



CHARACTERISTICS OF CLASSICAL PIANO MUSIC

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Abstract: This article analyzes the formation and developmental stages of classical piano music, as well as its artistic, aesthetic, and stylistic features. It is highlighted that the changes that occurred in European musical culture in the second half of the 18th century had a significant impact on the development of piano art. The study provides a scientific and theoretical analysis of the unique aspects of piano music in the works of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, who are considered mature representatives of the Classical period, the refinement of the sonata form, the enrichment of musical expressive means, and the development of performance styles.

Keywords: Classicism, piano music, sonata form, musical style, harmony, musical form, artistic and aesthetic features, Vienna Classical School, musical interpretation, classical music.

Introduction

Piano music, as one of the most important and multifaceted directions of world musical culture, has been formed and developed over centuries. The period of Classicism holds a special place in the history of piano art. This period is recognized as a stage in the musical art where the principles of precision, order, proportionality, logic, and artistic perfection became leading. In classical music, human thinking, inner experiences, and aesthetic views are manifested through clear form, smooth melody, balanced composition, and expressive means of performance. In this regard, the study of classical piano music is of great scientific and practical importance not only for the history of music but also for performing arts and music education.

The great changes that occurred in European musical culture in the second half of the 18th and early 19th centuries had a strong impact on the development of the piano. While instruments such as the harpsichord and clavichord were widely used in earlier periods, by the era of classicism, the piano began to take a leading position in musical practice due to its rich dynamic capabilities, sound diversity, and ease of performance. The piano's ability to express strong and soft sounds allowed composers to reveal musical images more deeply and to delicately depict the human psyche and emotions. As a result, the piano has become not only a solo instrument but also the primary instrument of chamber music, the concert genre, and the pedagogical repertoire.

The development of classical piano music is primarily closely linked to the works of representatives of the Vienna Classical School—Joseph Haydn, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and Ludwig van Beethoven. These composers made a great contribution to the perfection of piano music in terms of form and content. In Haydn's work, the logical structure of the sonata form, the fluency of the themes, and the consistent development of musical thought are clearly manifested. While Mozart brought elegance, lyricism, melodiousness, and artistic charm to piano music, Beethoven elevated this genre to a more dramatic, philosophical, and profound

level. It was through their work that the main aesthetic criteria of classical piano music were formed.

In the piano music of this period, genres such as sonata, variation, rondo, fantasy, and concerto were widely developed. In particular, the sonata genre emerged as one of the most perfect manifestations of classical musical thought. In the form of a sonata, the logical movement of musical thought occurs through the opposition of themes, their development, and final unification. This situation reflects the principles of order, balance, and internal harmony characteristic of the aesthetics of classicism. At the same time, technical mastery and artistic expression are inextricably linked in piano works. The performer is required to possess not only precise technique but also a deep understanding of the work's stylistic features, a subtle sense of the musical image, and to convey it impressively to the listener.

Another important aspect of classical piano music is its pedagogical significance. Today, the works of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven are widely used in music education institutions as the primary repertoire for teaching piano performance. These works serve as an important tool for developing musical thinking, rhythmic precision, a sense of form, artistic taste, performance culture, and technical mastery in students. By studying classical piano works, the performer acquires skills in analyzing the musical text, understanding the composer's idea, and stylistically correctly interpreting the work.

Discussion

The study of classical piano music is closely linked, first and foremost, to the understanding of the general artistic and aesthetic principles of this period. In the art of classicism, order, precision, proportionality, logic, and formal perfection serve as the primary criteria. These features are also clearly visible in piano music. The composers of this period sought to express musical thought fluently and accurately, without excessive complexity. Therefore, in classical piano works, every melody, every theme, and every harmonic turn serves a specific purpose. In it, internal content, compositional order, and artistic balance take priority over external decoration.

During the period of Classicism, the role of the piano in musical practice increased. While the harpsichord, widely used during the Baroque era, was limited in its ability to modify sound intensity, the piano allowed the performer to clearly express the distinction between strong and soft sounds. It was precisely this opportunity that greatly influenced the style of creating musical images by classical composers. Through the piano, the subtle emotions of the human psyche, lyrical states, joy, drama, and internal contradictions found a more natural expression. As a result, the piano became an important instrument in solo, ensemble, and concert genres.

One of the important features of classical piano music is the high development of the sonata form. The sonata is recognized as one of the most perfect examples of musical thought from the Classical period. In it, the internal dramaturgy of the work is formed through the opposition, development and final harmony of musical themes. The exposition, development, and recapitulation parts of the sonata form allow for the consistent expression of musical thought. This structure requires the performer to interpret the work not as a simple sequence of notes, but as an artistic process with internal logic.

In the work of Joseph Haydn, the piano sonata is distinguished by its clear form, fluid theme, and logical development. In Haydn's works, musical thought is often expressed in a simple, concise, and lifelike spirit. In his piano works, cheerfulness, humor, precision, and

rhythmic liveliness occupy an important place. Haydn demonstrated a mastery in developing themes in piano music and creating large forms from a small musical idea. In this regard, his work serves as an important stage in the formation of the classical sonata form.

In the piano music of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, elegance, melodiousness, and musical beauty occupy a special place. In Mozart's works, the simplicity of form is harmonized with the depth of content. In his piano sonatas and concertos, a natural flow of melodies, harmonic fluency, subtle lyricism, and vivid imagery are noticeable. When performing Mozart's music, it is important to avoid excessive dramatization or artificial affectation, maintaining the fluency of the voice and the elegance of the phrases. This requires a high level of taste, a refined ear, and stylistic sensitivity from the performer.

In the works of Ludwig van Beethoven, the piano music of the Classical period reached a new level of content. In Beethoven's sonatas, dramatic power, internal conflict, philosophical contemplation, and the idea of human will are strongly manifested. Although the classical form is preserved in his piano works, they are deepened in content and approach the expressive means characteristic of Romanticism. In Beethoven's piano music, dynamic contrasts, strong chords, wide registers, rhythmic tension, and dramatic development are of great importance. Therefore, his work is considered an important bridge between classicism and romanticism.

Harmony also occupies an important place in piano music of the Classical period. In the works of this period, the precision of the tonal center, the stability of the cadence, and the logic of the harmonic development are the leading features. Composers sought to express musical thought clearly and intelligibly rather than through complex harmonic experiments. However, this simplicity is not superficial, but based on a deep internal order. Harmonic means serve to reveal the mood, images, and dramaturgy of the work.

From a performance perspective, classical piano music requires a special approach. In such works, loyalty to the note, rhythmic accuracy, articulatory clarity, dynamic balance, and the culture of phrasing are of great importance. In the performance of a classical work, excessive freedom, excessive change of tempo, or excessive emotional exaggeration may be stylistically incorrect. Because the aesthetics of classicism implies the expression of emotions in a proportional, controlled and form-bound manner. Therefore, the performer must interpret the work with a deep understanding of its internal order, formal structure, and the composer's style.

The pedagogical significance of classical piano music is also immense. In today's music education, the works of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven play a crucial role in shaping students' technical and artistic skills. Through these works, students develop skills in clear rhythm, pure intonational hearing, finger independence, phrasing, dynamic control, and a sense of musical form. In particular, classical sonatas help young performers understand the beginning, development, and conclusion of musical thought.

Furthermore, studying classical piano music fosters aesthetic taste in students. Through these works, they learn to feel the beauty, order, logic, and harmony of music. Classical music attracts the listener not with its noisy impressiveness, but through inner balance, clarity, and artistic perfection. Therefore, piano works of this period are not only an important part of the performance repertoire but also an effective means of musical education.

Theoretical basis

In elucidating the theoretical foundations of classical piano music, it is first necessary to deeply understand the aesthetic views, system of musical thinking, and compositional principles of this period. Classicism was a major artistic movement formed in European art and culture in the second half of the 18th and early 19th centuries, in which order, precision, logic, balance, formal perfection, and semantic clarity were manifested as the main criteria. In musical art, these principles are manifested in the harmony of melody, rhythm, harmony, form, and performance style. In particular, piano music became one of the most important creative fields of the classical period, developing as the primary means of expressing the artistic thinking, aesthetic ideals, and performance capabilities of composers.

The theoretical foundation of classical music is based on the unity of form and content. The composers of this period sought to create a musical work not as a collection of random melodies, but as a holistic artistic system developing on the basis of internal order and logic. Each theme, each harmonic turn, and rhythmic movement served the overall compositional idea. Therefore, in classical piano works, precision, conciseness, and natural development prevail over excessive ornamentation, complexity, or emotional exaggeration. This approach gave the piano music a unique clarity and clarity.

Theoretically, one of the most important features of classical piano music is the refinement of the sonata form. The sonata form is regarded as a perfect compositional structure that ensures the logical development of musical thought. It usually contains parts of exposition, development, and recapitulation, through which themes are contrasted, developed, and ultimately brought to a specific musical unity. In the exposition, the main and auxiliary themes are presented; in the development, these themes are processed through various tonal and rhythmic changes, and in the recapitulation, they are reappeared within the main key. This process expresses the relations of contradiction and harmony, movement and stability, freedom and order characteristic of the aesthetics of classicism.

The development of the sonata form in piano music is directly linked to the works of Joseph Haydn, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and Ludwig van Beethoven. In Haydn's sonatas, clarity of form, conciseness of themes, and the logic of musical development play an important role. His works clearly demonstrate the ability to create a large compositional structure from a small musical idea. In piano music, Mozart brought melodiousness, elegance, and lyrical content to the sonata form. In his works, the simplicity of form is combined with the depth of artistic content. Beethoven enriched the classical sonata form with dramatic and philosophical content, further expanding the expressive possibilities of piano music. In this regard, the works of these three composers determined the stages of the theoretical and practical development of classical piano music.

One of the theoretical foundations of classical piano music is the stability of the tonal-harmonic system. During the period of Classicism, the major-minor system served as the primary means of organizing musical thought. The precision of the tonal center, the clarity of the cadence, the consistency of the harmonic development, and the logic of the modulations are among the important features of classical works. During this period, harmony manifested not only as a harmony of sounds but also as an important means of organizing musical form and determining dramaturgical development. In piano works, the relationship between keys played a major role in determining the overall character, mood, and system of images of the work.



Rhythm and meter also occupy a special place in the theoretical foundations of classical piano music. In the works of this period, rhythmic precision, metrical stability, and the naturalness of movement are of great importance. In classical music, rhythm often provides the internal order of musical thought. Dance genres, marching movements, smooth passages, and precise phrases expand the expressive possibilities of piano works. At the same time, the simplicity of the rhythmic structure does not imply the superficiality of the content; on the contrary, its clarity requires a high level of order, discipline, and musical sensitivity from the performer.

In classical piano music, melody appears as one of the primary means of expression. Classical melody is distinguished by its fluidity, naturalness, symmetrical phrasing, and memorability. Often, melodies are built on the principle of question-and-answer, periodicity, and logical conclusion. This makes the musical idea understandable and impressive for the listener. It is extremely important for a pianist to understand such a melodic structure, as in a classical work, every phrase has its own beginning, development, and end. Its correct interpretation is one of the main conditions for revealing the artistic content of the work.

Another important feature of classical piano music from a theoretical perspective is the issue of texture. Piano texture refers to the arrangement of sounds in a work, the relationship between voices, and the general structure of chords, passages, arpeggios, and other performance devices. During the period of Classicism, the piano texture gradually diverged from the harpsichord style, adapting to new dynamic and technical possibilities. Types of texture that serve as melody in the right hand and accompaniment in the left have become widespread. Albert's bass, chord accompaniment, arpeggio, and transparent voice structures were important features of classical piano music. Such a texture ensured the clarity of the musical text and served to clearly hear the melody and harmony.

The technical capabilities of the piano are also one of the factors determining the theoretical foundations of classical music. Compared to the harpsichord, the piano allowed for changes in sound intensity, the expression of dynamic nuances, and the creation of images of various characters. Dynamic contrasts such as "piano" and "forte," articulatory techniques such as crescendo and diminuendo, and legato and staccato occupied an important place in classical piano performance. For this reason, composers widely used the piano not only as a technical instrument but also as a means of artistic expression.

The theoretical foundations of classical piano music are also inextricably linked to performance interpretation. In the performance of a classical work, fidelity to the note, sense of form, precision of phrasing, dynamic balance, articulatory clarity, and tempo stability are of great importance. The performer must consider the requirements of the composer's style and the aesthetics of the era without interpreting the work too loosely. Classical music contains emotion, but it is expressed within the framework of order and form. In this regard, classical piano performance requires internal discipline, thinking, and subtle artistic sensitivity.

Within the framework of theoretical foundations, it is necessary to emphasize the genre system of classical piano music. During this period, sonata, variation, rondo, fantasy, concerto, and small pieces were widely developed. Each genre has its own compositional and expressive features, revealing various facets of piano music. The sonata demonstrated the logical development of musical thinking, the possibility of creative processing of the theme of

variation, and the rondo demonstrated compositional playfulness based on repetition and contrast. Piano concerts created an artistic dialogue between a soloist and an orchestra.

The theoretical foundations of classical piano music can also be considered in connection with music education. The works of this period serve as an important tool for students and pupils in understanding musical form, developing harmonic hearing, developing technical skills, and cultivating artistic taste. Through classical repertoire, young performers acquire note-keeping, rhythmic precision, dynamic control, the culture of phrasing, and performance responsibility. For this reason, the piano music of the Classical period continues to maintain its significance in the current system of music education.

Overall, the theoretical foundations of classical piano music are determined by aesthetic principles, sonata form, tonal-harmonic system, rhythmic precision, melodic clarity, texture features, genre system, and performance interpretation. All these factors combine to ensure the artistic perfection and historical significance of classical piano music. Fortepiano music of the Classical period, as an example of art that expressed human thinking, feelings, and aesthetic ideals in an orderly, clear, and perfect form, remains relevant from a scientific, performing, and pedagogical perspective to this day.

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