

Analysis on Lester's Piano Transcription "Rigoletto"

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Abstract—Lester was one of the most important musicians and pianists in the romantic period. Piano transcription occupies a special position in Lester's composition career. It is of the largest number of Lester's works, and a genre most people know. His piano transcriptions can not only reflect the fusion with the original composition in content, but also can show the charm of the color out of the ordinary in music. This creative technique has injected new vitality for the world of music, which has a very far-reaching significance. Taking "Rigoletto" as example, the paper has analyzed its composition background, material, musical structure, style and playing techniques.

Keywords—Lester; Rigoletto; piano transcription; adaptation technique; artistic style; playing techniques

I. INTRODUCTION

Throughout the history of European music, Lester, known as "king of piano", was a prominent musician in the romantic period, and he held a very important position in history of music. The magnificent composition and dazzling performance made his piano skills up to an extraordinary extent and greatly enhanced the expressive power and emotional color of the piano music. It plays a far-reaching role in the performance and development of the piano music.

In Lester's life, the adapted piano works occupies a very large proportion. Among them, "Rigoletto" also occupies a very special place. It is a masterpiece processed and composed from the Quartet of "Praise You, Love Goddess" in Verdi's opera "Rigoletto", which possesses a very high performance value and appreciation value. So, this work is loved and sought after by many pianists. However, from the performance point of view, we should have a complete understanding and analysis of the original opera and adapted piano work in order to grasp it accurately. Only by fully understanding the connotation, form and composition meaning of this adapted song, can it reflect its historical value and rich connotation of this work.

II. THE COMPOSITION BACKGROUND OF LESTER'S PIANO TRANSCRIPTION "RIGOLETTO"

Lester lived in a period which opera art were flourishing and innovating continually. A lot of great opera composers born in Europe, including Wagner, Webb and Verdi. They composed "Rigoletto", "La Traviata", "Carmen" and other outstanding opera works.

Lester's piano transcription "Rigoletto" was created in 1859. His composition inspiration and motivation were derived from the famous Quartet of "Praise You, Love Goddess" in Verdi's opera "Rigoletto" at the fourth scene. The opera tells a story about a clown of the king Rigoletto. His very favorite daughter Gilda was cheated and abandoned by a duke, so he simmered with rage and attempted to design incitement to murder the duke. Rigoletto arranged the duke to be a guest in hotel managed by his hired murderer and brought Gilda to the outside of the hotel. He accidentally witnessed the duke was making merry with the sister of the murderer Madeleine. Innocent Gilda really saw the truth. Her dreams and hopes vanished into thin air, and she was extremely grieved.

The Quartet clearly shows four characters with distinct characteristics in the opera. The first was Rigoletto. He deeply loved his daughter who was mocked and abandoned by a duke, which made him burst into fire. The second was the inconstant playboy duke who played with others for pleasure. The third was Gilda who looked for love but was cheated. The third was Madeleine who was molested by the duke but did not mind at all. Lester cleverly borrowed the different characteristics of characters in the original, and adapted it and composed a new one. He perfectly integrated the dramatic effects with characters' personalities in the opera, which enhanced the tension of the opera and enriched the image of this transcription.

III. THE COMPOSITION STYLE OF LESTER'S PIANO TRANSCRIPTION "RIGOLETTO"

Lester was superb in playing piano. He was known as "Paganini" on the piano. Therefore, people label Lester's works as "virtuosity". Anyone who has read the works of Lester is certain to feel the wonderful piano technique. However, Lester was not of the style of empty technique prevailing in that period. He has his own unique ideas: always believing and understanding the intention of the composer is the mission of a good performer. Skill is only an expression form of music. Therefore, piano skills should first serve the connotation of music, and pursue the unique spirit of individual performers on the basis of respecting the inherent requirements.

Lester believed that music is the expression and interpretation of human emotions and musical notes reflect the emotional status of mankind. "Art is more powerful than an artist." In pursuit of music expression, we should go to the

pursuit of the connotation of the music itself. Music is not limited to a single "good voice". It is an art form carrying the mind and heart of human! Therefore, musical works are the inner sustenance of emotion and thought, rather than an external form.

The above concepts are manifested totally in "Rigoletto". On the one hand, it always follows the connotation of the original work. Lester added an introduction with thematic motivation in the front. He focused on the description of the adulterous duke, frivolous Madeleine, sorrowful and resentful Gilda. It develops according to the clue of the original opera. It almost perfectly reproduces the concept of music the original opera tries to follow. On the other hand, in the piano transcription "Rigoletto", Lester took the development of story and the change of the feelings of the characters as basis, and comprehensively used a variety of composition techniques and piano skills and difficult techniques. Its fundamental purpose is to use the new expression carrier and music language to restore the music attitude the original opera wants to show.

IV. ADAPTATION TECHNIQUES USED IN LESTER'S "RIGOLETTO"

Lester was very faithful to the original in his piano transcription "Rigoletto" on a whole. First, at the start he singly added an intro of 14 bars. It is a comprehensive lead to this adapted music. It uses the mutual repetition and comparison of the two materials to highlight the dramatic effect. The complete intro continually changes mode and tonality. But we can clearly find the tendency of it. For example, the final sounds of the second bar and fourth bar finally attribute to bG. The outer-parts cantos of the fifth and sixth bars at the right hand starts from bE to F, then from G to bG, which make a semitone progress every time. In the seventh and eighth bars, the roots of left hand also were bG. In the 11th bar, bG in the alto voice section goes up to bG (#A) in the high pitch section in the mode of broken chord. As a whole, bG is the most important tendency tone in the intro. It makes the intro structure compact and auditory effect harmonious and music with strong power. This technique is Lester's most commonly used composition technique.

Example 1: fragment of original quartet. "Fig. 1"



Fig. 1. Fragment of original quartet.

Example 2: fragment of adapted quartet. "Fig. 2"



Fig. 2. Fragment of adapted quartet

Lester added some decoration and made some changes on normal rhythm. The addition of tercet increases the singing quality of rhythm and promoted the development of music. Compared with the original, Lester's work can express strong and delicate feelings through details and processing, which sublimate the mood of music and better express its sentiment.

The section from 54th bar to 68th bar (see example 3) were added by Lester. It is a supplement to Rigoletto's music motivation, and also symbolizes that conflicts and hatred begins to become fiercer. The seventh chord in #D harmonic major drops six tones to the second transposition of the main chord, forming a contrast and echo with the previous music. It laid the groundwork for the Quartet in the climax.

Example 3: the section from 54th bar to 68th bar in adapted "Rigoletto". "Fig. 3"

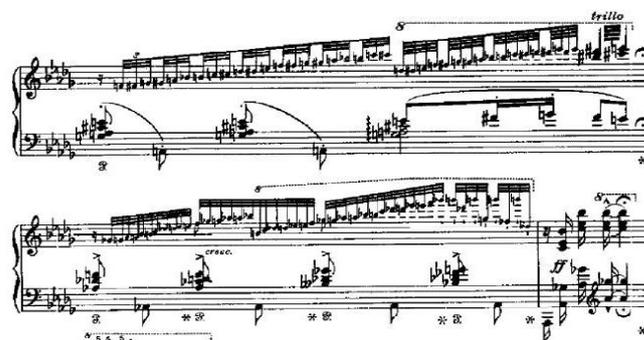


Fig. 3. The section from 54th bar to 68th bar in adapted "Rigoletto".

The section from 85th bar to 91st bar (see example 4) reproduces the classic melody of Quartet which weaved materials of the Duke, Madeleine, Gilda and Rigoletto, and pushed to the highest point and ended.

Example 4: the section from 85th bar to 91st bar in adapted "Rigoletto". "Fig. 4"



Fig. 4. The Section From 85th Bar To 91st Bar In Adapted "Rigoletto".

Through above comparisons, it is easy to find that: first, Lester had his own unique insights about the use of harmonic language, mode and tonality. He changed the simplicity and unicity of original harmony, developed a lot of colorful

harmonies and made the transcription with dramatic tension. Second, Lester stressed the skills and decorative character of piano music, which enriched the single tone melody and made them harmonic and intensive. They all reflect Lester's excellent symphonic music thinking.

V. THE PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS OF LESTER'S PIANO TRANSCRIPTION "RIGOLETTO"

In Lester's "Rigoletto", intensive ornaments, tones by alternating hands, complex dual tone and octave run through. It is a great test to player's individual skills, tone control, physical strength and concentration to perform this song. It needs players to overcome difficulties and finish with a lot of practice and pondering. Below, the paper will analyze the single tone, double tone and octave and variations and other playing techniques to illustrate "Rigoletto".

A. Single Tone

In Lester's "Rigoletto", single ones usually were written in scale. Scale is one of the basic practices in playing piano. It is not too difficult to play it, but it needs a lot of figure functions. There is a lot of large-margin fast scale running in the B part of "Rigoletto" "Fig. 5".

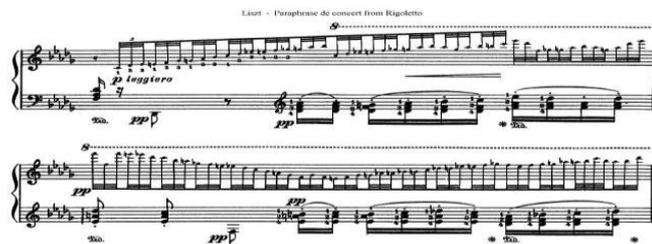


Fig. 5. Rigoletto.

From above we can see that "Rigoletto" contains many kinds of scale forms, including chromatic scale, third and sixth double-tone scales and octaves. It highly improves the difficulties of double-tone scales and octaves. It is worth noting that, in scale practice: first, pay attention to the independence of each finger, and respectively train its running ability. Pay attention to figure rotation and try to avoid non-uniform, disturbance of fluency and incoherence in playing. Second, use brain to control and adjust figure-touching actions and focus attention to seek the best touching state. Keep each tone clear and clean. Third, keep a certain speed and quality to play scales. It needs players to relax wrists and coordinate state of figures. With a lot of practice, players can play each scale well.

B. Arpeggio

Lester, in order to pursue the gorgeous virtuoso sound, used a lot of fast short arpeggios and long arpeggios in broken chord. Its tone is like a sudden wind and rain, which brings highlights to the overall music. A passage of gorgeous virtuoso arpeggio needs players to practice more and slow and continuously, for it can make their figure with mature function. Practice as more as possible, until players can play it automatically or semi-automatically. The key to play

arpeggio well is to uplift and drop down figures well, firm stable base and move into right position. All timbres should be deep, vigorous and full. All practices have to pass a process from quantity accumulation to qualitative leap. Blind practice will only run counter to our purpose. Therefore, players should combine correct methods and scientific practice together in order to practice arpeggio well.

C. Octaves

Octave is quite common in piano playing skills. Its sound is rich, and it needs high techniques. So, octave became Lester's important virtuoso means to write brilliant works. Octave technique is frequently used in "Rigoletto". It has an importance influence on the characterization of people, expression of dramatic conflicts and music effects. So, to practice octave well is the successful key to play "Rigoletto" and perfectly show the key of music connotation. The following is a part of intro: "Fig. 6"



Fig. 6. A part of intro.

It needs skillful arm, wrist and figure functions to play octaves. First, player should play firmly and strongly, relax wrists and put figure in motion with elbow joints and big arms. After touching key freely, takes keys as point of strength and lifts arm flexibly. Keep wrist parallel and transmission function in playing and do auxiliary support well.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

"Rigoletto", adapted by Lester, can be a perfect fusion of music and techniques. In music, Lester used colorful harmonies and flexible piano vocabularies to express the distinctive characteristics and inner emotions of the four representative characters in the original. The adapted piano music has a great dramatic tension and perfect integrated music and techniques together, which showed Lester's excellent piano performance skills and extraordinary composition talent.

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