> , Op. 2	Advanced	Voicing, octaves, complex rhythms, large leaps, tempo changes, running notes, syncopation
<i>Three Preludes</i> , Op. 3	No. 1—Early Intermediate No. 2 & No. 3—Late Intermediate	Alternating melodies between hands, voicing, notes reading, timbre
<i>Variations on a Theme of Chinese Folk Songs</i> Op. 4	Late Intermediate	Various rhythmic patterns, evenness of 32nd running notes, tempo changes, voicing
<i>Xinjiang Dance No. 1</i> , Op. 6	Advanced	Complex rhythms, large leaps, wide dynamic range, octaves, tempo & meter changes
<i>Children's Suite, Happy Holidays</i> , Op. 9	No. 1 & No. 3—Early Intermediate No. 2, 4 & 5—Late Intermediate	Repetitive patterns in fast speed, frequent tempo & meter changes, changing fingers on repeated notes, large leaps, balance
<i>Xinjiang Dance No. 2</i> , Op. 11	Advanced	Repetitive patterns with light staccato and accent, octaves, large leaps, voicing, wide dynamic range

<i>Toccata</i> , Op. 13	Advanced	Evenness on repeated notes, syncopation, fast running notes, wide dynamic range
<i>Eight Pieces for Children</i> , Op. 28	No. 1-4—Early Intermediate No. 5-8—Late Intermediate	Frequent meters & key signatures changes, syncopation with accents, various rhythmic patterns, voicing, notes reading (many accidentals)
<i>Four Little Preludes and Fugues</i> , Op. 29	No. 1 & No. 2—Late Intermediate No. 3 & No. 4—Advanced	Hands coordination melodies, LH—melodies with running notes, phrasing, continuous patterns, off-beat, balance, voicing
<i>Sixteen Easy Etudes</i> , Op. 31	No. 3, 7, 9, 11, 14–16—Late Intermediate Others—Early Intermediate	Evenness, hands coordination, fingering arrangement, large leaps, meter and tempo changes
<i>Sonatina</i> , Op. 32	Late Intermediate	Accidentals, syncopation with accents, meter changes, hands coordination
<i>Rondo</i> , Op. 33	Advanced	Alternative melodies between hands, evenness on fast running notes, balance
<i>Six Preludes</i> , Op. 34	No. 1 & No. 4-6—Advanced No. 2 & No. 3—Late Intermediate	Clarity of 32nd & 16th running notes in fast speed, fast motion on chords changing, large leaps, phrasing, evenness on alternative hands play, hands coordination, fingerings
<i>Scherzo</i> , Op. 35	Advanced	Complex rhythmic patterns, tempo changes, fingerings, accents on weak beats
<i>Three Pieces on Chinese Folk Songs</i> , Op. 36	Advanced	Evenness on running notes, voicing, hands coordination, phrasing

Although most of Ding’s solo piano works are written for late intermediate and advanced students, certain sets such as *Three Preludes*, Op. 3 and *Children’s Suite*, *Happy Holidays*, Op. 9, contain small pieces appropriate for early intermediate students. These pieces are no more than two pages in length and contain few accidentals or complicated fingerings, making them suitable pedagogical materials for building students’ confidence and musical expression. The first piece of *Happy Holidays*, for

example, is Moderato with clear melodic lines, and F# is the sole black key. The subtitle, *To the Suburbs*, guides students in understanding the images and mood that the composer wants to deliver. The majority of *Sixteen Little Etudes*, Op. 31 are on just the right level for early intermediate students to enhance their technical skills. Unlike more virtuosic etudes filled with consecutive running notes, repeated patterns and complicated fingerings, Ding's etudes emphasize artistic expression. Each one has clear melodic lines and slow rhythmic patterns. The left hand provides simple accompaniment and also echoes melodic materials in the right hand. To maintain fluency, half notes of the right hand are accompanied by broken chords in the left, with interaction between the hands (e.g., *Etude*, Op. 31, No. 2, Ex. 51). Besides addressing the technical difficulties of each etude, students and teachers are required to resolve musical issues.



Example 51. Ding *Sixteen Easy Etudes*, Op. 31, No. 2, mm. 1-3.

The late intermediate pieces are longer with more complicated textures. Many sharps and flats are present, such as in the third piece of *Three Preludes*, Op. 3 which has a six-flat key signature and many accidentals. Moreover, advanced techniques such as large leaps, crossing hands and rapid running notes require students to have flexibility, strength and skilled finger movements. Musically, tonal balance and voicing are critical challenges to be tackled. Compared with Example 51, there are many accidentals in Example 52. Broken chord rhythmic patterns as accompaniment appear in both pieces.

However, Ding used sixteenth running notes with large leaps and finger crossing motions to increase the difficulty of technique and balance in Example 52.



Example 52. Ding *Six Preludes*, Op. 34, No. 2, mm. 11-15.

The number of Ding's advanced piano pieces nearly equal those in the late-intermediate category. They contain similar technical challenges, but at higher levels designed for competitions and concerts. Many challenging rhythmic patterns with uneven accents, along with frequently changing meters and tempos, can cause rushing of the beat as players abruptly switch rhythmic patterns. Inner voices and delicate balances require listening sensitivity. Overall, Ding's advanced level pieces require substantial ability and musical comprehension.

II. Performance Tips

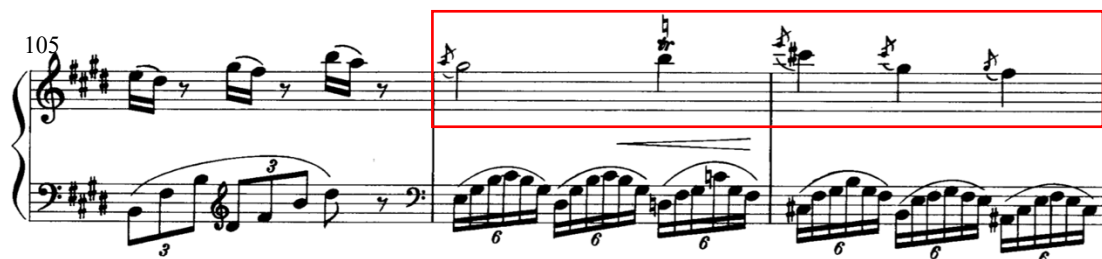
Good performances embody composers' thoughts and resonate well with audience members. Performers must strive to fully understand the compositions they play, involving their highest professional skills and artistic culture.

1. Instrumental Imitation

The styles of Chinese piano works vary. Some are arrangements of folk songs, Chinese traditional instrumental works, ancient music and Chinese operas. Others are

originally composed. The majority of the arranged Chinese piano pieces are from works written for Chinese instruments, including erhu, guzheng, yangqin, guqin, pipa and suona (e.g., the famous suona piece, *A Hundred Birds Praise the Phoenix*).

For the piano pieces composed originally by composers themselves, presenting the characteristics of Chinese traditional instruments remains prevalent. In Ding's solo piano pieces, various ornaments (trills, acciaccaturas, mordents, etc.) are employed to embody the timbre and playing skills of these instruments. In the first movement of the *Piano Sonata in E Major*, Op. 2, consecutive acciaccaturas with trill in mm.106-107 imitate the plucking and turning motion of pipa playing (See Ex. 53).



Example 53. Ding *Piano Sonata in E Major*, Op. 2, first movement, mm.105-107.

Groups of running notes can also create the sound effect of specific instruments. In the first movement of the same sonata (Ex. 54), sixteenth notes mimic glissandos played on the guzheng.



Example 54. Ding *Piano Sonata in E Major*, Op. 2, first movement, mm. 111-113.

When playing Chinese piano pieces, it is important for performers to know the characteristics of major Chinese traditional instruments, such as basic timbres, the ways in which instruments are played, their capacities for note duration and dynamic range, etc. Performers need to not only imitate the timbre of the instruments, but also discover specific touches and motions to mimic them on the piano. This is essential for playing Chinese piano works properly.

2. Voicing

For the clarification of music layers and sonority enrichment, Ding used tenutos, accent markings, and prolonged notes to distinguish the leading melodies and inner voices. One common challenge for performers (e.g., Example 55) is to project and connect melodic tones while playing accompanying notes in the same hand. Passages like this benefit from thoughtful practice techniques, such as: 1) playing the melodic notes alone to determine appropriate fingerings and phrase shape; 2) adding the right-hand accompanying notes, working towards good balance between voices; and 3) adding the remaining bass notes for final balancing, ensuring that the combined accompanying notes are evenly executed and do not overpower the melodic line. Example 56 illustrates an inner voice with tenuto marks. Belonging to the secondary layer, this voice needs to be played softer than the main melody written on the treble staff.

Example 55. Ding *Spring Trip*, Op. 1, No. 2, *In the Boat*, mm. 1-5.

Example 56. Ding *Spring Trip*, Op. 1, No. 1, *Waiting for the Sunrise*, mm. 4-9.

3. Octaves and Leaps

Octaves and leaps occur frequently throughout Ding’s solo piano works. They can be part of the melodic line (Ex. 57), as well as in the accompaniment (Ex. 58). Octaves are often technically difficult for performers, especially when played in fast tempo. Ensuring octave accuracy is a fundamental requirement for performers, but playing them in a connected manner can be equally important, particularly when they form melodies in slow tempo. Finger substitution is sometimes necessary. In order to bring out octave melodic lines, performers should establish free rotating motions of the arm and elbow as appropriate.

Example 57. Ding *Piano Sonata in E Major*, Op. 2, first movement, mm. 12-17.

Example 58. Ding *Xinjiang Dance No. 1*, Op. 6, mm. 69-72.

A leading challenge for executing leaps is, of course, to quickly find and accurately play the distant notes. Performers are often anxious as the leap approaches, leading to physical stiffness and increased potential for wrong notes, unsteady beats and unwanted accents. It is helpful to remember that large leaps in music are experienced in a similar way to large steps taken by the foot, thus requiring extra time. Metronomic perfection is not the goal. In Example 58, large leaps are seen in the accompaniment. In order to keep an energetic feeling in the fast speed, performers need to keep these leaps reasonably in

tempo. The damper pedal can sustain sounds and shorten the time needed for the fingers to hold down keys. To aid ascending leaps in m. 70, the damper pedal needs to be applied on the third beat and held until the end of the measure. Also, the last chord may be played by the right hand, saving time for the left hand to reach the lower register in m. 71.

When executing either octaves or leaps, performers should always prioritize musical concerns over technical difficulties. This will, in turn, greatly ease performers' pressures and produce clear and lyrical lines.

4. Phrasing

The melodies in most of Ding's piano works are comprised of short motives or fragmented materials. Gathering these small units together with good shaping is a major challenge for performers. Fine phrasing is needed to provide a clear map of the composer's intentions. Slurs do not always indicate complete phrase units. Example 59 shows the first eleven measures of Ding's *Six Preludes*, Op. 36, No. 1. Slurs appear in every measure, but the phrases are longer. These eleven measures can be divided into two phrases with a two-measure link. In this case, the first phrase extends from mm. 1-5, followed by the link (mm. 6-7), and then the second phrase covers mm. 8 to 11. To help convey this plan, performers might ease the tempo at the end of each phrase and accelerate the short link slightly to increase musical tension and connection.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for a piano piece. The first system is titled "Adagietto" with a tempo marking of a quarter note equal to 66 (♩ = 66). It consists of five measures. The first measure is marked *mp* (mezzo-piano) and the fourth measure is marked *mf* (mezzo-forte). The second system begins at measure 6 and consists of six measures. The first measure is marked *mp*, the second is *mf*, and the fourth is *mp*. A red bracket labeled "Link" spans the first two measures of the second system. The notation includes treble and bass clefs, a 2/4 time signature, and various musical symbols such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings.

Example 59. Ding *Six Preludes*, Op. 36, No. 1, mm. 1-11.

In summary, all technical considerations must serve the music. Otherwise, mechanical playing will likely be the result, with little hope for expression of the composer's ideas and purpose.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Among Ding's thirty-six works, the solo piano pieces comprise the largest portion, representing his compositional characteristics with a mixture of diverse genres and varying skills.

The styles of Ding's piano works vary substantially due to the influence of some western composers (Chopin, Schubert, Debussy, Scriabin, Bartók, and Schönberg). As an innovator among his fellow Chinese composers, Ding combined western harmonic languages with Chinese traditional elements to emphasize national characteristics and form a personal compositional style. His piano works reflect Chinese historic reformation and show the development of Chinese compositional techniques.

Ding's solo piano works are designed for both pedagogical and performance purposes, with a diversity of not only music styles, but also of technical challenges. It is hoped that this research will promote wider appreciation of his music and provide deeper understanding of its construction. Perhaps in the future more students, teachers and performers will choose to explore the richness of Shande Ding's solo piano works.

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