

## FROM FRANZ LISZT'S LATE PIANO WORKS TO ANALYZE HIS MUSIC PERFORMING STYLE

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**ABSTRACT:** *As a pianist, Franz Liszt plays an important role in the European music history. He made some open innovations in harmony, tonality and other aspects, which brought essential changes in his late piano works. He brought some new concepts of style and harmony to the music, giving music creators more inspirations. The article is to analyze the use of dissonant interval in harmony, scale and tonality in his late piano works to present the characteristics and the changes of his late music style.*

**KEYWORDS:** Franz Liszt, piano works, music, harmony.

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### INTRODUCTION

Franz Liszt composed a large number of excellent music works in his lifetime and those are the rarities in music history. Depending on outstanding piano playing techniques and boundless creation, he made a tremendous contribution to the development of music. He is a great pianist and used the extremely open creative techniques to express his unique music ideas by using perfect melody. He composed different kinds of music works and the styles are so different, also the music styles are changeable. His late works are more introverted than the middle fanatical works, implying more religious beliefs which reflect his thoughts of life itself. Franz Liszt's late famous piano works are *Mephisto Waltz*, *La lugubre gondola*, *The Fountains of the Villa d'Este*, *Gray Clouds* and so on. From his late works, we can know some music characteristics.

### The use of dissonant interval in harmony and nontraditional chord

#### The tritone at the special place

The tritone includes the augmented fourth interval and diminished fifth interval and they are the dissonant intervals in traditional harmony concept. *Disaster*, one of his late piano works, reflects the tritone interval relationship, because it ends up with the tritone in every phrase at the beginning. He particularly used the tritone to show every phrase and used dissonant interval at the special place to show the harmony sound effect. *Disaster* is the description of his late mental anguish life, reflecting his afraid and sad emotions to his weak body. So the players should realize his lonely and lost emotions to have a good control of the tritone.

### **The continuous use of the augmented triad**

The augmented triad, one of the extremely dissonant chords, is consisted of two kinds of three intervals to form chord structure to sound nervous and harsh so that few composers regard this as the primary chord to compose. In his late piano works, the augmented triad plays a very important role. For example, in *Gray Clouds*, the augmented triad was used to pursue the gloomy and horrible sound effects. The continuous use of the augmented triad made his works have atonality. He had a try on nontraditional chord, using the augmented triad to regard it as the primary chord in the whole chapter. By using the augmented triad which was rarely used by others, not only should he make the description of music, but also he expressed his inner mind.

### **The prominence of the augmented eighth interval and diminished eighth interval**

The augmented eighth interval, diminished eighth interval and other dissonant intervals are rarely used in music creation. In *La lugubre gondola*, he used two interval forms, and they appeared in strong beats suddenly. In the sixth and ninth bar line the augmented eighth interval and diminished eighth interval appeared respectively, describing the circumstance of the boat swaying on the river. This prominent interval brings the personality of his music to present the sad atmosphere, expressing Liszt's inward sadness and ineffable bitterness of his late lifetime. Considering this, the players should pay much attention to the use of the augmented eighth interval and diminished eighth interval. The players should put themselves in Liszt's position to realize the emotions at that time to play providentially.

### **The innovation of the traditional chord structure**

The third interval structure is the base of the traditional chord. In his late piano works, he used the overlapping four degrees chord structure to replace the traditional overlapping three degrees chord structure creatively. For example, in *Gray Clouds*, it begins with the fourth degree chord structure, and then, it goes with the traditional third degree chord alternately. In the ninth line bar, the overlapping four degrees cylindrical chord structure is used in it. The fourth degree chord structure has the clear and elegant sound effects to present the characteristic of clouds imaginably.

### **The special termination style**

Franz Liszt's late works usually end up with unexpected harmony. In his late works, music termination style has three aspects. Firstly, he used subdominant to replace the functional harmony at the end of the music, emphasizing the gradual music termination style. He pursued the colorful sound effects to express the atmosphere and circumstance. This was mainly reflected in the termination style of *Evening bell*, *Disaster*, *The three Mephisto Waltz*. Secondly, he usually used dissonant interval at the end of the music to lengthen this kind of instable state, so that he gave audience imaginable space to bring them endless and wonderful

feelings. This was mainly reflected in *La lugubre gondola*. Thirdly, randomness and freedom takes a dominant role in some of his works. For example, at the end, *La lugubre gondola* has chromatic melody to lighten the sense of music direction, bringing instable melody. In a word, this expresses the inner emotion of his.

### **The analysis to the scale, mode and tonality**

#### **The use of the pentatonic scale and pentatonic mode**

To delete two scale degrees from the diatonic major scale, we can get the pentatonic scale. From the interval relationships of the five cadre sound, the pentatonic scale is short of shrill sound effects. *Engagement* is one work of his lifetime. At the end of this music, he used melodic contour of the pentatonic scale to show the single-tone in the theme and used a series of melody to present the theme of the music. The use of the pentatonic scale leads the new composing style, especially having a great influence on Debussy's composing style who is one of the representatives of Impressionism. The use of the pentatonic scale is a pioneer action which has a great influence on the later piano composing style.

#### **The appearance of the compound tonality concept**

In the music composing, composers use different chords, modes and tonalities which are vertically superimposed to form chord with compound structure. Liszt's late works had formed the compound tonality concept. For example, he started to use eastern pentatonic mode and natural size mode together.

#### **The changes of his music performing style in his late piano works**

In Liszt's early years, he is very charismatic and energetic, so his music works are open and gorgeous, expressing the free style. It seems unintentional, but all the parts of his works are scheduled carefully. His music works are lifelike and his thoughts are neoteric. By using liberal and even open scales, he created great works to shock the world at that time. He created the style with virtuosity, so he was regarded as a pianist who was with virtuosity. For other pianists, it is untouchable. Influenced by his early travel, religion beliefs and philosophy, also tormented by loneliness and disease, he changed his thoughts, spirits and attitudes towards life. As a result, he gave up his early composing techniques which were with the grand concepts and virtuosity to start to explore unadorned and succinct piano ditty. Comparing with his previous works, the later piano works have less simple virtuosity. On the contrary, he composed the works from his heart to make them unadorned and deep, not using the complicated techniques and orotund skills to play the piano with great passion to show off his music concepts. In his old age, Liszt was more persistent to his beliefs. The inspirations were from his inner heart, such as the essence of life, the manifestation of nature and the meaning of death. These were full of the connotation of philosophy, making his works more deep. The direct reason why the later performers couldn't have a good control of his

performing style was that he challenged the tradition and constantly pursued the new performing techniques, patterns and sound effects. In his old age, Liszt broke the traditional harmony techniques and actually he explored New Harmony. His works had a close connection with Debussy and Maurice Ravel's works. In his old age, he used more unconventional techniques to express his inner heart, or to rely on religion, or to express his loneliness. In the works of his old age, he referred to the dead issue .By using intervals and chords, not only did he describe the theme of music , but also expressed his inner ideas. For example, in *The Fountains of the Villa d'Este*, he described water in which he put mysteriousness of religion to express his emotion that the water could give him everlasting life. Liszt's late piano works are related to some elements of harmony and these kinds of creational techniques refer to Impressionism in the 20th century. In addition, there are some parallel processing techniques to reflect the color of his music in piano works.

## CONCLUSION

Liszt is a pioneer of music creation. When the music of Romanticism was very popular, he started to pursue the new language and form of music. The frustration on the way to innovate made him be lonely in his old age.

But the dissonant interval which he explored and innovated was the prime technique feature of Impressionism in music. Liszt used the interval which was prevented by tradition to break and innovate in harmony structure, becoming the prime structure power in his works. He regarded music as the way of emotion expression and emphasized that emotion was the reflection of music existence and value, giving more flexibility to music form. In his old age, Liszt was constantly exploring in harmony to pursue the neoteric expressing technique, expressing his desires about the new harmony system and modern mode. Liszt had been putting the neoteric ideas into his own works, promoting the development of music in Romanticism at that time.

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