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The Influence of Socio-cultural Dynamics on Contemporary Chinese Piano Performance

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Abstract Chinese music culture is often criticised for not giving artists the freedom to innovate and be creative. Studies exploring this from the point of view of Chinese piano professionals are limited. This study, therefore, investigates the influence of sociocultural dynamics in contemporary Chinese piano performance. Online, semi-structured interviews, which contained open-ended questions were conducted among 12 professional piano performers from China. Some of them were music teachers and their professional experiences ranged from as little as six years to almost 50 years. The findings were analysed thematically using NVivo. A total of seven themes were found: 1) Chinese professional piano performers strongly appreciated the role of social and cultural influences in their performance; 2) Chinese culture influenced performances through artistic expression and cultural representation; 3) This culture was reflected in the piano performance improvement techniques; 4) Western culture influenced piano performance by establishing rules, structure and personality; 5) As compared to Chinese culture, Western culture offered more rules and less freedom for innovative piano composition; and lastly, 6) Chinese piano professionals faced several challenges in navigating Western culture for their composition, performance and innovation. The findings contradict the researched notion that Chinese musical cultures offer less freedom, creativity and autonomy to participants. Additionally, the challenges faced by Chinese pianists to understand Western piano compositions were starkly reflected. This calls for the need to develop new policies and music technology solutions.

Index Terms piano, Chinese, Western, performance, composition, innovation, music, professional

I. Introduction

Music is not only a product of personal skill and performance, but also a product of cultural and social development. For instance, social comparison between performers can influence the development of self-efficacy and motivation in an artist. Artists or music performers receiving direct feedback concerning their performance are likely to experience self-efficacy and reap creativity during music composition and performance, as compared to artists or music learners whose efficacy has been compared socially with others [1], [2]. The influential role of social development or social dynamics in music composition and performance has further gained importance with the rising role of social media in promoting music education. This has been observed in recent qualitative studies reporting how social media or a supportive social environment, facilitated knowledge sharing, face-to-face instruction, communication, arousal of learning interest, and improvement of instrument playing skills such as rhythm, fingering, and posture [3], [4]. Similarly, participatory and social-interactive aspects are also essential determinants of music performance composition. Indeed, live music performances and concerts afford verbal interactions between the audience and the artists, where the former provides direct reactions like attention, interest, support, displeasure, and pleasure to the latter. Such interactions provide artists with the necessary feedback to propagate or limit specific music compositions and pieces [5], [6]. In another interesting example, it is considered culturally unusual for African musicians to number the beats in their music composition and performance – a cultural practice that is an essential prerequisite for classical Indian musicians [7]. Thus, the importance of cultural and social developments in influencing music performance, composition, and continuous learning is crucial and undeniable.

While the relationship between sociocultural dynamics and music composition and performance has been established in evidence-based literature, a focus on piano performance, particularly the composition of Chinese piano artists, is lacking. The paper by Zheng and Leung (2021) [8] which investigated multiple case studies of Chinese piano learning students, found that traditional Chinese culture limits expressive autonomy in the composition and piano performance of budding artists. This is because traditional Chinese classical music is based completely on standardised notations. This means that the tempi, dynamics, and intentions of the piano artists must be as accurate and faithful to these standardized cultural notations. This limits creativity since performers are

restricted to only reproducing traditional Chinese works, rather than deviating and creating any original piano compositions [8]. Another similar qualitative study by Zheng and Leung (2023) [9], which interviewed Chinese piano professors and artists from Guangzhou and Shanghai found that creativity in piano composition and performance is perceived differently between Chinese and Western cultures. Chinese perspectives of musical creativity are established with the need to respect the past and maintain harmony with nature. In contrast, Western cultures encourage artists to practice creativity by providing unique compositions and solutions within suitable contexts [9]. However, these studies have focused primarily on the aspect of creativity in music, without emphasizing or exploring how the composition, playing styles, and performances of Chinese professional piano artists are influenced by social and traditional cultural factors. Comparing these experiences, with the perspectives held by Chinese piano artists on the contrasting impact of Western cultures in their composition, styles, and performances, can provide profound insights into the sociocultural dynamics underlying the Chinese piano industry. This study thus intends to overcome the identified problem of limited research by exploring how nuances of social and cultural developments, both within and beyond China, have influenced the piano compositions and performances of professional piano artists respectively.

The rationale of this study lies in its ability to provide detailed insights concerning the current status of piano performance and musical composition in China, in light of historical and contemporary sociocultural development. After the introduction of the piano during the seventeenth century in China, several musical pieces have been composed specifically in the country for the new instrument. Despite Chinese piano music being performed popularly in the country, Chinese piano compositions continued to be perceived as foreign to the standard repertoire followed in the West. Despite a willingness between both cultures to learn about each other, there is often a lack of appreciation and understanding of the cultural differences between Chinese and Western piano performances [10], [11]. However, research exploring the experiences or attitudes held by Chinese piano artists. This study is thus rationalized for investigating the perspectives held by Chinese piano artists regarding the influence of sociocultural factors in their piano performances and composition. Its findings can have useful implications for identifying potential areas of establishing cultural harmony between Oriental and Western music philosophies. Additionally, during the Opium War in the 1840s, piano was disseminated in China by foreign missionaries, which bolstered the establishment of small Western instrumental stores in Chinese coastal cities. Since these historical developments, Chinese pianists have continued to explore the piano with traditional Chinese playing styles. The earliest cultural version of Chinese piano composition is regarded to be the product of Western and Chinese music [10], [12], [13]. These findings thus contradict existing literature, which shows that Chinese musical cultures are rigid with limited space for creativity. It is therefore reasonable to further explore perspectives of Chinese piano artists on this cultural fusion, as this will reveal how Chinese piano music services as a product of historical and sociocultural changes.

This study aims to investigate the influence of sociocultural dynamics in contemporary Chinese piano performance. It is based on fulfilling the following research objectives:

- (1) To explore the views of Chinese professional piano artists on the impact of social-cultural factors on their performance.
- (2) To evaluate the views of Chinese professional piano artists on the impact of traditional Chinese social and cultural factors on piano composition, performance and innovation.
- (3) To assess from the perspective of Chinese professional piano artists, paying attention to the impact of comparative differences between Chinese and Western traditional cultures on piano composition, performance and innovation.

II. Literature Review

II. A. Sociocultural Influences on Music and Piano Performance

Existing research supports the significant influence of social and cultural factors on music performance. For example, according to Lerch (2019) [14], every musical performance relies on the meaningful interpretation and feedback given by the listener. The perspectives and responses of the listeners towards musical performance, are not merely dependent on external performance features, but also internal characteristics, such as their levels of training, history, and culture. Listener-focused performance analysis is thus driven by social and cultural aspects of the listeners that prompt artists to deliver perceptually relevant output in their compositions [14]. Further, according to, the syntactical structure of various musical genres and styles, varies across diverse musical cultures. Such a structure is learned through cultural exposure which produces observed distinctive features between listeners from various cultures. For this reason, the extent to which the music of any two cultures will be different in the context of rhythm, and pitch, will predict how an individual from one culture will process music from another culture [15]. This means that the cultural differences in musical features such as pitch, rhythm, and tempo between Chinese and Western cultures, influence differences in their piano performances and compositions.

However, research focused on piano performance appears to be scarce. For example, Gorbunova (2018) [16] investigated the problems associated with mastering electronic musical instruments, such as the electronic piano, and the role of culture in its performance mastery. The performance of electronic piano instruments requires a combination of the cultural traditions of the performer towards individual instruments, as well as a creative perspective toward the development, regulation, and management of new or existing timbres. Traditional musical cultures also contribute to the understanding that a musical instrument such as a piano, is a specific physical object that can only be used to generate specific sounds and timbre. Musical cultures however become innovative in the context of electronic versions of traditional instruments and subsequently, prompts the development of a modified piano with multiple keyboards and features to incorporate a multitude of unique sounds [16]. In another study by Lavengood (2019) [17], Western genres known as the '80s sound' emerged, and continue to be attractive, because of cultures related to musical timbre that were popularized by electronic pianos such as the digital synthesizer during that time. Additionally, the 80s were also characterised by culture-shifting opinions. This was seen in the form of a preference towards creating music that was fresh, loud, ambitious and representative of diverse cultures. As a result, a fusion of genres, such as music that combined rock and rap music emerged. Further, because of the rise of television, and music channels such as MTV that broadcasted music videos and live artist performances, such music also made its way to the suburbs and remote areas. The appreciation and dissemination of a more creative culture of music was further increased by the development of digital technologies, such as the electronic guitar, synthesizer and electronic drum kits, that began to be used in every recording studio [17]. While these findings are historical, and limited in the context of the piano, they demonstrate the importance of culture in defining the perspectives of piano performance and music creation. It is thus evident that social and cultural factors play a significant role in influencing music, particularly, contemporary piano performance.

II. B. Impact of Chinese Culture on Music and Piano Performance

While the piano was introduced by Western culture, the Chinese piano follows a unique style that reflects the 5000-year-old tradition of the country. The overall culture of China incorporates the diverse heritages of its various ethnic groups. For this reason, piano culture in China is unique and adapted to the unique artistic features and characteristics of its local cultures [18], [19]. Therefore, it is clear that the influence of traditional Chinese culture on piano performance is multifaceted and heterogenous, retaining regional and local characteristics. Indeed, Liu (2022) [20] reviews that Chinese piano music is based on folk songs, and Chinese traditional poetry which reflect the characteristic features of refined intonation and expressive sounds in this genre of music. Chinese music has historically been revolutionized by the music composer Chu Wanghua, especially with his piano suite composition 'Sounds of the Temple' ('Capriccio Suite: The Sound of the Linyin Temple'). This traditional piano piece incorporates the sounds of bells, a slow tempo, major deviations in tone, and the use of polyphonic sounds to imitate other Chinese musical instruments [20]. Similarly, Hou and Isaiah (2021) [21] postulate that this cultural tradition of harmonizing classical piano music with the works of other instruments is a traditional Chinese music practice known as transplantation or 'pianoization'. It comprises retaining the structure and melody of the original piano work while also combining traditional instrumental music – a practice used prevalently by Chinese composers during the 1980s [21]. The cross-sectional paper by Lu (2022) [19] further cements these findings, by justifying that while traditional Chinese music is based on a single sound and a historical heritage stretching across several thousands of years, Chinese piano music is peculiar since it was introduced by Western traditions. Thus, while Chinese piano music maintains a Westernised harmony, its artistic aesthetics are modified to suit traditional Chinese folk instruments [19]. Such modifications establish a platform where piano performance and composition in China are influenced by not just Chinese but also Western traditional cultures.

II. C. Western vs. Chinese Cultures in Music and Piano Performance

In the field of piano education, diverse cultural traditions bring forth diverse meanings and modifications in the music. For example, within the humanistic tradition of Britain, piano players are encouraged to expand their talents and play as per their advantages. In the United States, however, there is an absence of classical tradition and music performers are mainly encouraged to play based on personal values and practicality. In contrast, Chinese culture is based on traditional humanistic thoughts and thus encourages piano players to cultivate moral values in their performance through education [18], [22]. Such diversity in tradition and culture however does not mean that Chinese piano performance or music in general, has been completely free from Western influence. For instance, in his book, Wong (2020) [23] denotes that since the last century, traditional Chinese music has experienced a process of modernization. This has occurred because a growing number of Chinese music composers have travelled abroad to study and create music, leading to the emergence of the modern Chinese orchestra and the reformation of traditional Chinese musical instruments. Indeed, in the cross-sectional study by Lu (2022) [19] which surveyed 87

Chinese college students learning piano, it was found that only 8% of students used traditional Chinese music in their compositions. However, upon being applied a traditional Chinese music training, approximately 29%, 25% and 21% of students started integrating traditional music while creating their videos, participating in concerts, and arrangement of musical compositions. These findings demonstrate the diversity of the background of Chinese piano industry. Although influenced by traditional culture and history, it also has room to embrace Western traditions and principles. However, the opinions and views of professional piano performers regarding the impact of traditional Chinese and Western cultures on their composition and performance are missing. This gap thus forms the groundwork of this study.

II. D. Research Gap

The literature review findings were, however, not free from limitations. Firstly, papers that specifically explored how sociocultural dynamics influenced piano performance and music creation are largely limited. While studies examining the impact of sociocultural influences on Chinese traditional music are abundant, studies investigating this influence particularly piano music seemed limited to Western music. A few studies however traced the origins of the piano in China, and how Chinese culture influenced the works of traditional artists. These studies were regardless, cross-sectional, descriptive or narrative in nature, with limited exploration of the subjective experiences and opinions of professional piano artists. Similarly, several narrative studies were reviewed regarding the differences between Western and Chinese music cultures, and papers that included the opinions of real-life piano performers and professionals were missing. These limitations therefore motivated the methodological section of this paper.

II. E. Theoretical Framework

Trans-culturalism or transcultural music theory, is a useful theoretical framework for this study. Trans-culturalism in music talks about how cultures are interconnected via musical expression, that embraces diversity and goes beyond geographical boundaries. Therefore, transcultural music is an interesting representation of how global trends, innovative technologies and culturally diverse music practices intersect. This framework, however, must not be confused with multiculturalism. “Multiculturalism” is typically a community or society which respects culturally heterogeneous diverse people and accepts their existence. In other words, different cultures exist together and maintain their traditional practice in a multicultural society. In contrast, it is only about the coexistence of different cultures. Trans-culturalism is about overcoming cultural boundaries and intermingling or merging different cultures. This theory is fitting in the context of this study given how it compares the role of Western and Chinese music cultures in the development and performance of the piano in China. This theory is well suited to this study, especially since the piano was first a Western invention that was later adapted to represent traditional cultures upon its introduction in China.

III. Methodology

III. A. Research Design

This study was qualitative. Such studies are both interpretivist and also constructivist. Both these principles work together to explore a topic comprehensively, rather than only identifying relationships or outcomes. The latter represents a positivist paradigm. Interpretivism intends to obtain knowledge regarding the different viewpoints held by individuals, while constructivism explores how people make sense of their experiences. In general, it is argued that qualitative research methodologies maintain subjectivity in the experiences of the participants that might be affected by the biases of the researcher [24], [25]. This was appropriate for such a study since it aimed to give meaning to the voices of professional piano players in China. This will overcome existing studies' limitations where the authors have mainly relied on objective methods of data collection to try and understand the views of Chinese pianists on how their performance is affected by culture.

III. B. Sampling

The study relied on a convenience sampling method. Convenience sampling represents the samples that are selected by the researcher based on what is readily and easily available within their reach. On the other hand, another study by Zheng and Leung (2021) [8] examined the relationship that might exist between creativity and Chinese piano performance. The authors included up to a total of three participants who learned to play the piano and knew them personally. In this context, professional piano players that the researcher will reach out to for recruitment will also get additional contacts from other artists who may have input into the study. Further, another study that delved deeper into the perspectives of Chinese piano students on creativity was done by Zheng and Leung (2023) [9], who selected a total of 13 interviewees. Hence, while recruiting the convenience sample for this study, it was considered that the sample size may also fall between three to thirteen professional piano players

based on existing research. Professional piano performers who were known personally to the researcher were mailed the consent forms, information sheet, and participant requirements. Upon obtaining their consent, they were requested to provide additional contacts of professional piano players. The final set of 12 interviews was conducted online via WeChat and Zoom, and the responses of the participants were recorded verbatim.

III. C. Data Collection and Analysis

Semi-structured interviews comprising open-ended questions were utilized for data collection. This is because of the ability of this interview format to encourage participants to provide detailed, subjective, and flexible answers, rather than the rigid, questioning format of close-ended interviews. Additionally, the interview questions were derived from Zheng & Leung (2023) [9], as well as Zheng and Leung (2021) [8], where Chinese participants shared how traditional Chinese culture forbade them to innovate or develop a personal style in their piano performance. Thus, the questions for this study were derived and modified from these qualitative studies, and outlined in Appendix 1. Additionally, thematic analysis was used to evaluate the interview responses. It is a qualitative process by which a large amount of unstructured, subjective data is evaluated for similar and significant patterns and categorized based on themes. The researcher first familiarizes themselves with the data, followed by identifying codes and reviewing the themes with the existing literature [26], [27]. The interview responses were, therefore, evaluated carefully by the researcher to identify patterns and responses that were relevant to the context of social and cultural impacts of piano performance. These patterns were hence combined to form themes that were analysed on their alignment with the research objectives of the study.

IV. Results

IV. A. Participant Characteristics

A total of 12 participants were interviewed for this study. They were all professional piano players. While some of them conducted professional piano performances for almost six years, the careers of some of them stretched to 10, 20 and almost 50 years. Around two of the participants also shared they had been teaching the piano professionally. The interviews of the participants were evaluated using NVivo. A total of six themes were identified (Table 1). Appendix 2 outlines the themes and corresponding significant statements of the participants in detail.

Table 1: Thematic Analysis of Interviews

| Themes | Codes |
|--|---|
| Impact of Social and Cultural Factors on Piano Performance | Cultural literacy is important for appreciating piano and music performance. |
| | Understanding cultural factors also helps to disseminate music. |
| Impact of Chinese Culture on Piano Performance | Chinese culture encourages emotional expression during piano performances. |
| | Chinese culture reflects folk traditions and instruments during piano performances. |
| | The Chinese culture has instilled the pentatonic scale in piano performance. |
| | Chinese culture influences piano performance by impacting family education, policy support, stress relaxation, and political education. |
| Cultural Influence of Piano Performance Strategies | Focus on hearing to improve rhythm and emotional expression of piano performances. |
| | Use rhythm exercises to overcome technical difficulties. |
| | Engage in reading to improve understanding of a piano work. |
| Impact of Western Culture on Piano Performance | Western artists created diverse piano pieces reflective of their personalities. |
| | Need to understand the style of the Western artist and the background behind the piano piece. |
| | Important to research Western culture since the piano is a Western instrument. |
| Western vs. Chinese Culture in Piano Performance | Chinese culture pays more importance to rhythm and melody |
| | Western culture is more structured, and Chinese culture is more liberal in piano performance. |
| | The blending of cultures is appreciated. |
| Sociocultural Difficulties During Piano Performance | Lack of knowledge of Western artists |
| | Difficult to grasp Western piano style |
| | Need to research and train extensively |

IV. B. Impact of Social and Cultural Factors on Piano Performance

Participants collectively agreed on the significant role of social and cultural factors in influencing music, particularly, piano performance (Appendix 2). For instance, Participant 9, took the example of a Chinese piano piece ‘Pi Huang’

and how it represented “*musical elements of Peking Opera Xi Pi and Er Huang, and used the yin and yang of ancient Chinese culture*”. Additionally, they also said “*This piece of music is enough to illustrate that music without cultural and social development has no soul. Performers must also enrich their cultural literacy before they can use their professional skills to interpret the works more deeply.*” Indeed, the importance of cultural literacy in appreciating music and piano performance was also sounded by Participant 3, “*Social environment, people's comprehensive cultural literacy, economic development level and other factors have an impact on the popularization, appreciation and piano education of music.*” Alternatively, Participant 4 and Participant 11, claimed that “*Cultural and social factors play an integral role in music, especially the piano. They not only shape the shape and style of music but also affect the spread and reception of music*” and “*piano education activities can encourage people to create and spread culture.*” Therefore, participants agreed that cultural literacy is needed not just to appreciate the meaning behind a piece of piano music, but also to appreciate and spread the music and cultural history to others.

IV. C. Impact of Chinese Culture on Piano Performance

Additionally, there was also a consensus among participants that native Chinese cultures played a significant role in influencing their piano performance (Appendix 2). In this regard, Participant 11 gave the most comprehensive explanation of how strongly Chinese culture influences piano performance in mainly three ways, “*First of all, Chinese piano performance and creation not only absorb Western piano art but are also deeply rooted in traditional Chinese culture, with keynote music creation as the mainstream. Secondly, Chinese piano performance and creation are adapted from excellent folk songs, ancient songs, and operas, showing strong national characteristics. Finally, while inheriting tradition, Chinese piano performance and creation are also constantly innovating.*” According to Participant 4, Chinese culture is also reflected in piano performance in terms of emotional expression, “*In characteristics, Chinese piano performance pays more attention to expressing emotions and artistic conception. Chinese piano works incorporate elements of traditional Chinese music, giving the works distinctive national characteristics.*” Participant 12 and 9 expressed their preference towards Chinese culture when innovating or creating their piano compositions, because, “*If we understand the development of social history and culture, then piano performance will be more profound and touching*” and also because “*Chinese folk instruments and folk songs provide rich creative materials for the development of Chinese piano music. People can imitate the timbre of Pihuang tune, the melody of folk songs, and the magnificent momentum of folk orchestras through the piano.*” Interestingly, in addition to the characteristic inclusion of the “*pentatonic scale*” – as stated by Participant 8 – Participant 9 also shared that Chinese culture also influences piano performance “*through family education, policy support, stress relaxation, political education.*” They reasoned that the strong representation of national culture and emotional expression encourages parents to teach piano to their children, leading to educational policies and competitions to encourage piano performance and appreciation among the masses.

IV. D. Cultural Influence of Piano Performance Strategies

Chinese culture also influenced the kind of techniques they used to improve their piano performance or for further piano learning (Appendix 2). Participant 2 placed a strong emphasis on the importance of “*hearing*” in improving the rhythm and emotional expression of piano performances. The reason being, “*hearing should always be put first to guide all practice and performance; pay close attention to the rigour of rhythm; observe life, gain insight into human nature, and experience emotions, so that music can be scientifically understood and accurately expressed during the performance*”. Participant 3 claimed that, “*for technical difficulties, we will adopt changing rhythm exercises, divide them into groups, and guide students to carefully study music charts*”. In contrast, the importance of reading was raised by Participant 7, who claimed that, “*Basic exercises for daily scales, arpeggios, and chords: deepen your understanding of the performance of the work and the musical processing of the work through literature reading.*” Therefore, culture also played an important role in the kinds of techniques participants used to improve their piano performance.

IV. E. Impact of Western Culture on Piano Performance

Similar to Chinese culture, participants also shared how heavily their piano performance was influenced by Western culture (Appendix 2). A key feature was that Western artists seemed to create diverse piano pieces, which reflected their unique styles, emotions and journeys. This was specially stated by Participant 3, who said that “*the American composer Gottschalk combined his experience of travelling in Central and South America to create piano music in various styles. The American composer Kapustin's etudes the jazz music style is incorporated into the work, which is very contagious*”. Due to such diversity, participants, such as Participant 8, stated the importance of first understanding the style of the Western artist and the background behind the piano piece, “*Yes, most of the piano practice works are Western works. It is necessary to consult information to understand the creation background of*

the works, and to study the composer's style to create an artistic image that is in line with the spirit of the original works". Participants 2 and 4 shared that, "The piano itself is a Western instrument, and this factor must be incorporated into all aspects of piano playing and teaching" and "in the process of interpreting works, it is necessary to continuously research and learn about the Western historical and cultural background, to have a deeper understanding of different style works to achieve better performance results." Therefore, Chinese piano professionals were not completely new to the impact of Western culture on piano performance. Rather they appreciated how Western piano music is equally diverse and is a reflection of the history, style, journey, emotions and feelings of the composer.

IV. F. Western vs. Chinese Culture in Piano Performance

Participants also shared several instances of how Western and Chinese cultures impact piano performances differently (Appendix 2). One major difference, that was pointed out by Participant 4 was that Chinese piano works "use melodies and harmonies with national characteristics, which have a strong Chinese flavour", while "Western piano works focus on harmony and technique, and the composers have different personalities and different styles of works." Similarly, Participant 8 shared, "The piano art system/style genre/composer personality established by Western culture ... lays the foundation for my personal performance and teaching abilities. Chinese works usually pay more attention to the beauty of melody lines and charm." Interestingly, Participant 11 shared that, "in terms of rhythm, Western music usually has strong and weak sounds that appear regularly and are divided into measures. Chinese music is different in that it has a free rhythm, like Sanban, which has no rules at all." This means that while Western piano music may be more rigid and structured in its composition, Chinese piano does not always follow specific rhythms and "uses lines as the main means of expression, shaping the language characteristics of cadence". Participant 1, shared that "Today, when cultural diversity is booming, such collisions and integrations have injected unprecedented vitality into the development of music, adding more cultural experiences and repertoire choices for performers." There was, therefore, an agreement that while Western and Chinese cultures impact piano performances differently, the practice of blending cultures to create innovative piano works was also being appreciated.

IV. G. Sociocultural Difficulties During Piano Performance

Participants also shared that they encountered some challenges when they tried to develop their piano style when using both Chinese and Western cultures (Appendix 2). One challenge was that since Chinese artists did not know Western artists, they often found it difficult to effectively represent the emotions or intentions of the composer when playing Western works. This problem was shared by Participant 8 who said, "When studying Western piano works, we often encounter scores with incomplete markings. It is difficult to accurately express the composer's intention for such works. The fundamental reason is that we do not have enough understanding of the social culture of various historical stages in the West". This problem was also shared by Participant 4 – "When playing Western works, it is difficult to grasp the styles of each composer's works well, and you will also encounter many difficulties in performance skills". The only solution to these difficulties was the practice extensively and research on various Piano composers, as claimed by Participant 2, "The incompatibility between Chinese piano creations and arrangements, harmony, temperament, musical style, etc., and the fixed structure of the piano keyboard has resulted in technical difficulties in performance. Practice hard to adapt." Similarly, Participant 12 also shared that, "During the learning process, I needed to consult different materials, such as articles and videos, to supplement my cultural deficiencies..."

IV. H. Discussion

Participants shared that it was necessary for professional piano players to develop cultural literacy because some Chinese piano music reflected ancient stories and cultural heritage. This was also reviewed by Hu and Zheng (2024) [28] who studied how the teaching of the piano has become more innovative in higher educational institutions. These courses generally teach about the origins of a particular piano composition or artist by integrating it with the political ideologies and discourses during the time. Contrastingly, participants also shared that, sociocultural factors help to disseminate piano music by making people know more about the impact of their national culture. Similarly, Pereverzeva et al. (2018) [29] as well as Hu and Zheng (2024) [28] shared that, when music such as piano is integrated with different cultural and technological media, it can support cultural dissemination in universities and colleges. Such integrated music sounds diverse and rich, and appeals to people with diverse tastes. Participants believed that Chinese piano music is a reflection of folk music, history and opera music, and also reflects national characteristics through melodies and rhythms of emotional expression. Indeed, this was also supported by Liu (2022) [20] who reviewed that Chinese piano music is strongly influenced by folk songs and Chinese traditional poetry.

These instil the expressive sounds and refined intonation that Chinese piano music is famous for. Interestingly, participants seemed to enjoy how the Chinese culture influenced their piano performance. The elements of Chinese culture in the piano music instil patriotism, and the inclusion of various folk instruments also enables artists to express their emotions freely. These findings were similar to Hou and Isaiah (2021) [21] who highlighted the feature of ‘pianoization’ or musical transplantation in Chinese traditional piano music where the classical tunes are combined with the sounds of other folk instruments. This helps artists retain the melody and structure of the original composition while also making room for innovation and creative expression by including other instruments.

Alternatively, participants also shared that Chinese culture can influence piano performance as seen in increasing educational policies, the enthusiasm of families and an increase in musical competitions which collectively work to encourage Chinese students to take up piano learning and piano performances. Similarly, MacIntyre and Potter (2014) [30] also reported that the culture of piano learning and performance was mainly influenced by competitions, grading levels and recitals in formal education which guitarists do not have to go through. Therefore, pianists show a higher effort to learn and higher introjected regulation during piano learning and composition. Further, the participants shared how culture, especially Chinese culture, influenced the kind of strategies, such as research, listening and exercises, that they used to improve their piano performance and compositions. Indeed, Yin (2023) [31] and Liu (2023) [32] found that young musicians generally played music exercises repeatedly for practice and performance improvement. As they mature, they use their self-regulation skills such as establishing goals, monitoring their practice and changing their practice time. This was not shared by professional piano players, possibly because of their experience considering that the above paper explored piano teaching for students.

According to the participants, Western piano music has specific rules to follow, and artists can innovate on this basis. However, Chinese culture does not have such fixed rules, but their piano compositions are nationalistic and have artistic melodies and rhythms. Western piano pieces have some specific rules to follow, after which the artist can innovate their composition, while Chinese culture does not have such rules but mostly creates piano compositions that are nationalistic and have beautiful or artistic melodies and rhythms. Therefore, Chinese-influenced piano styles give more artistic freedom to the composer. Interestingly, according to Zhang and Negus (2020) [22] as well as Ye (2020) [18], Western pianists are encouraged to expand their talents and play according to their own preferences, whereas in the United States, there is no classical tradition, and pianists prefer to consider personal values and practicality. In contrast, Chinese culture follows humanism and thus encourages piano players to cultivate moral values in their performance [18], [22]. These findings contradict the literature review, therefore, in several ways, where it is seen that Western musical cultures can be extremely varied in their impact on piano performances. While the interviewees of this paper did acknowledge the importance of Chinese nationalism and moral thought, their ideas on Western music being structured contrast with current literature. This shows how vastly different are the experiences of actual professional Chinese piano players as compared to existing research. Alternatively, participants agreed that currently, cultures are being blended to create innovative piano pieces. Indeed, current research proves that in several Chinese piano pieces, such as the “Pi Huang” and the “Moments of Peking Opera”, the harmonic styles of the West are included along with the richness of traditional Chinese piano music (Huang, 2024) [33]. In summation, Chinese piano culture is, therefore, not new to cultural blending and provides sufficient opportunities for artists to innovate their compositions and performances.

In criticism, participants often find it challenging to innovate because Chinese artists did not know about Western culture or artists and found it difficult to effectively represent their emotions or intentions. Creating a personal and innovative musical style was further perceived to be different by the participants because of how different Chinese and Western piano styles are in terms of rhythms, melodies, scales, styles and temperaments. These responses were indeed similar to the studies by Zheng and Leung (2021) [8] and Zheng and Leung (2023) [9] but to an extent. In both these studies, the authors interviewed Chinese piano students and professors regarding how they harnessed creativity in their composition and performance. The participants in these studies shared that Chinese culture encourages only those forms of creativity where the past heritage is reflected. Western piano culture, on the other hand, appreciates pianists for developing unique compositions. Chinese piano culture further requires artists to follow very strict notations which prevent innovation. These research findings, also highlighting the vast differences between Chinese and Western cultures, contradict interview responses where professional pianists shared that Chinese culture granted them much more freedom to innovate as compared to the strict rules needed to be followed in Western piano culture (Appendix 2). This could be because of the role of years of experience since the previous research focused on Chinese piano students. Regardless, irrespective of professional expertise, participants shared about their inadequate knowledge and accessibility of Western piano compositions which restricts innovation and demands further future attention.

V. Conclusion and Future Scope

This paper investigated the influence of sociocultural dynamics in contemporary Chinese piano performance. Interviews were conducted with 12 professional Chinese piano artists. A total of seven themes were discovered. Firstly, all participants agreed that culture strongly influenced piano performances and compositions, and supports dissemination. Secondly, Chinese culture particularly influences piano performance by encouraging artistic expression and the inclusion of various instruments to reflect folk culture. This culture was reflected in the techniques used for improving and innovating performance. These findings therefore show the significant extent to which, social and cultural factors influence the performance and composition of Chinese professional piano artists. Additionally, the participants also shared that in comparison to the strict rules and structures of Western cultures, Chinese piano cultures leave more room for freedom according to the participants. This was an interesting finding because existing literature represents Chinese music and piano cultures as being extremely rigid, with limited creative freedom and a mandatory need for artists to innovate in a manner that represents national culture. This research advances the literature by showing that Chinese music cultures may be misunderstood and misrepresented in mainstream media and that difficulties with innovation can change or vary based on expertise or professional skills. Future research can, therefore, interview both Chinese and Western piano artists to compare their experiences with integrating non-native cultures into their piano performances. Future research can also be expanded on music professionals other than the piano to find out how broadly does social and cultural factors impact music, particularly Chinese musical performances and music composition strategies. However, participants also shared that inadequate knowledge about Western culture and artists made it challenging to innovate compositions, even though they appreciated the importance of researching and blending. Therefore, future research must also focus on studying the factors responsible for hindering or supporting Chinese piano artists to innovate their performance and composition, especially in the context of being able to learn and integrate different music cultures. Overall, these findings provide useful implications for future improvements in practice and research.

V. A. Study Implications

The findings of this study hold significance for several purposes. Firstly, the findings have useful implications for amateur or future piano artists in China, who wish to learn about the role of Western and traditional Chinese musical cultures, and how they combined with social factors to develop contemporary Chinese piano works. Therefore, future Chinese piano artists need to remember that culture is irreplaceable from their composition and performance and that they need to appreciate the cultural and social history of a piano composition while mastering it. It is also significant for amateur Chinese piano artists who wish for the kind of social surroundings that may influence their fusion of Western and Chinese cultures in their future piano works. As per these study's findings, it is recommended that Chinese piano artists who are building their repertoire, work in surroundings or environments that offer them sufficient opportunity to research and learn from other cultures. However, participants in this study shared how they find it difficult to understand or learn about incomplete Western composition. The Chinese government and educational institutions must, therefore, assist artists in obtaining easier access to compositions and music research findings from various cultures, that can expand their skills, and innovate their composition and performance.

The findings are also particularly useful for music technicians and digital artists, who may be looking for diverse ways by which, they can innovate their music through the integration of Chinese and Western music philosophies. Indeed, based on the study's findings, both Chinese and Western cultures include different advantages such as creative freedom and music structure which artists can combine to produce a fusion or novel musical composition. This study is also beneficial for Chinese piano teachers and administrators of musical institutes. This is because they can use the findings to identify how social and cultural factors may be influencing the music performances of their students while identifying opportunities for improvement in the piano skill development process. For instance, it is recommended that teachers and educators provide an environment that strengthens research, and offers creative freedom and practising opportunities for piano artists to improve and innovate their performance. Lastly, this study is also significant for policymakers involved in the music and cultural development of China. This is because these findings can provide policymakers insights into the limitations of traditional Chinese music cultures, and the policy changes that can be considered to encourage the integration of Western musical cultures in the piano industry. For example, professional Chinese piano players shared how they did not always have knowledge and accessibility to Western piano compositions for innovations. Policymakers and institutions can, therefore, identify ways to increase this accessibility or provide technological innovations that Chinese pianists can use to improve their performance and compositions.

V. B. Limitations

There were some strengths and limitations of this study that serve as references for future research. Firstly, the study only relied on qualitative, interview findings that can be at risk of bias and social reliability. This, however, serves as a strength considering that there have hardly been studies to explore the experiences and opinions of professional Chinese piano players on the sociocultural implications of their performance. Another limitation was that some of the participants had vast variations in their professional piano experience with some having only six years to some having almost one to five decades of expertise. While this did not make the findings very heterogeneous, they do indicate the possibility of time or years of experience as a mediator or confounding factor. Some of the piano professionals also claimed to be teachers which indicates another possible mediator. Future research can, therefore, segregate Chinese piano professionals based on their careers and experience to identify how these factors work with social and cultural aspects to influence piano performance, composition and innovation.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Questionnaire

- (1) How long have you been professionally conducting piano performances?
- (2) To what degree are you aware of the role of culture and social factors in music in general, and piano in particular?
- (3) What are the characteristics and nature of sociocultural factors in Chinese piano performance and composition?
- (4) What practising, composition, and performance strategies have you used in innovating or improving your piano composition and performance?
- (5) Have you ever been exposed to Western sociocultural factors in your piano performance? If yes, how?
- (6) How would you compare the impact of Chinese culture with Western culture in terms of your piano performance and composition?
- (7) Do you like how Chinese social and cultural factors impact your piano performance? Why? Why not?
- (8) What are the sociocultural difficulties that you have experienced in terms of developing your style or performance of playing the piano?

Appendix 2: Thematic Analysis from NVivo

| Theme 1 | Participants | Coverage | Significant Interview Statements |
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| Impact of Social and Cultural Factors on Piano Performance | Participant 9 | 22.06% | <i>"From the beginning of my professional studies, I heard my senior sister rehearse "Pi Huang". I just thought that this piece of music was technically difficult. There were many complex rhythm patterns and chord intervals that I wanted to challenge, but I couldn't imitate "Pi Huang" no matter what. As I grew up and gained more knowledge, I realized that "Pi Huang" was created based on Peking Opera music. The work mainly draws on the musical elements of Peking Opera Xi Pi and Er Huang and uses the yin and yang of ancient Chinese culture. Conceived from philosophical thoughts. The musical image includes the performance of Peking opera and martial arts, as well as the depiction of the beautiful scenery of Dianchi Lake in Yunnan and the freehand brushwork of the long couplet of the Grand View Tower. It pays attention to the sense of space and fantasy and expresses the praise of patriotic heroes in Chinese history. This piece of music is enough to illustrate that music without cultural and social development has no soul. Performers must also enrich their cultural literacy before they can use their professional skills to interpret the works more deeply."</i> |
| | Participant 3 | 10.92% | <i>"Social environment, people's comprehensive cultural literacy, economic development level and other factors have an impact on the popularization, appreciation and piano education of music. The popularity of piano education in developed countries is relatively high. At present, some people in China still have some utilitarian ideas in piano learning."</i> |
| | Participant 4 | 8.01% | <i>"Cultural and social factors play an integral role in music, especially the piano. They not only shape the shape and style of music but also affect the spread and reception of music. Can better understand and appreciate music by paying attention to the cultural and social context behind it."</i> |
| | Participant 11 | 7.17% | <i>"First of all, piano education activities can encourage people to create and spread culture. Secondly, piano education. It can cultivate people's aesthetic ability, feel beauty, create beauty and appreciate beauty so that we have the quality and quality of beauty."</i> |

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| | | | <i>Finally, piano education can well improve personal cultivation and cultural literacy, as well as develop intelligence."</i> |
| | Participant 8 | 7.05% | <i>"Music itself is a product of the times, and so is the piano. In different social backgrounds and national cultures, musical works and piano works with different characteristics will be derived."</i> |
| Theme 2 | Participants | Coverage | Significant Interview Statements |
| Impact of Chinese Culture on Piano Performance | Participant 12 | 30.85% | <p><i>"I think cultural and social factors are still very important because music itself is a kind of culture, so we learn music through piano and inherit Chinese music culture through music, which has a positive effect on society. Because it is an art that conveys truth, goodness and beauty, I think it is very meaningful and worth exploring and learning throughout our lives."</i></p> <p><i>"From my personal perspective, the first is to spread China's excellent traditional culture, and the second is to inherit China's music culture. The two major elements of Chinese music are melody and rhythm. The melody of Chinese music is the same as that of the West. It is curvilinear, like Chinese mountains and flowing water. So in fact, it is a kind of audio visualization, which is audibility. This effect actually has a very profound inheritance effect on Chinese broad and profound culture."</i></p> <p><i>In terms of Chinese piano creation, its nature is that many outstanding composers are exploring national materials, including folk songs, songs and dances, and local customs. Based on the original ethnic material, they created very beautiful works. Therefore, I believe that the characteristics and nature of social and cultural factors have a positive promotion effect."</i></p> <p><i>"Yes. As I mentioned in the previous interview, behind the music is the cultural heritage. If we understand the development of social history and culture, then piano performance will be more profound and touching. The understanding, imagination and creation of music are all based on our comprehensive understanding of culture and history. Therefore, social and cultural factors play a very important role in learning music and piano performance."</i></p> |
| | Participant 11 | 27.61% | <p><i>"First of all, Chinese piano performance and creation not only absorb Western piano art but are also deeply rooted in traditional Chinese culture, with keynote music creation as the mainstream. Secondly, Chinese piano performance and creation are adapted from excellent folk songs, ancient songs, and operas, showing strong national characteristics. Finally, while inheriting tradition, Chinese piano performance and creation are also constantly innovating. On the one hand, the melody and harmony have Chinese national characteristics, and the melody imitates the acoustic characteristics of folk music. On the other hand, it also draws on and absorbs Western art, understands the aesthetic differences between China and the West, and creates new creations and interpretations."</i></p> <p><i>"Yes, first, compared with Western art, Chinese traditional art has its historical tradition, unique characteristics, and unique aesthetic characteristics. Chinese aesthetics emphasizes artistic expression, lyricism, ambition, and the unity of emotion and reason. The mainstream of Chinese music is the art of line, which is embodied as an extension and has a plot. Secondly, Chinese traditional music has its unique history and culture, artistic conception, and aesthetic ideal state. Finally, Chinese piano performance uses elements adapted from ancient songs and folk songs, reflecting a free rhythm that can be freely extended along with the emotional development of music."</i></p> |
| | Participant 4 | 24.64% | <p><i>"In characteristics, Chinese piano performance pays more attention to expressing emotions and artistic conception. Chinese piano works incorporate elements of traditional Chinese music, giving the works distinctive national characteristics. In nature, Chinese piano performance and creation reflect China's profound cultural heritage and the spirit of the times, paying more attention to the transmission of emotions and cultural expression."</i></p> <p><i>"I like. Chinese society and culture focus on the expression of inner emotions and artistic conception. Chinese piano works incorporate elements of Chinese culture and have Chinese characteristics, which can stimulate the resonance and patriotic feelings of the performers. At the same time, when playing the musical works of the own nation, the</i></p> |

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| | | | <i>cultural connotation of the works can be better expressed and the deep meaning of the music can be conveyed."</i> |
| | Participant 3 | 23.96% | <p><i>"In recent years, some excellent piano works have emerged in our country, many of which incorporate strong national elements, such as "Numa Ame", "Hani Love Song", "Pihuang" by Zhang Zhao, and "In That Faraway Place" which adapted from songs. Zhang Shuai's three "Preludes" contain elements of Xinjiang music and have a strong sense of rhythm. Composer Gao Ping's "Dance Fury-Homage to Astor Piazzolla" incorporates elements of tango music. Wang Lishan's "Suite: Impressions of Paintings by Higashiyama Kail" contains Japanese music, which fully reflects these excellent creations. Diverse integration and innovation of music culture."</i></p> <p><i>"Yes. The diverse ethnic vocabulary makes music more colourful and fascinating. Excellent piano works are worth learning and appreciating."</i></p> |
| | Participant 9 | 23.90% | <p><i>"In Chinese society, people influence Chinese piano performance through family education, policy support, stress relaxation, political education, etc. As the concept of eugenics and eugenics has an increasing influence on people, parents will train their children to learn a musical instrument, and the piano is the most popular. This is followed by the encouragement of education policies, and various literary and artistic election competitions are held every year in music. Countless; in the context of Chinese huge population base, people are under heavy pressure in life and work, and sometimes need to play musical instruments to relieve stress; in the historical context of Chinese revolutionary martyrs, China has a wealth of red songs praising the dedication of revolutionary martyrs' spirit, which also provides rich material for the development of Chinese piano works."</i></p> <p><i>"Yes. Chinese folk instruments and folk songs provide rich creative materials for the development of Chinese piano music. People can imitate the timbre of Pihuang tunes, the melody of folk songs, and the magnificent momentum of folk orchestras through the piano. They can also use the piano to adapt the original compositions of Pipa, Bamboo Flute, and Guzheng."</i></p> |
| | Participant 10 | 13.60% | <p><i>"Most Chinese music is very beautiful or majestic in style. The representative work "Butterfly Lovers" with beautiful music style, and the majestic representative work "Yellow River"."</i></p> <p><i>"I like it. Most Chinese songs have a strong sense of melody."</i></p> |
| | Participant 7 | 12.41% | <p><i>"Features: It has national music elements, such as rhythm, melody, and themes; it has humanistic characteristics, such as geography and humanities, and the background of the creation of the work is usually story-telling and contemporary; Nature: Use music to convey Chinese culture."</i></p> |
| | Participant 8 | 12.19% | <p><i>"Nationality (pentatonic scale, opera and other elements) Mass nature (adaptation of popular folk songs)"</i></p> <p><i>"Yes. Although Chinese piano works started later than the West, many works reflect the real social background and have more Chinese national characteristics. When practising, you can usually feel more familiar and better grasped."</i></p> |
| | Participant 1 | 10.86% | <p><i>"China has rich musical art forms, such as opera and folk music, which have a great influence on piano performance. Local music has a unique artistic style in terms of harmonic texture, melody composition and rhythmic organization, and the culture and emotions it expresses are also uniquely oriental. Piano performance and repertoire are also greatly influenced by these aspects."</i></p> |
| | Participant 2 | 10.83% | <p><i>"What is national is what is the world. In today's context of world music globalization, integration and development, it is very important to learn and learn from Western music, but the fundamental soul should always be based on the excellent music culture and art of the country and nation, absorb nutrients, inherit and develop."</i></p> |
| | Participant 5 | 10.78% | <p><i>"As a piano performer, you must base yourself on the foundation of national culture, explore the traditional Western music system in China's profound cultural and artistic heritage, and promote the further improvement of piano playing."</i></p> |
| | Participant 3 | 3.53% | <p><i>"The pentatonic mode is closely related to the needs of the times."</i></p> |
| Theme 3 | Participants | Coverage | Significant Interview Statements |

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| Cultural Influence of Piano Performance Strategies | Participant 2 | 14.33% | <i>"Music is the art of hearing, the art of time, and the art of emotion. It is another transcendental language for communicating with people. Therefore, the hearing should always be put first to guide all practice and performance; pay close attention to the rigour of rhythm; observe life, gain insight into human nature, and experience emotions, so that music can be scientifically understood and accurately expressed during performance."</i> |
| | Participant 3 | 10.64% | <i>"From a teaching point of view, for technical difficulties, we will adopt changing rhythm exercises, divide them into groups, and guide students to carefully study music charts. In the later stages of learning, we will listen to the versions of outstanding performers with students to help them establish higher musical aesthetic standards."</i> |
| | Participant 11 | 8.03% | <i>"First of all, make reasonable, planned and targeted arrangements for practice time, cooperate with initiative, and take the initiative to master and understand. Secondly, fully grasp your attention. Concentration is the guarantee of efficiency when learning. Moreover, only with concentration can you better develop your musical expression. Finally, you must have a certain basic knowledge of music and an understanding of music."</i> |
| | Participant 7 | 8.01% | <i>"Basic exercises for daily scales, arpeggios, and chords: deepen your understanding of the performance of the work and the musical processing of the work through literature reading."</i> |
| | Participant 4 | 4.05% | <i>"Practice slowly with a metronome, practice separately, practice changing rhythms, practice combining fast and slow, and listen to more piano works."</i> |
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| Theme 4 | Participants | Coverage | Significant Interview Statements |
| Impact of Western Culture on Piano Performance | Participant 3 | 15.72% | <i>"Many of the piano works that I have come into contact with can feel the diverse atmosphere of Western culture. For example, the American composer Gottschalk combined his experience of travelling in Central and South America to create piano music in various styles. The American composer Kapustin's etudes the jazz music style is incorporated into the work, which is very contagious. Performers must first understand the creative background of the work, master the rhythm, and solve technical difficulties."</i> |
| | Participant 8 | 14.06% | <i>"Practice: Works by Hanon, Czerny, Chopin, Beethoven, Mozart, etc. Strategy: Practice slowly and sing."</i> <i>"Yes, most of the piano practice works are Western works. It is necessary to consult information to understand the creation background of the works, and to study the composer's style to create an artistic image that is in line with the spirit of the original works."</i> |
| | Participant 9 | 13.57% | <i>"Yes. When playing some Western polyphonic music, the influence of Western social and cultural background is extremely obvious. Polyphonic music has a long history. The earliest polyphonic music can be found in the church chants in the Middle Ages. When the monks sang carols, they sang different melodies on different parts. Later, the Dutch School of Music in the Netherlands further developed the theory and writing techniques of polyphony. Only after I walked into the church to listen to polyphonic choral works and combined them with Western history could I truly understand Western polyphonic music. Therefore, Western social and cultural factors have an extremely profound impact on piano works."</i> |
| | Participant 1 | 11.58% | <i>"The piano originated in the West. During its performance, it is bound to be directly or indirectly exposed to Western social and cultural factors. Therefore, in the process of interpreting works, it is necessary to continuously research and learn about the Western historical and cultural background, to have a deeper understanding of different style works to achieve better performance results."</i> |
| | Participant 11 | 9.47% | <i>"Yes, first of all, in piano performance, we need to be familiar with a certain amount of Western music history and understand the author's creative ideas and intentions. Secondly, in piano performance, we need to have a certain understanding of the creator's heart, so we need to understand the breadth and depth of the work by understanding the history of Western music. Finally, we need to grasp the correct playing style, perform according to the composer's style, and follow the rules of piano playing."</i> |

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| | Participant 2 | 4.27% | <i>"The piano itself is a Western instrument, and this factor must be incorporated into all aspects of piano playing and teaching."</i> |
| Theme 5 | Participants | Coverage | Significant Interview Statements |
| Western vs. Chinese Culture in Piano Performance | Participant 1 | 31.13% | <p><i>"Piano performance was introduced to China in the mid-19th century and developed rapidly in the country in less than two hundred years. Nowadays, the piano, as an instrument with a wide range and rich harmonic effects, has been used in various fields, especially in the field of cooperative art. Piano performance has been widely used at home and abroad, and personal performances have also developed in a more diversified way. Different music genres and styles are widely accepted, and the performance scene has also moved from traditional professional stages such as concert halls to more popular venues."</i></p> <p><i>"The influence of Eastern culture on the development of Western music has never stopped. Many famous Western composers have shown their favour for Eastern culture. Many local modern and contemporary composers have significant influence in the West. Today, when cultural diversity is booming, such collisions and integrations have injected unprecedented vitality into the development of music, adding more cultural experiences and repertoire choices for performers."</i></p> |
| | Participant 12 | 18.08% | <p><i>"I think Chinese culture is very profound. If we play Chinese works, Chinese culture is of vital importance to us. From artistic conception to melody, lines to rhythm, the characteristics of different ethnic groups have a profound, huge, and very valuable impact."</i></p> <p><i>Regarding Western culture, as I mentioned in the fifth question, Western music culture, such as the Renaissance, includes the origin of German and Austrian music. Understanding the background of all music cultures plays an important role in our further understanding of the creative intentions and musical cultural thoughts of each composer in different music periods."</i></p> <p><i>Therefore, as Chinese, when we study Western culture, we must understand the essence of Western music culture. We may spend a lifetime exploring and improving. These are all based on the fact that we must have a profound foundation in Chinese culture, including art, calligraphy, dance, etc., which are of great value to piano performance and teaching."</i></p> |
| | Participant 7 | 16.42% | <i>"The influence of Western culture is more reflected in the analysis and creation of the basic structure, composition techniques, textures and layers of works. When interpreting foreign works, it is necessary to understand the relevant culture and creative background; the influence of Chinese culture There will be more specific performance when playing local piano works."</i> |
| | Participant 11 | 14.56% | <i>"First of all, in terms of melody, the mainstream of Chinese music uses lines as the main means of expression, shaping the language characteristics of cadence. Western music has the characteristics of combining virtuality and reality, and the degree of virtuality and reality in the performance of melody lines is different. Secondly, from a structural point of view, Western music is largely the product of three sections, while Chinese music rarely adopts the ABA structure, and is more of an extended body, mostly scattered, from disorder to order. Finally, in terms of rhythm, Western music usually has strong and weak sounds that appear regularly and are divided into measures. Chinese music is different in that it has a free rhythm, like Sanban, which has no rules at all."</i> |
| | Participant 8 | 14.68% | <i>"The piano art system/style genre/composer personality established by Western culture is something that every piano practitioner must learn, and it also lays the foundation for my personal performance and teaching abilities. Chinese works usually pay more attention to the beauty of melody lines and charm. In short, practising both Chinese and Western works can provide training in different aspects."</i> |
| | Participant 4 | 14.48% | <p><i>"Chinese works mostly use melodies and harmonies with national characteristics, which have a strong Chinese flavour. And because Chinese culture is the culture of this nation, it can resonate more with the emotions and artistic conception of the works."</i></p> <p><i>Western piano works focus on harmony and technique, and the composers have different personalities and different styles of work. It is necessary to pay more attention</i></p> |

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| | | | <i>to details during performance and improve the ability to transform skills and emotions during performance."</i> |
| | Participant 9 | 12.53% | <i>"When it comes to polyphonic learning alone, Western polyphonic music techniques have far-reaching significance for our country's music creation. Due to our country's vast territory, diverse cultures, and different living customs, the music forms themselves are rich and diverse. After the Westernization Movement, with the introduction of Western culture, our country's music was also affected. Music scholars gradually came into contact with Western polyphonic music writing techniques and works, and under their influence, they explored and researched music creation, making Chinese music gradually move towards a professional development path."</i> |
| | Participant 2 | 6.86% | <i>"In today's era of globalization in all aspects, Eastern and Western cultures should not be opposed and separated, but should strive to learn from each other, integrate, and develop together."</i> |
| | Participant 3 | 3.74% | <i>"Both show diverse characteristics. We need to understand and learn new works from both cultural and technical aspects."</i> |
| Theme 6 | Participants | Coverage | Significant Interview Statements |
| Sociocultural Difficulties During Piano Performance | Participant 5 | 16.94% | <i>"Chinese piano music and education started later than in Western countries, and the public's acceptance of repertoire and styles has certain limitations. Because our interest in familiar repertoire is high, it is difficult for us to diversify our playing styles. Therefore, the selection of tracks should highlight the hierarchy and add appropriate publicity and guidance."</i> |
| | Participant 12 | 15.79% | <i>"For example, when we study Chinese or foreign works, there are some national characteristics, such as Korean music. When I don't know enough about Korean music, I must read authoritative articles, such as Professor Jihao Quan's article on the Korean "long and short" rhythm system. When studying the characteristics of "long and short" rhythms, I consulted the famous musicologist Professor Xiaonan Zhao. He said that "the soul of Korean music is long and short." So, this sentence has been of great help to my piano playing and teaching. To give another example, the second piece I am studying is Debussy's Estampes—La soirée dans Grenade. During the learning process, I needed to consult different materials, such as articles and videos, to supplement my cultural deficiencies regarding the rhythm and dance characteristics of "Habanera", a black dance in Spain."</i> |
| | Participant 11 | 13.31% | <i>"First of all, during performance, the wrist will become stiff, causing the wrist itself to lose its due elasticity. Through slow practice, you can first make the fingers active and flexible, and then further understand the relationship between the force exerted by the fingers and the stability of the wrist. Secondly, fingers 1.4.5 are weak fingers with relatively weak strength. You can improve the flexibility of the palm joints and train their strength at the same time, training each finger individually. Finally, there will be problems with unconscious nervousness. You can correct your attitude, don't take chances, put more pressure on yourself, practice more on weekdays, and have skilled techniques."</i> |
| | Participant 8 | 13.07% | <i>"When studying Western piano works, we often encounter scores with incomplete markings. It is difficult to accurately express the composer's intention for such works. The fundamental reason is that we do not have enough understanding of the social culture of various historical stages in the West. I can only find the Composer's pianist version for reference."</i> |
| | Participant 4 | 12.28% | <i>"When playing Western works, it is difficult to grasp the styles of each composer's works well, and you will also encounter many difficulties in performance skills. By reading books about Western works, you can understand the creative background of Western works, and listen to more audio to grasp the style of the works. For some technical problems in the performance of some Western works, it is necessary to practice, listen and analyse more."</i> |
| | Participant 7 | 11.97% | <i>"Sometimes you may have different preferences from the audience when it comes to song selection. During the performance, you should arrange the repertoire appropriately, taking into account the interests of the audience and the style of the repertoire that you are good at."</i> |

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| | Participant 10 | 8.66% | <i>"It is more difficult to master the styles of some foreign modernist music. The solution is to learn more about the composition background and listen more."</i> |
| | Participant 2 | 7.90% | <i>"The incompatibility between Chinese piano creations and arrangements, harmony, temperament, musical style, etc., and the fixed structure of the piano keyboard has resulted in technical difficulties in performance. Practice hard to adapt."</i> |
| | Participant 9 | 5.16% | <i>"Before going abroad, I had no idea what the sound of the fortepiano was, what church music was, or what Chopin's "Revolution" was about. Only by listening and experiencing with my ears can I appreciate the musical style characteristics of different countries."</i> |
| | Participant 1 | 2.03% | <i>"I have been working as a coach and my style is not very obvious."</i> |

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