

Breaking the Gap between Musicology and Music Performance

——An Analysis of the Study of Chinese Music Performance Practice

Lide Ben^{1, a, *}

¹*School of Foreign Languages, University of Electronic Science And Technology Of China, Chengdu, China, 611731*

a. 1742868342@qq.com

** corresponding author*

Abstract: In 2011, Cambridge University held an international academic conference--“performance studies network international conference”, and proposed to establish the discipline of “performance musicology” in 2014, which made it possible to solve the old contradiction between musicology and music performance. This paper explains the possibility and inevitability of the common maturity of musicology and music performance, and seeks more breakthrough points to break the barrier. Through literature analysis, this paper constructs the core value of the practicality of music performance research from the perspective of interdisciplinary integration. This paper finds that the development of the two academic fields of music performance research and musicology is a mutual achievement and common growth. With the help of musicology, music performance research will make performance more speculative and logical, and musicology will have more practical value with the entry of music performance.

Keywords: Musicology, Music performance, Music performance practice, Research on music performance

1. Introduction

In the second half of the 20th century, the study of music performance has become a hot research project in international musicology, producing many academic achievements. The research project on British music performance from 2004-2014 had a great impact on China. The project also achieved two phased accomplishments, which were published in the Centre for the History and Analysis of Record Music (CHARM, 2004-2009 for short) and the Centre for Musical Performance as Creative Practice (CMP CP, 2009-2014 for short) [1]. For this purpose, Cambridge, England also carried out an international academic seminar called “Performance Research Network” (the first one was held in July 2011, called “performance studies network international conference”) every two years. At the third (2014) conference, John Rink, the chairman of the conference, reviewed the development of performance research in the past ten years and proposed to establish the discipline of “Musicology of Performance”. This proposal and the four consecutive international academic conferences have also promoted the development of Chinese musicology and music performance.

Central Conservatory of Music, the top institution of music in China, held the "First National Symposium on Music Performance Research" in 2016. Since then, it has been held every three years, and it has been the third one in 2022. The Shanghai Conservatory of Music in China also held the "International Summit Forum on Music Performance Theory" in 2019. The research on music performance in China has reached an unprecedented high.

Professor John Rink emphasized that "only by continuously promoting performance research can performance theory catch up with the brilliant achievements made in performance practice in concept and provide a more reliable and feasible reference for performers" [1]. It can be seen that effective research on music performance needs to have practical value for performers. The study of music performance takes the study of performance practice as the core research. It emphasizes the close relationship between musicologists and music performance practice. It also has the inherent characteristics based on "interdisciplinary vision", which gives it broad research space. More experts from different fields can join in academic exchanges to promote the development of music performance. These experts are not limited to the field of music, but also can be philosophers, scientists, sociologists, psychologists, etc. In this context, this paper will first explain the concept and value of music performance research, and on this basis, explore the possibility and inevitability of interdisciplinary, hoping to arouse more professional scholars' interest, see the broad prospects of music performance, and help Chinese music performance to develop along a more open, more vital and sustainable path. Finally, it gives the answer to the significance of the study of music performance and how to better carry out the relevant research based on the actual situation in China.

2. History and Present Development of Music Performance Research

The relationship between musicology and music performance itself is closely linked and grows together. All the great musicians in history have compound identities, such as C.P.E Bach, a musicologist and composer. He is not only a very prolific composer but also published *The True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*. This book is still an important basis for studying the playing methods of keyboard instruments in the 18th century. As a composer, pianist and music critic, Schumann did the same. He once edited the *New Music Magazine* (*Neue Zeitschrift für Music*) and so on. Later, after a long period of development, various professions gradually began to work independently, and estrangement also began to emerge in the 20th century. The development of "new musicology" at the end of the 20th century made musicologists often write academic articles to criticize the works of composers and the performance of performers, which led to the escalation of contradictions and differentiation, and aggravated the division between musicologists and performers and composers. The famous composer Shostakovich once mocked the musicologist as a person who "can neither fry eggs nor eat eggs, but talks about eggs all day" [2]. This situation is not only caused by the prosperity and development of music theory, music analysis and the popularity of music criticism but also because expressing the whole content of music in words and expressing the meaning and significance of words in music are essentially two different modes. It is difficult to communicate. But the estrangement is not caused by one side, and the music players are also responsible. In the context of China, music performance has always regarded itself as an independent practice, believing that technology is the first and paramount. Besides, because many contemporary musicologists are not experts in the field of performance, they are far from proficient in playing various instruments, so their articles often make performers think that the theories of musicologists cannot be directly used in practice. Therefore, the trust between musicologists and music performers is very low. Fortunately, in the past decade, musicians and performers have gradually realized their own limitations and started to try to integrate and communicate with each other. This opportunity took place after 2000, with the support of the 10-year project of the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) of the United Kingdom, the Centre for the History and

Analysis of Record Music and the research of the Centre for Musical Performance as Creative Practice were established, and the theoretical research of music performance practice spread to China rapidly. After three sessions of the international conference on performance research at Cambridge University in the United Kingdom, Beijing and Shanghai in China also held four academic seminars on music performance research, which were attended by more than 30 universities and more than 200 performers. More than 10 academic lectures involved a variety of interdisciplinary academic frontier reports related to performance research and produced a large number of high-quality papers [3]. In 2015, John Rink of the United Kingdom was invited as a musicologist of music performance research to be the judge of the 17th Chopin International Piano Competition, which also broke the situation that only performers were invited as judges in the past. This behavior shows that the gap between musicology and music performance is slowly disappearing, and the influence of music performance research has reached a certain height and is recognized internationally.

3. A Broad and Narrow Interdisciplinary Model of Music Performance Research

After understanding the relationship between musicology and music performance in history, it has become the common demand of musicology and music performance to break discipline barriers, establish a win-win discipline mechanism and develop together. Performance practice research belongs to western musicology and is also an important part of music performance research. Compared with other music disciplines, it is more likely to combine practice with theory and has high practicability. It is a comprehensive research that includes all performances and practices. The interdisciplinary model of music performance research can be divided into broad interdisciplinary and narrow interdisciplinary.

The broad interdisciplinary model of music performance research refers to external interdisciplinary, which is mainly embodied in the combination of music performance and science and technology. The first stage of British music performance research is the research on the history and analysis of recorded music from 2004 to 2009. The research in these five years is highly scientific and technological. It uses computer programs to analyze the recording and video parameters of performance, and mainly makes a visual analysis of the data of different styles of performers playing the same work in different periods of history. Through the collection of a large number of data on strength, speed and other factors, the UK has become an international leader in performance research. China's Central Conservatory of Music has been exploring the cooperation system with AI and successfully held a special concert for the exhibition of the achievements of "AI Night - Music AI Accompaniment System" in 2018. The special feature of this AI is its anthropomorphic learning ability, which can remember the personal playing style and playing habits of the performer. This has saved more funds for many performances (it is expensive to find accompaniment, especially if they are still students in school, and they have no financial resources), and the instruments in the performance location are not restricted by the environment (in some poor areas of China, there is no piano, so the performers only sing or play accompaniment tapes with a fixed beat). This practical interdisciplinary exploration is very popular with music performers. The famous "deviation" principle of performance put forward by Carl E Seashore also used science to help music performance. He found in the sound wave chart that when playing the same work, the students' performance is more unified, while the performers' performance has more changes and their own personality treatment. This "deviation" movement is the difference between performers and students. This use of atlas analysis and musical acoustics to reveal the personality and characteristics of performing artists reflects the charm of performers. His analysis also set off the trend of scientific positivism.

In the narrow sense, the interdisciplinary model of music performance research refers to the internal interdisciplinary research. The internal interdisciplinary research mainly refers to breaking the traditional discipline settings within music, such as music history analysis. Its original research object is to classify and sort out music works and their formation process, and study the independence of works and the mutual influence of musicians in the production process. Then when the methodology of music history is combined with music performance, the focus on the work can be shifted to the performer. The music performance of performers is the most intuitive way to express works. If we classify and sort out the performance styles of performers at different times, we can find different performance styles in each era, because performers will be affected by the aesthetics of their own times when expressing music. In addition, it is also possible to classify the performances and recordings of the same work in different periods and the preferences of contemporary audiences of the same work in different periods. Such research will make modern performers more theoretical and practical when playing works of historical times. This means that the historical data of the work is transformed into the historical data of the performance.

Moreover, the course of theoretical analysis of works in all conservatories of music in China generally refers to the analysis of the works of composers studied by students majoring in musicology. It mainly involves the background of composers, the structure of specific works, the harmony technology and the music form used in works. However, there are few specific analyses of music performance. This analysis of the performance style of performers can also be called an interdisciplinary analysis of music performance aesthetics. This transformation can make practice and theory closely combined, and also enable performers to participate in theoretical research to a greater extent.

4. Research on Strengthening Chinese Music Performance

After the successful holding of five academic conferences on music performance research in the UK, China has also held several international conferences in major top conservatories [4]. The holding of academic conferences has promoted the development of the discipline and produced many related papers and works, which is the progress of China's music performance research. Compared with international conferences, most of the participants are experts in the industry, but if you want to really promote the development of a discipline, after these high-end academic conferences, people can also set up interdisciplinary forums among students in schools related to major professional fields to cultivate students' interests and help them expand more research space. The students' active exploration will also be fed back to the research fields of various professors, so that it can be written from the top, and in turn, the cycle mode from the bottom students to the top professors will accelerate the construction of disciplines. In the teaching system, it is also a feasible way to establish a new teaching system reform, increase matching courses, and cultivate students in professional fields, so as to reserve young people for the development of Chinese music performance. For example, we can set up practice courses related to music performance in the music major, or we can also set up music thesis writing courses in the music performance major, which can help students from both disciplines to do interdisciplinary research more easily [5]. In terms of courses offered, the Central Conservatory of Music in China has tried to offer a course on performance practice research, and related professors have published relevant works [6]. However, there are not many such courses in professional schools across the country, and to be specific, there is only one. If these courses can be expanded and systematized, the research on music performance will have greater progress and harvest.

5. Conclusion

Although the ancient contradiction between performers and theorists has eased up in history to the present, seeking more platforms and solutions for cooperation is the most effective way for the progress of both sides. This paper attempts to explain the possibility and necessity of the common maturity of musicology and music performance. The study of performance music practice is just such an opportunity, which is the best proof of the integration of practice and theory. Young music performance science needs the joint participation of more performers and theorists. The establishment and cultivation of this interdisciplinary model will enable this discipline to grow rapidly. Compared with the international music performance science, there is still much to learn and learn from, and more academic exchanges, academic conferences, international joint lectures and various attempts and research will attract more scholars from different fields to participate. As a new discipline, music performance science has a broad world, and its great research value and practical significance still await more professional scholars to explore. The examples involved in this paper are mainly based on the summary of the paper, but there is still a lack of field visits and face-to-face interviews. Due to the epidemic situation, the author did not conduct face-to-face interviews with the main subjects of cross-border events, such as Professor Rink, who was invited to be a judge of Chopin. It is hoped that more interdisciplinary experts can offer be interviewed in future research, and more academic experts can get some suggestions and comments on this research field. Also, the author hopes to actually participate in some international academic conferences and increase communication with insiders, so as to carry out some comprehensive exploration. These can be used to make up for some regrets and improve some limitations in this paper and get a more comprehensive conclusion.

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