

The Evolution and Integration of the Chinese Dulcimer: A Study of Cross-Cultural Musical Fusion

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Abstract: The Chinese dulcimer (yangqin) is an instrument of Western origin (Persian origin) that was originally known as the board zither. It was introduced to China through the Silk Road, either by land or ocean during the Ming and Qing dynasties. The Chinese dulcimer has been integrated into Chinese traditional opera as an accompaniment instrument and it is also played by local bands in various cities in China. Consequently, the Chinese dulcimer has gradually become a traditional symbol of Chinese music and has become a representative instrument of Chinese traditional music abroad, despite its Western origin. Interestingly, in the current Chinese dulcimer teaching process, many teachers will incorporate selected Western music into their curriculum because Chinese dulcimers only have a limited repertoire. The curriculum usually includes pieces such as Saint-Saen's *Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso* and Sarasate's *Songs of the Wonderer*, which were commonly played on the violin. There are currently efforts to develop and expand the repertoire of the Chinese dulcimer by incorporating Western musical elements. However, this work provokes questions, such as: How can Chinese and Western musical elements merge? What are the advantages and disadvantages of the yangqin when performing Western musical pieces? This article will discuss these topics here in depth.

Keywords: Chinese Dulcimer, Chinese Traditional Music, Ethnic Music

1. Introduction

This article covers the development and evolution of the dulcimer after it was introduced to China, including the introduction history, format reform, repertoire development, performance techniques and other related content. This article mainly talks about the reform and development of the dulcimer after it was introduced to China from three aspects: the historical origin of the dulcimer after it was introduced to China, the evolution and integration of the dulcimer after it was introduced to China, and the integration of Chinese and Western musical elements with the modern Chinese dulcimer (yangqin). At the end of the article, the advantages and disadvantages of Chinese dulcimer (yangqin) playing Western music works are discussed.

2. Literature Review

This paper will start by discussing some current literature on the field of Chinese dulcimers. Chinese sources were found using cnki.net, the largest Chinese academic database. There are a total of 76 papers on ‘The Origin of Yangqin (Chinese dulcimer),’ including 37 theses and 29 journal articles. There are 9 papers regarding the modern development of the yangqin and 17 papers related to the transposition of Western musical works on the yangqin. However, among all these articles, only 11 papers on CNKI specifically mention ‘transplanted repertoire’ related to the yangqin. This article will cover three aspects. Firstly, the origin and history of the yangqin. Secondly, they mention the fusion and distinctions between the yangqin and the foreign dulcimer. Lastly, they cover the development of modern Chinese yangqin music.

Additionally, there are a total of 25 academic studies on cnki.net that compare different types of Chinese dulcimer. Most of these discuss the differences through the look of the instruments, the musical scales, as well as the different performance techniques and styles. For example, Xu Pingxin’s ‘Comparison of Chinese and Foreign Yangqin’ published in the Chinese Music Journal roughly introduces the differences between Chinese yangqin and world yangqin in terms of form, scale, performance style and technique [1]. Furthermore, Su Mingzhen’s Master’s Thesis ‘The Mutual Learning and Development of Chinese and Foreign Dulcimer Music’ from Northwest Minzu University describes the history and origin of the yangqin and compares it with the history of the foreign dulcimer [2]. Based on the development of the foreign dulcimer, Mingzhen proposes suggestions for the future development of the Chinese dulcimer.

Moreover, Ma Hui’s master’s thesis, ‘Significance and Technique Analysis of Foreign Transplanted Works of Yangqin’ from the Central Conservatory of Music [3]. It first introduces the current Western transposition musical pieces on Chinese dulcimer and compares the differences in music style and performance style of Western music and Chinese folk music. Compared to how the same piece of music sounds in Western instruments and Chinese dulcimer. The author also summarises the key points of delivering a successful performance of transposition works.

This article will discuss the three main aspects of the yangqin: the development of the yangqin itself, the development of yangqin art and the advancement of yangqin performance techniques.

3. The History and Origin of the Chinese Dulcimer (Yangqin)

The dulcimer, a chordophone percussion instrument, originates from the zither family. Under the influence of various musical systems around the world, the dulcimer has different names and forms in different regions and countries. For instance, in most English-speaking countries such as the U.K. and the U.S., it is commonly referred to as the dulcimer or psaltery. In Northern and Eastern European countries, it is known as the hackbrett, cymbaly or the cimbalom; in Southwestern Asia, it’s referred to as the santur. Early in Chinese history, it was known as the dazhen, the hu the die qin or the yangqin, with the latter becoming the dominant name used for the instrument. This article will be based on the three classification systems of dulcimers: the European dulcimer, the Southwestern Asian dulcimer and the yangqin, a system proposed by the renowned yangqin expert Xiang Zuhua [4].

The Chinese hammered dulcimer (yangqin), is an imported musical instrument that was introduced into China from the West in the early 17th century or the 18th century. The yangqin has undergone hundreds of years of development in China and has merged with the local music culture and traditions since its introduction. There are two main theories about how the dulcimer entered China. The first source is that the instrument was introduced to China via the Silk Road, which originated in the Han Dynasty. This route spanned from the Middle East, passing through Central Asia and ultimately reaching the Xinjiang Province of China. This was known as the ‘land route’ and happened in the 18th century.

The second source posits the arrival of the yangqin in the early 17th century, when Western missionaries arrived in the Guangdong coastal area of China, bringing the dulcimer with them [5]. This was known as the maritime route. At the end of the Ming Dynasty or the beginning of the Qing Dynasty (17-18th century), there were numerous books describing the different forms, styles and performances of the Chinese dulcimer and the European dulcimer. (This article is based the maritime route)

During the era of the Republic of China (1912-1949), the form and performance techniques of the yangqin were further organised and merged with native music. During this period, four major Chinese yangqin schools were formed: Guangdong Yangqin, Jiangnan Bamboo Yangqin, Sichuan Yangqin and Northeastern Yangqin. After the establishment of the People's Republic of China, due to the support of the National Cultural Department of Traditional Music, Chinese yangqin performers and craftsmen cooperated to organise and form the music theory and tuning theory of the Chinese yangqin.

Moreover, there are different types of Chinese yangqin which have been developed, such as the Temperament Grand Yangqin, the Variable Tone Yangqin, the 401 Variable Tone Yangqin, the 501 Yangqin and the 12-tone Equal Temperament Yangqin. Additionally, during the 1970s and 1980s, the Electronic Yangqin was introduced and, in the 1990s, the 402 Performance Yangqin was introduced, [6] which is the most commonly used yangqin used today in China. The introduction of 402 Performance Yangqin widely enlarged the range and volume of the former commonly used 401 Performance Yangqin. Moreover, it incorporates the well-tempered system of toning from Western music. These changes expanded the expressive capabilities of yangqin instruments and laid a solid foundation for the development of the contemporary yangqin repertoire as well as the appearance of the transplanted repertoire.

4. Application and Playing Techniques of the Dulcimer

Although the dulcimer spread quickly among the Chinese populace after its introduction, its teaching pattern remained largely within folk traditions and the yangqin was primarily used as an accompaniment instrument for Chinese folk songs and storytelling performances. It was not widely used in mainstream Chinese Opera such as Beijing Opera.

However, the yangqin gradually found its place in various regions for use in folk music [7]. For example, the dulcimer was prominent in the Southeastern coastal regions of China, where it accompanied various folk music and storytelling traditions. It later spread to other regions in China. This regional development helped to provide a very diverse musical genre for the yangqin.

The early development of dulcimer playing techniques relied on oral tradition and a mentoring system. The standardisation of traditional yangqin techniques began with the publication of 'New Chapters in Qin Studies' by Guangdong musician Qiu Hechou in 1921 [8], followed by Xiang Zuhua's integration and proposal of contemporary Yangqin techniques known as the 'new ten degrees,' comprising ten major categories of techniques such as single-string (single notes), simultaneous-strings (chords), rolling-string (repeated notes), plucking-string, embellishment and so on.

Moreover, some of the techniques of the yangqin were adopted from another Chinese traditional instrument guzheng. These techniques include pinching (using hands to pluck the strings). Other techniques such as picking (pizzicato) were adopted from the Chinese instrument, the pipa. These techniques used in the guzheng and the pipa largely enhanced the expressive range of the dulcimer and provided the yangqin with unique traditional skills and techniques.

5. Integration of Western musical elements and modern Chinese dulcimer(yangqin)

The development of yangqin art is inseparable from the transformation of yangqin instruments. From the original 401 Model Yangqin of the 1980s to the 402 model during the 1990s and then to the appearance of the Die-Meng Yangqin and the hu-xiao yangqin in the 21st century. These developments further expanded the range of the yangqin, as well as adding a mute pedal for the instrument [9].

Today, the arrangement of the Yangqin has been finalised and, at the same time, the reformation of yangqin types has also reached a certain height. These newly developed instrument types have enabled a more diverse repertoire or ensemble for the yangqin. For example, Professor Li Lingling of the China Conservatory of Music, who invented the Die-Meng Yangqin compiled newly developed teaching materials and repertoire, as well as collaborating with composer Yang Qing, composed ensemble pieces such as 'Butterfly Dream Flying Bamboo', specifically for the Die-Meng Yangqin. The Die-Meng Yangqin also has a mini version which was designed for younger children; this new feature is massively helpful for the promotion of this instrument to the younger generation [7].

In 2018, hundreds of musicians and technologists collaborated with China Lehai Musical Instruments Co. Ltd. and developed the Hu-Xiao Yangqin. This work made the instrument more practical to use. For example, it added four wheels making the yangqin more convenient to move. It also added a foot-operated mute pedal to prevent strong resonance when playing many notes. At the same time, the Hu-Xiao Yangqin also enlarged the lower range of the instrument. These new features have made the Hu-Xiao Yangqin the most commonly used yangqin in professional music schools today.

When it comes to the playing tools of the yangqin, the earliest striking tool was made of wood. However, due to its high weight and lack of flexibility, the material for striking tools became Chinese bamboo. Its lightweight and flexibility improved the playing tone of the yangqin and enriched its playing techniques. The use of Chinese bamboo also adds credence to the yangqin being a truly Chinese instrument. Nowadays, yangqin striking tools are divided into single-tone and double-tone; double-tone striking tools have an additional bamboo head added compared to the single-tone one [10].

Before the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the yangqin's repertoire was limited to solo pieces and most of these were adapted from Chinese folk music and operatic music. Some well-known examples from the yangqin solo repertoire from that period include *Dry and Thunder*, *Raindrop Hitting Banana Leaves* and *Chain Buckle*. After the 1950s, the yangqin was officially incorporated into higher education teaching as a professional discipline but the insufficient repertoire impeded professional teaching. Therefore, Chinese yangqin teachers and musicians took on the task of creating music for the instrument, as well as adapting repertoire from other traditional Chinese instruments, such as the pipa and the guzheng. These include *Blossoms on a Moonlit River in Spring* and *Fishermen's Song* [11].

Besides Chinese repertoire, contemporary yangqin music also has a trend of adapting foreign music works, such as the Japanese folk song *Sakura*, the Guinean folk song *Elephant* and the Romanian folk tune *Lark*. Moreover, there are yangqin musicians who have adapted repertoire from Western instruments, such as violin works *Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso*, *Paganini's Caprice*, *Czardas Dance* and *Song of the Wanderer*. The innovations of the first generation of Chinese contemporary yangqin artists have led the music towards a professional development path and yangqin works have flourished since then.

The second generation of Chinese contemporary yangqin musicians, represented by Huang He, Li Lingling and Xu Xuedong, played a leading role in innovating the yangqin. Their music became more innovative - on one hand, the content represented the massive scenery of different regions of China;

on the other hand, it incorporated various Western music genres and composition techniques. These repertoires included *Yellow Earth Feelings*, *Tianshan Poetry and Painting*, *Li Sao* and *Ancient Road Travels* by Huang He. Other works include *Night Talks of Yao Mountain*, *Autumn Dreams* and *Fantasy in B-flat Minor* by Xu Xuedong. *Storm* by Li Lingling and *Desert Dance* by Wang Se are also notable works.

More specifically, several representatives of the yangqin repertoire integrated Chinese and Western music. For example, the concerto *Rhapsody* written by Wang Danhong has been described as similar to *Rhapsody in Blues* by George Gershwin. This piece uses the rhapsody genre, rondo structure and jazz style, integrating Chinese instrumental music with the Western music genre and form [12]. It is technically a challenging yangqin piece, with complex rhythmic variations illustrated through rich chord changes.

The integration of jazz music styles showcased the yangqin's strong adeptness in both Chinese and Western music since the modern version of the yangqin has all the notes in the Western well-tempered system. It successfully shows the jazz-style rhythm through the unique sound effects of the yangqin, opening up a new path for the development of modern yangqin music. For example, in the first part of Wang Danhong's *Rhapsody* - bars 29 to 37 (Figure 1) - we can see that Wang uses a lot of syncopated rhythmic patterns with fast-running notes to strengthen the overall swing jazz style since syncopation is one of the main feathers of swing jazz music. Then, the theme is developed by doubling the layer into octaves, deepening the range of music and pushing the music to its climax [13].

The syncopated rhythm of jazz music originated in ragtime music. Ragtime is a musical genre popularised in America in the late 19th century and early 20th century. People at that time were particularly obsessed with rag dances, such as the cakewalk, with its syncopated rhythm. After the 1920s, ragtime lost its popularity but it did pass some of its legacy to jazz music, including the syncopation rhythm [12].

Figure 1: *Rhapsody* -bars 29 to 37

Bars 89 to 91 (Figure 2) and 97 to 100 (Figure 3) show the yangqin's unique solo cadenza, using rapid running notes passages and rapid alternations between septuplet and sextuplet to emphasise the rhythmic complexity of jazz, continually adding 'jazz flavour' to the *Rhapsody*. This is also a technically challenging passage for performers.

10

89 $\text{♩} = 96$

yangqin Lento poi accelerando

7

90 6

yangqin

91

yangqin

Figure 2: *Rhapsody*-bars 89 to 91

97 $\text{♩} = 96$ Lento poi accelerando

yangqin *p* 6 6 6

99 *cresc.* 6 6 6

yangqin

100

yangqin *f*

Figure 3: *Rhapsody* -bars 97 to 100

Desert Dance, composed by Wang Se in September 2015, is also one of the most popular pieces for the yangqin. This piece of music also shows the integration of Chinese and Western music. The

background of this piece of music is the Silk Road, a trade route connecting China and the West. The Silk Road is also the place where, as noted earlier, the Western yangqin was introduced to China. Therefore, this piece of music combines Chinese and Western music elements and expresses the music of the Western Regions. Wang Se not only combines the European scale with the Chinese pentatonic scale but also adds the Arabic form ‘Usha Iran’ [14], enriching the structure and stylistic characteristics of the music. Moreover, the rhythm also incorporates the characteristics of European music, using a large number of variable notes and the integration of the whole scale.

For example, bars 94 to 96 (Figure 4), with the rapid sixteenth note quintuplets, emphasise the performers’ virtuosity.



Figure 4: *Desert Dance* -bars 94 to 96

Throughout the whole piece, we can easily find that the rhythm mostly comprises multiple beats such as 8/9, 4/4 meter and other examples of cross-rhythm. In the melody with accents, we can hear the characteristics of triple beats and tuple beats, with a wide range of dotted, syncopated, sixteenth-note rhythms. The right hand adds a sense of rhythm when the bass is sustained and the dynamic also has strong ups and downs when playing fast alternating broken chords. In the technical part, various traditional techniques, such as rapid repetition of notes and ‘big jump’ playing methods, are frequently used, fully demonstrating the technical strength of the yangqin and the vastness and mystery of the desert.

6. Characteristics and Techniques of Transplanted Songs

Many classical Western instrumental repertoires have also been performed in Chinese Yanyu, such as the violin piece *Introduction and Rondo Caprice* by Saint-Saëns in 1863 [15]. This piece was originally composed for Spanish violinist Pablo de Sarasate and has a strong flavour of European romanticism. The yangqin performers are required to have both solid Chinese performance skills as well as a deep understanding of the European Romanticism style. The whole piece consists of two parts, the introduction and rondo. The introduction is andante and the key is mainly in A minor, with 2/4 meter, and a rich Spanish style - slow but extremely powerful. After being transplanted and adapted into a yangqin piece, the melody, key and rhythm of the original violin solo piece were retained. In the introduction, the descending scale-like technique and syncopation are frequently used.

The introduction and rondo capriccio are transplanted songs and the yangqin version is directly transcribed from the original Violin score. The yangqin takes advantage of its wide range of registers and dynamics and can play perfectly with another taste that differs from the violin.

Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso

[illegible]

Figure 5: *Introduction and Rondo Caprice* -bars 1 to 15

The opening introduction bars 1 to 15 (Figure 5) start with a piano dynamic, using a light but dense round sound that imitates the string timbre of the violin. To imitate the violin, there should not be any sharp or emphasised sounds at the beginning of each sentence, which is abnormal and challenging. The other challenging point is the frequent use of the alternate performance technique to imitate the long notes as well as the vibrato of string instruments. Moreover, the violin bowing technique is replaced by the yangqin overtones. A delicate performance with clear overtones contrasts with the previous dense and round sound, making the introduction sound clean and delicate - perfectly simulating the violin.

con moto

$\overset{\sharp}{3}\overset{\flat}{2}\overset{\sharp}{5}$ 0 $\underline{2\overset{\sharp}{2}3\overset{\sharp}{5}2}$ | $\overset{\sharp}{1}\overset{\flat}{3}\overset{\sharp}{4}$ $\underline{76}$ | $\overset{\flat}{7}0\overset{\sharp}{5}0$ | $\overset{\sharp}{3}\overset{\flat}{6}$ $\underline{6133}\overset{\sharp}{5}733$ | $\underline{72336133}$ $\underline{13662477}$

$\overset{\sharp}{2}\overset{\flat}{3}$ $\overset{\sharp}{2}\overset{\flat}{5}$ $\overset{\sharp}{4}$ $\overset{\sharp}{4}3\overset{\flat}{3}$ | $\overset{\sharp}{3}\overset{\flat}{1}$ $\overset{\sharp}{3}\overset{\flat}{3}$ $\underline{2172}$ | $\overset{\flat}{1}\overset{\flat}{7}$ $\underline{6133}\overset{\sharp}{5}733$ | $\underline{72336133}$ $\underline{13662477}$

f

$\overset{\sharp}{2}\overset{\flat}{3}$ $\overset{\sharp}{2}\overset{\flat}{5}$ $\underline{4324}$ | $\overset{\sharp}{3}\overset{\flat}{1}$ $\overset{\sharp}{7}\overset{\flat}{7}$ $\underline{656}$ | $\underline{573}\overset{\flat}{5}$ $\underline{73}\overset{\sharp}{1}\overset{\sharp}{3}73$ | $\underline{6'\overset{\sharp}{1}3'\overset{\sharp}{4}1'}$ $\underline{67'\overset{\sharp}{2}47'}$

quietamente

$\overset{\sharp}{5}73'\overset{\sharp}{5}$ $\overset{\sharp}{7}3'\overset{\sharp}{1}373$ | $\underline{6'\overset{\sharp}{1}3'\overset{\sharp}{4}1'}$ $\underline{1'\overset{\sharp}{7}64'\overset{\sharp}{2}716}$ | $\underline{7'\overset{\sharp}{5}6'\overset{\sharp}{4}27'\overset{\sharp}{1}67'\overset{\sharp}{5}6'\overset{\sharp}{4}2724}$ | $\underline{67'\overset{\sharp}{2}46427}$ $\underline{6'\overset{\sharp}{5}456'\overset{\sharp}{17}\overset{\sharp}{2}}$

$\overset{\flat}{3}\overset{\sharp}{v}$ $\underline{3\overset{\flat}{3}3\overset{\flat}{4}212}$ | $\overset{\flat}{3}\overset{\flat}{3}$ $\overset{\flat}{3}\overset{\flat}{4}$ $\overset{\flat}{2}\overset{\flat}{1}\overset{\flat}{2}$ | $\overset{\flat}{3}\overset{\flat}{3}$ $\underline{34'\overset{\flat}{4}5'\overset{\flat}{5}671'\overset{\flat}{12}\overset{\flat}{2}}$ | $\overset{\flat}{3}\overset{\flat}{3}$ $\overset{\flat}{2}\overset{\flat}{1}$ | $\overset{\flat}{1}\overset{\flat}{7}$ $\overset{\flat}{7}$ | $\overset{\flat}{1}\overset{\flat}{7}$ $\overset{\flat}{7}$ | $\overset{\flat}{1}\overset{\flat}{7}$ $\overset{\flat}{7}$ |

cresc.

Figure 6: *Introduction and Rondo Caprice* -bars 16 to 34

The second paragraph bars 16 to 34 (Figure 6) uses the same technique as the first to imitate the violin but with a denser layering and stronger dynamic.

$\text{♩} = 88$ con moto

$\frac{6}{8}$ $\frac{9}{8}$ 0 0. | $\underline{2}$ | 0. $\overset{\text{tr}}{\underset{\text{p}}{\underline{3^{\text{tr}}2^{\text{tr}}3^{\text{tr}}}}} | \underline{2\ 0\ 1^{\text{tr}}\ 1^{\text{tr}}\ 7^{\text{tr}}\ 7^{\text{tr}}\ 6^{\text{tr}}\ 6^{\text{tr}}\ 5^{\text{tr}}\ 6^{\text{tr}}} | \underline{5\ 0\ 4^{\text{tr}}\ 4^{\text{tr}}\ 3^{\text{tr}}} |$
 $\underline{3^{\text{tr}}\ 2^{\text{tr}}\ 2^{\text{tr}}\ 1^{\text{tr}}\ 2^{\text{tr}}} | \underline{1\ 0^{\text{tr}}\ 7^{\text{tr}}\ 7^{\text{tr}}\ 6^{\text{tr}}} | \underline{6^{\text{tr}}\ 5^{\text{tr}}\ 7\ 0\ 234} | \underline{0\ 234}\ \underline{0\ 3432} | \underline{12176}\ \overset{\text{tr}}{\underline{3^{\text{tr}}2^{\text{tr}}3^{\text{tr}}}} |$
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Figure 7: Introduction and Rondo Caprice -bars 38 to 69

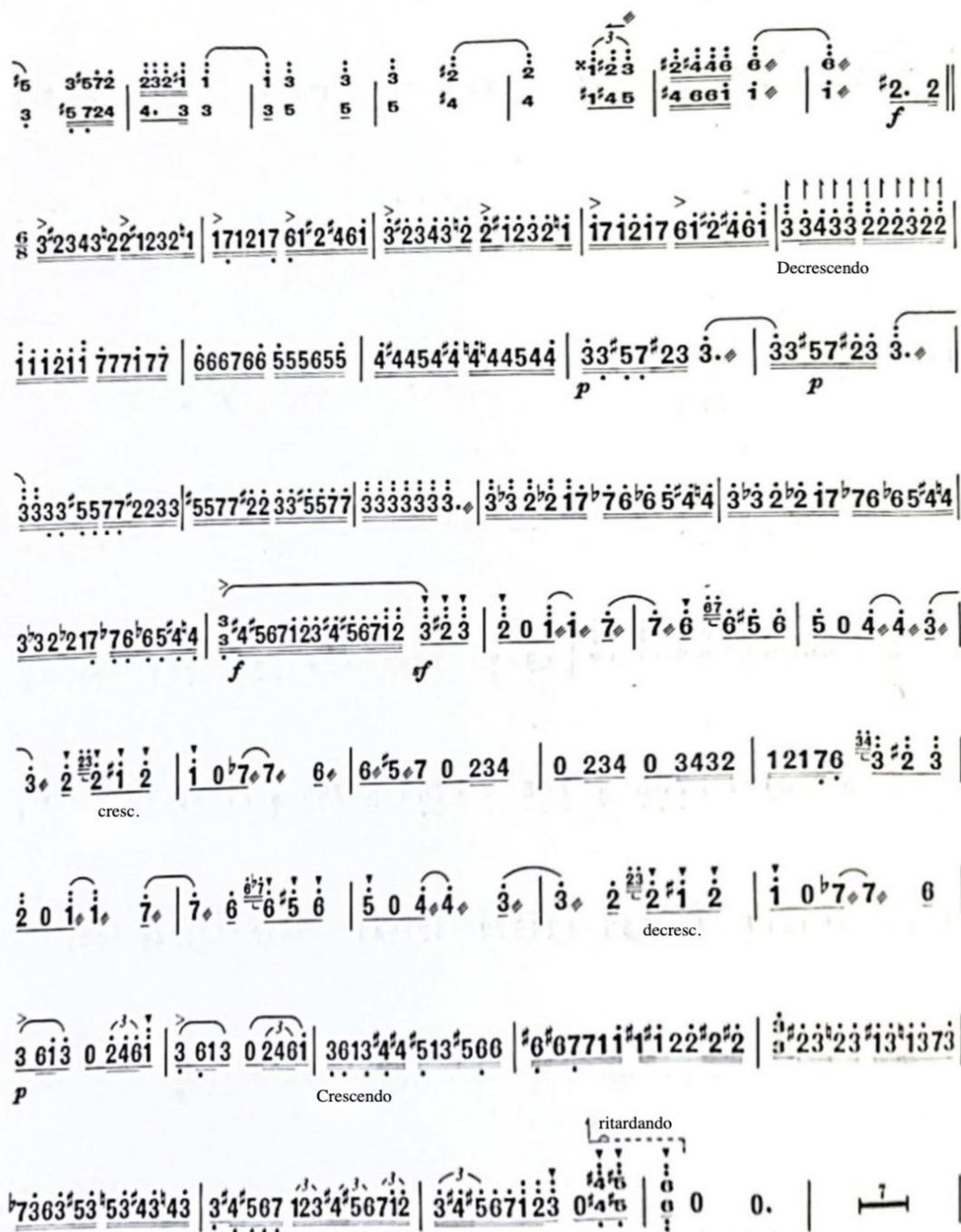


Figure 9: *Introduction and Rondo Caprice* -bars 307 to 340

The rondo capriccio part in bars 38 to 69 (Figure 7) features an 8/6 meter, with a faster tempo: allegro non-troppo (a livelier, but not excessive, speed). In bars 85 to 103 (Figure 8) the music starts from piano dynamic and gradually goes up to forte, while the tempo becomes increasingly fast. Another technical difficulty is playing the ornaments clearly and with delicacy. During long triplet passages, the yangqin can use its advantages of easily playing quick passages with accuracy.

When it comes to arpeggio cadenza in bars 307 to 340 (Figure 9) the yangqin's unique advantages can be used to quickly and accurately play each note, especially when it comes to the fast descending

chromatic scale. Similarly, the technical difficulty is mainly about controlling the pitch of the fast-alternating notes.

The ending is a great place for the yangqin player to display their technique. The fast-running sextuplets series must be played clearly and accurately. Some rising and falling notes are difficult to play and they can also be played through the successive thirds. Finally, the music ends with two groups of arpeggios, which ends the whole work clean and neatly. Yangqin performers can use the quick-rotation performance technique, connecting points of notes into legato singing lines and imitating the sound effects of string music as much as possible. This technique requires the yangqin player's strength and control.

Similarly, when the notes are quickly alternating, it is a virtuosic moment for yangqin performers to show off their skills. As transcribed music, the yangqin can use its advantages and characteristics to show the original music more vividly and charmingly while combining the long melodic line of the violin with the bright tone of the yangqin.

When using the Chinese dulcimer to play Western music, it is difficult to imitate the long line melody of instruments such as string instruments and wind instruments because this requires a strong control of the volume, intensity and accuracy of the pitch while playing passages that might be already fast. This difficulty can be seen when playing the yangqin version of the violin piece *Introduction and Rondo Caprice*. To showcase the intense, long and singing sound of the violin, the yangqin performer needs to have good control of the dynamic, to avoid sharp tones when using the quick-rotation performance technique. The rapid alternation technique ensures no transition gap between notes but it requires the performer to play smoothly and with controlled intensity. In addition, the fast sextuplet in the last part of the piece places great technical demand on the yangqin performer.

Moreover, the yangqin, as a Chinese traditional instrument, mostly focuses on playing monophonic music. But now in transcribed pieces, performers must try their best to imitate Western music, which contains rich polyphonic elements, harmonic progressions and chords. However, Chinese yangqin performers can normally only play up to three notes simultaneously. Thus, transcribing a Western musical piece for the Chinese yangqin requires extensive work, such as re-adjusting some notes temporally to try to achieve multi-part harmony. While playing the same composition, the Chinese yangqin adds unique tones, charm and style to a Western piece and also provides special embellishments with its light and lively playing style, which brings an incomparable listening experience to the audience.

7. Conclusion

The yangqin has developed rapidly in recent years, with great progress in its appearance and repertoire. At the same time, there has been extensive work to expand the possibilities of the yangqin by adding non-Chinese music elements into some of its contemporary repertoire. In the past 400 years, the Chinese yangqin has undergone progress and innovation, such as the improvement of its appearance, range and volume, as well as changes in its toning into the Western well-tempered system. All these changes have optimised the yangqin's performance function to elevate its virtuosic level. These new changes during the mid to late 20th century, enlarged its range, as well as its ability to perform more notes at the same time, which has enabled it to continually absorb Western music into its repertoire.

The Chinese yangqin has been striving to influence a bigger population, not only in China but also overseas. For example, cooperation between the Chinese yangqin and the world dulcimers, led by Professor Lingling from the China Conservatory of Music, has included activities such as playing Chinese music with Indian, Iranian and Hungarian dulcimers and performing on the same stage with foreign dulcimer musicians. Moreover, the recent cultural exchange activities regarding the Chinese yangqin integrate various music cultures and elements from all over the world, especially from

Western music. These activities have also expanded the yangqin's audience and further introduced the instrument to overseas audiences.

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