

A Pedagogical Study of Selected Piano Compositions

by the "Godfather of Piano Education", Zhaoyi Dan

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project is to research the pedagogical, philosophical and compositional ideals of the renowned Chinese pedagogue Zhaoyi Dan and to provide performance and pedagogical suggestions for selected piano works. Zhaoyi Dan (b. 1940) is one of the leading piano educators of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in China. Over his sixty years of teaching, he has been given the nickname “Godfather of piano education”. He has taught many renowned concert pianists, including Yundi Li, Sa Chen, and Haochen Zhang. Twenty-nine of Dan’s students have collectively won sixty-three prizes at major international competitions. This paper will detail Zhaoyi Dan’s comprehensive teaching philosophy and methods by studying his published academic theses, piano compositions, and online master classes and seminars. The selected piano works composed by Zhaoyi Dan are presented with an introduction of each piece, brief musical description, and pedagogical suggestions. Through the study of Zhaoyi Dan’s pedagogical philosophies and selected piano works, I hope this paper will show his helpful teaching methods and add to the pedagogical piano repertoire for teachers and students.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this paper to my beloved mother Xiangjun Du and father Xiqin Guan, who have provided their great support for my study of piano from the age of six until now.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF EXAMPLES.....	vi
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF ZHAOYI DAN	1
2 ZHAOYI DAN'S TEACHING PHILOSOPHY AND PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES	5
Five Relationships in Piano Pedagogy	5
The Design of Dynamic Layers in Piano Performance.....	10
Fundamental Piano Teaching — New Paths: The Basic Piano Course For Beginning Students.....	15
3 SELECTED PIANO SOLO WORKS BY ZHAOYI DAN	20
Elementary Level – <i>Five Children's Piano Pieces</i>	23
Beautiful Flowers are Blooming.....	23
In the Meadow.....	27
Planting Sunflowers.....	30
A Story of the Shepherd Boy.....	33
Yaxshi.....	40
Intermediate Level.....	43
Facing the Sun (from <i>Ten Etudes</i>).....	43
Chasing Xi-er (from <i>Ten Etudes</i>).....	47
The Impression of Zither (from <i>Ten Etudes</i>).....	49

	Page
Flying a Kite.....	53
Longing.....	61
Advanced Level.....	68
Night Banquet of Shu Palace (Piano Solo).....	70
Introduction.....	70
Pedagogical Suggestions for the Introduction.....	70
Section I.....	72
Pedagogical Suggestions for Section I.....	74
Section II.....	78
Pedagogical Suggestions for Section II.....	81
Section III.....	88
Pedagogical Suggestions for Section III.....	89
4 CONCLUSION	92
REFERENCES	94

LIST OF EXAMPLES

Example	Page
1. Beethoven <i>Piano Sonata</i> No. 5 in c minor, Op. 10, No. 1, 1 st movement, 1 st theme, mm. 1-8.	12
2. Mussorgsky, <i>Pictures at an Exhibition</i> , mm. 1-5.....	13
3. Mussorgsky, <i>Pictures at an Exhibition</i> , mm. 9-12.....	13
4. The Sweet Fragrance of Friendship Blooming in numbered notation. ...	24
5. Realization of the numbered notation	24
6. Zhaoyi Dan, <i>Beautiful Flowers are Blooming</i> , mm.1-5.	25
7. Zhaoyi Dan, <i>Beautiful Flowers are Blooming</i> , mm. 5-8.	25
8. Zhaoyi Dan, <i>Beautiful Flowers are Blooming</i> , mm. 21-24.	26
9. Zhaoyi Dan, <i>In the Meadow</i> , mm. 1-2.....	27
10. Zhaoyi Dan, <i>In the Meadow</i> , mm. 9-12.....	28
11. Zhaoyi Dan, <i>In the Meadow</i> , mm. 24-28.....	28
12. Zhaoyi Dan, <i>In the Meadow</i> , mm. 41-46.....	28
13. Zhaoyi Dan, <i>Planting Sunflowers</i> , mm. 1-4.	30
14. Zhaoyi Dan, <i>Planting Sunflowers</i> , mm. 5-8.	31
15. Zhaoyi Dan, <i>Planting Sunflowers</i> , mm.13-18.	31
16. Zhaoyi Dan, <i>Planting Sunflowers</i> , mm. 34-37.	31
17. Zhaoyi Dan, <i>Planting Sunflowers</i> , mm. 43-47.	31
18. A Story of the Shepherd Boy, Theme, mm. 1-2.....	33
19. A Story of the Shepherd Boy, Var. I, mm. 9-10.	34
20. A Story of the Shepherd Boy, Var. II, mm. 17-19..	35

Example	Page
21. A Story of the Shepherd Boy, Var. II, mm. 27-28.	36
22. A Story of the Shepherd Boy, Var. III, mm. 29-32.	36
23. A Story of the Shepherd Boy, Var. IV, mm. 44-45.	37
24. A Story of the Shepherd Boy, Var. IV, mm. 53-56.	37
25. A Story of the Shepherd Boy, Var. V, mm. 58-59.	38
26. A Story of the Shepherd Boy, Var. VI, mm. 72-73.	39
27. A Story of the Shepherd Boy, Var. VII, mm. 97-98.	39
28. Yaxshi, mm. 1-4.	41
29. Yaxshi, mm. 15-16.	41
30. Yaxshi, mm. 118-121.	42
31. Facing the Sun, mm. 1-2.	44
32. Facing the Sun, mm. 9-10.	45
33. Facing the Sun, mm. 24-25.	46
34. Chasing Xi-er, mm. 4-6.	47
35. Impression of Zither, mm. 1-4.	49
36. Impression of Zither, mm. 1-4, the melodic notes with the embellishing quintuplets.	50
37. Impression of Zither, mm. 17-19.	50
38. Impression of Zither, mm. 21-22.	51
39. Impression of Zither, mm. 46-47.	52
40. Flying a Kite, m. 1.	54

Example	Page
41. Flying a Kite, mm. 2-5.	55
42. Flying a Kite, mm. 24-25.	56
43. Flying a Kite, mm. 38-42.	56
44. Flying a Kite, mm. 80-82.	57
45. Flying a Kite, mm. 101-110.	58
46. Flying a Kite, mm. 126-128.	59
47. Flying a Kite, mm. 149-150.	59
48. Longing, mm. 1-3.	61
48. Longing, mm. 1-6.	62
50. Longing, mm. 15-16.	63
51. Longing, mm. 26-30.	65
52. Longing, m. 40	66
53. Longing, mm. 41-42.	66
54. Night Banquet of Shu Palace, mm. 1-4.	70
55. Night Banquet of Shu Palace, mm. 3-5.	71
56. Night Banquet of Shu Palace, mm. 8-9.	72
57. Night Banquet of Shu Palace, mm. 25-27.	73
58. Night Banquet of Shu Palace, m. 57, imitating the zither glissando.....	73
59. Night Banquet of Shu Palace, mm. 16-19.	74
60. Night Banquet of Shu Palace, Mussorgsky, mm. 26-28.	75
61. Night Banquet of Shu Palace, mm. 25-32.	77

Example	Page
62. Night Banquet of Shu Palace, mm. 61-62, C dance theme.....	78, 81
63. Night Banquet of Shu Palace, mm. 133-134, dance theme of C1.	79
64. Night Banquet of Shu Palace, mm. 217-218, dance theme of C2.	80
65. Night Banquet of Shu Palace, mm. 253-254, F episode.	80
66. Night Banquet of Shu Palace, mm. 95-101.	82
67. Night Banquet of Shu Palace, mm.159-171	83
68. Night Banquet of Shu Palace, mm. 215-219.	84
69. Night Banquet of Shu Palace, mm. 215-229.	85
70. Night Banquet of Shu Palace, mm. 250-259.	86
71. Night Banquet of Shu Palace, mm. 285-289.	87
72. Night Banquet of Shu Palace, mm. 300-304.	87
73. Night Banquet of Shu Palace, mm. 310-311, return of B in Section III.	88
74. Night Banquet of Shu Palace, mm. 328-330, return of A in Section III.	88
75. Night Banquet of Shu Palace, mm. 313-316.	89
76. Night Banquet of Shu Palace, mm. 29-33.	90
77. Night Banquet of Shu Palace, mm. 45-48.	90
78. Night Banquet of Shu Palace, mm. 323-326.	91
79. Night Banquet of Shu Palace, mm. 327-330.	91
80. Night Banquet of Shu Palace, mm. 334-337.	91

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Zhaoyi Dan, one of the leading Chinese piano educators for the past sixty years, is so influential that he has earned the nickname “Godfather of piano education”. Dan graduated from the Sichuan Conservatory of Music’s piano department in 1964. After graduation, he taught piano as a member of the faculty at the Sichuan Conservatory of Music. In 1995, Dan moved to Shenzhen and has been teaching piano in the Shenzhen Art School ever since.¹ Twenty-nine of Dan’s students have collectively won sixty-three prizes at major international competitions. These include Yundi Li, who won first prize at the 14th international Chopin Piano Competition in 2000, Sa Chen, who won first prize in the 1994 China International Piano Competition and third prize in the 2005 Van Cliburn International Competition, and Haochen Zhang, who was the gold medalist of the 13th Van Cliburn International Piano Competition in 2009.

A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF ZHAOYI DAN

Zhaoyi Dan was born on November 5, 1940 in Chongqing City in Southwestern China. His father was a medical doctor and his mother was a pharmacist. He is the third of five boys in his family. After the victory of the Chinese War of Resistance against Japanese aggression in 1945, Dan’s father bought a piano

¹ Chai, Yongbo, ed. *Dan Zhaoyi’s Life for the Art of Piano*, Shanghai Music Publishing House, Shanghai. 2011, Oct. ISBN: 9787807518730.

for the family. Dan's oldest brother, Zhaoxiao Dan, who is four years older, was a piano prodigy. Dan described his brother as having a "wonderful sense of music, perfect memory, and great technical ability. He started performing on stage at a very young age and was deemed a piano prodigy."² Young Zhaoyi Dan was influenced deeply by his big brother Zhaoxiao and fell in love with piano. Dan said it was regrettable that his big brother did not choose piano as a career, but instead became a glider pilot.³

Dan's first piano teacher was Bingxin Lao who later became director of the orchestra department at Sichuan Conservatory.⁴ At that time, however, Zhaoyi Dan had no interest in playing piano, until he went to the No. 5 Middle School of Chongqing in 1953 and got a new piano teacher, Zhongyong Cai. His first performance on stage was in 1954 at the age of thirteen for his middle school New Year's celebration. He played the first movement of Clementi's *Sonatina* Op. 36, No. 6.⁵ In the 1950s, very few people knew how to play the piano in China, especially not many thirteen year old children. After Dan's performance, he received a long round of applause and many compliments. Such an honor made Dan very proud of himself and he decided to be a pianist.⁶

² Yongbo, Chai, ed. *Dan Zhaoyi's Life for the Art of Piano*, Shanghai Music Publishing House, Shanghai. 2011, Oct. ISBN: 9787807518730, p. 113.

³ Ibid, pp. 113-114.

⁴ Ibid, p. 112.

⁵ Ibid, p. 114.

⁶ Ibid, p. 114.

In 1955, Dan was admitted to the high school of Southwest Music College, which was later renamed the Sichuan Conservatory of Music. Dan majored in piano under the Dean of the piano department, Professor Huishan He. After graduating from high school in 1959, he was accepted as a piano major at the newly formed Sichuan Conservatory of Music. During his bachelor's degree, he continued to study piano with Professor He. In 1962, Dan went to Beijing to study with the renowned piano educator, Guangreng Zhou, at the Central Conservatory of Music. While there, he also took lessons in percussion instruments from a percussionist in the Central Philharmonic Orchestra. In 1964, he graduated from the Sichuan Conservatory of Music with a Bachelor degree in piano. After his graduation, he joined the piano faculty at the Sichuan Conservatory. That same year, the Chinese government passed a policy stipulating that all college graduates must be assigned to the villages for labor reform. Dan was sent to a village in Sichuan and lived there for two years until the Cultural Revolution started in 1966. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), Dan was called back to the Sichuan Conservatory of Music to perform a "model opera",⁷ which was approved by the Chinese government. In the model opera, Dan performed as a timpanist. Originally, the Sichuan Conservatory had no percussion major and Dan was the only faculty member who had learned percussion. After the model opera performance, Dan also taught percussion at Sichuan Conservatory.⁸ In

⁷ "Model Opera" refers to the revolutionary Chinese opera created between 1967 to 1976 the Cultural Revolution. All the model operas had to be approved by the Chinese government. They mainly reflected the extreme left political stance of the Communist Party of China at that time.

⁸ Yongbo Chai, ed. *Dan Zhaoyi's Life for the Art of Piano*, Shanghai Music Publishing House, Shanghai. 2011, Oct. ISBN: 9787807518730, pp. 126-127.

1978, at the age of 38, Dan began his formal career as a piano teacher at the Sichuan Conservatory of Music.

Dan taught at the Sichuan Conservatory of Music until 1995, then transferred to the Shenzhen Art School, where he continues to teach piano today. His more famous students, such as Yundi Li, Sa Chen, and Jing Du, transferred from the Sichuan Conservatory of Music to follow Dan to the Shenzhen Art School.

He has adjudicated numerous national and international piano competitions over the years, including the Twelfth Animato International Piano Competition in Paris, France in 2010, the Eleventh Asian Chopin International Piano Competition in Tokyo, Japan in 2010, the Fourth Chinese Piano Compositions Competition in Hongkong in 2008, and the National Youth Piano Competition in Guangzhou, China in 2001. Amidst his busy teaching schedule, Dan has also written many pedagogical theses and articles to advocate his teaching philosophy and strategies. These have been published in various musical magazines, journals and books. He has also given many master classes and seminars in Asia, Europe, and the United States.⁹

⁹ Yongbo Chai, ed. *Dan Zhaoyi's Life for the Art of Piano*, Shanghai Music Publishing House, Shanghai. 2011, Oct. ISBN: 978780751830, pp. 406-414.

CHAPTER 2

ZHAOYI DAN'S TEACHING PHILOSOPHY AND PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES

Zhaoyi Dan's teaching philosophy is best showcased in the book *Dan Zhaoyi's Writings on Piano Education*, edited by Yongbo Chai from the Higher Education Research Institute of the Sichuan Conservatory of Music.¹⁰ The book is a collection of Dan's writings ranging from various pedagogical theses, seminars, articles, and academic dissertations to letters written by Dan to his students.

Five Relationships in Piano Pedagogy

Dan's pedagogical philosophy can be summarized by five relationships that are described in his thesis "On Several Relationships in Piano Pedagogy" and published in the book *Dan Zhaoyi's Writings on Piano Education*: those between musicality and technique, quantity and quality, step-by-step and leap-forward, in-depth and in-breadth, and finally, teaching and learning.¹¹ Each of these relationships will be explored further in this chapter.

1. The Relationship between Musicality and Technique

According to Dan, there are two contrary opinions about the relationship between musicality and technique. One viewpoint is that technique should be the primary focus for musical interpretation. The other considers musicality to be the most

¹⁰ Yongbo Chai, ed. *Dan Zhaoyi's Writings on Piano Education*. Shanghai Music Publishing House, Shanghai. 2011, Oct. ISBN: 9787807518723.

¹¹ *Ibid*, pp. 165-175.

important focus for piano teaching, with technique as a secondary focus that will come naturally from years of learning.

Dan argues that technique and musicianship are both important. He references Rachmaninoff as someone who reinforced the importance of technique at the fundamental stage of piano learning.¹² In 1910, *The Etude* magazine published an interview with Rachmaninoff, “Ten Important Attributes of Beautiful Pianoforte Playing”, in which he said, “It goes without saying, that technical proficiency should be one of the first acquisitions of the student who would become a fine pianist.”¹³ Rachmaninoff also emphasized the importance of musicianship and artistic interpretation, such as “real musical understanding”, “character in playing”, “proper phrasing”, “forming the proper concept of a piece”, etc. In a chapter of Josef Lhevinne’s book *Basic Principles in Pianoforte Playing*, titled “Grounding in musicianship”, he wrote: “In our first discussion of this subject we dwelt at considerable length upon the fact that before the student even considers the matters of technique and touch, a good grounding in real musicianship is necessary.”¹⁴ Dan points out that music is the goal, with technique acting as a toolbox from which one can achieve the desired musical interpretation and sound. All virtuosic techniques should serve musicality as the only goal.¹⁵

¹² Yongbo Chai, ed. *Dan Zhaoyi’s Writings on Piano Education*. Shanghai Music Publishing House, Shanghai. 2011, Oct. ISBN: 9787807518723, p. 166.

¹³ <http://www.etudemagazine.com>.

¹⁴ Lhevinne, Josef. *Basic Principles in Pianoforte Playing*. Dover Publications, Garden City, New York, 1972, p. 9.

¹⁵ Yongbo Chai, ed. *Dan Zhaoyi’s Writings on Piano Education*. Shanghai Music Publishing House, Shanghai. 2011, Oct. ISBN: 9787807518723, pp. 166-167.

2. The Relationship of Quantity and Quality

The syllabus of the Piano Department of Sichuan Conservatory contains a minimum requirement for the quantity of pieces that students need to play. Professor Dan thinks that in order to provide a better piano education for middle school and college students, piano teachers need to manage well the number and quality of pieces that students play. He has compiled a list of the minimum number of pieces that should be studied by middle to high school piano major students (12 to 18 years old). This list includes 40 etudes, 20 polyphonic pieces, 15 movements of larger compositions and 30 small- to medium-scale works. For college students (18 to 22 years old) during their four years of study, the repertoire typically includes 15 etudes, 10 polyphonic pieces, 7 movements of larger compositions and 15 small- to medium-scale works. In total, the minimum quantity of a piano student's repertoire after ten years of study is 50-60 etudes, 30 polyphonic pieces, 20 movements of larger compositions, and 40-50 small- to medium-scale works.¹⁶ Compared to the vast amount of piano repertoire that exists, these numbers are just the tip of the iceberg. The task of piano teachers is to help students maintain the balance between learning the expected number of pieces in each category and reaching a highly-polished level with their repertoire.¹⁷

3. The Relationship of Step-by-Step and Leaping-Forward

¹⁶ Yongbo Chai, ed. *Dan Zhaoyi's Writings on Piano Education*. Shanghai Music Publishing House, Shanghai. 2011, Oct. ISBN: 9787807518723, p. 168.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 168-169.

Learning the piano is a step-by-step progression from learning easy and simple pieces to more difficult and complex ones. For example, with etudes, a student will typically learn simpler etudes, such as Czerny Op. 599, Op. 849, Op. 299, then progress to moderately difficult etudes, such as the Cramer *Etudes*, Czerny Op. 740, Clementi *Etudes*, Moskowski *15 Etudes de Virtuosite*, Op. 72, and, finally, to more technically complicated etudes by composers such as Chopin, Liszt, Rachmaninoff, Debussy, Scriabin, and Stravinsky. The concept of 'leap forward' is to introduce more challenging etudes based on the musical talents and capabilities of each individual student. Students who possess better finger and kinesthetic awareness can skip some of the etude groupings and instead leap ahead to the next level instead of repeating etudes written for the same technical purpose.¹⁸

4. The Relationship of In-depth and In-breadth

From the Baroque era to present day, each historical period has numerous influential and prolific composers. Most composers wrote in several different genres, such as solo pieces, chamber music, symphonies, vocal pieces, opera, ballet, etc. Familiarity with a composer's entire output can foster a deeper understanding of their compositional style, and, as a result, both performance interpretation and compositional analysis will be more in-depth. It is in this way that learning pieces both in-depth and in-breadth is mutually reinforced. Dan

¹⁸ Yongbo Chai, ed. *Dan Zhaoyi's Writings on Piano Education*. Shanghai Music Publishing House, Shanghai. 2011, Oct. ISBN: 9787807518723, p.169.

believes that the relationship of in-depth and in-breadth musical study has a strong correlation with the relationship of quantity and quality.¹⁹

5. The Relationship of Teaching and Learning

The relationship of teaching and learning is an essential topic to all pedagogical fields. Dan believes that agreeable interaction between the teacher and the pupil is critically important for successful learning and that “not every good pianist is also a good piano teacher”.²⁰ A good piano teacher must not only have a well-rounded knowledge of the repertoire, but also possess a variety of teaching techniques. Professor Dan believes that the primary purpose of teaching is to help students know how to learn a piece independently, appropriately, and efficiently. Professor Dan also points out that it is necessary to have some basic psychological knowledge for successful teaching, as it helps the communication between the teacher and the pupil, which makes learning a more positive overall experience.²¹

¹⁹ Yongbo Chai, ed. *Dan Zhaoyi's Writings on Piano Education*. Shanghai Music Publishing House, Shanghai. 2011, Oct. ISBN: 9787807518723, pp. 170-171.

²⁰ *Ibid*, p.172.

²¹ *Ibid*, pp. 171-173.

The Design of Dynamic Layers in Piano Performance

In John Thompson's piano method book *Modern Course for the Piano, the First Grade Book*, he wrote: "Contrast is the first law of all arts".²² Dan's opinion is in accordance with Thompson's and he believes that contrast and tonal shadings are achieved through changes in dynamics. This "design of dynamic changes" is essential to an artistic performance. Dynamic contrasts are like a painter who paints with different colors, both bright and dark, to make the picture more interesting and beautiful.

In his thesis "The Design of Dynamic Layers in Piano Performance", Dan defined his often-used phrase 'dynamic layers' as the "dynamic balance of different voices, dynamic shaping, and dynamic range used in a music structure to reflect both its vertical and horizontal relationship". He described the design of dynamic layers in the following aspects.²³

1. Dynamic Layers: Voicing (Vertical Relationship)

Dan points out that the musical layers of a piece are embodied by well-balanced voicing. This balance can be achieved through different tones, or timbres, of

²² John Thompson, *John Thompson's Modern Course for the Piano*. The Willis Music Co., Florence, Kentucky, 1937, 2018, p. 8.

²³ Zhaoyi Dan's academic thesis "The Design of Dynamic Layers in Piano Performance" was first published in the music magazine "Explorations in Music" in 1993, vol. 2, sponsored by Sichuan Conservatory of Music.

voices. A well-voiced texture, along with a solid understanding of harmonic progressions, is the foundation of all other artistry.²⁴

2. Dynamic Layers: Phrasing and Dynamic Shaping (Horizontal Relationship)

The horizontal directions of the melody and other voices are achieved through use of dynamics. This dynamic shaping or phrasing of each voice makes the notes feel alive.

3. Dynamic Layers: Musical Character

Dan states that 'contrast' is one of the most important aesthetic principles. The performance of a piece is based on contrasts in elements such as dynamics, tempo, rhythm, tonality, register, tone color, harmony, texture, and so on. Dynamic contrast is the way to show these different types of contrast. It holds a deeper meaning beyond just being physically loud or soft—it is based on the character of the music. Musical character reveals the inner meaning of a composition. Dan provides an example using the first movement of Beethoven's *Piano Sonata No. 5*. The dynamic contrast of *forte* and *piano* in the first theme demonstrates this important idea of character.²⁵ *Forte* portrays being heroic, powerful, impulsive and strong, while the *piano* dynamic evokes a feeling of sadness, sighing, and melancholy.

²⁴ Yongbo Chai, ed. *Dan Zhaoyi's Writings on Piano Education*. Shanghai Music Publishing House, Shanghai. 2011, Oct. ISBN: 9787807518723, p. 181.

²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 183.



Example 1: Beethoven *Piano Sonata* No. 5 in c minor, Op. 10, No. 1, 1st movement, 1st theme, mm. 1-8.²⁶

4. Dynamic Layers: Music Images and Impressions

The changing of dynamic layers can create very colorful sound images. Dan exemplifies this through comparing Debussy's *Clair De Lune*, which portrays a gentle and dream-like impression of the moonlight, and Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*, in which the contrast of dynamics shapes two completely different personalities in "Samuel Goldenberg and Schmuyle". In Example 2-1 (mm. 1-5), Mussorgsky represents the image of a rich and arrogant Jew with a *forte* dynamic, while in Example 2-2 (mm. 9-12), Mussorgsky shows the image of a poor and pitiful Jew with dynamics "*mezzo forte*" and "*piano*". Dan concludes that without dynamic contrasts, musical images cannot be produced.²⁷

²⁶ Yongbo Chai, ed. *Dan Zhaoyi's Writings on Piano Education*. Shanghai Music Publishing House, Shanghai. 2011, Oct. ISBN: 9787807518723, p. 183.

²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 185.

pieces. Other climaxes are longer, such as those in the third movement of Tchaikovsky's *Piano Concerto No. 1* and in the first movement of Rachmaninoff's *Piano Concerto No.2*. The performer needs to have a broader perspective of the piece in order to have an overall dynamic design and carefully form the climax.²⁹

6. Dynamic Layers: Musical Entirety

Dan states that one of the principles of musical aesthetic is creating a dynamic design of the whole piece to make the music beautiful. It is the performer's job to carefully craft an overall dynamic structure to embody the musical form of the piece and the relationship between each section.³⁰

²⁹ Yongbo Chai, ed. *Dan Zhaoyi's Writings on Piano Education*. Shanghai Music Publishing House, Shanghai. 2011, Oct. ISBN: 9787807518723, pp. 185-186.

³⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 185-186.

Fundamental Piano Teaching - *New Paths: The Basic Piano Course for
Beginning Students*

A piano teacher's choice of teaching materials reflects their teaching philosophy and teaching plan. Professor Dan states that basic repertoire and piano method books are like the foundation of a large-scale construction project, ultimately determining the scope of what can be built upon it.³¹ In 2016, after several years of research and discussion, Professor Dan and his colleagues published *New Paths: The Basic Piano Course for Beginning Students*, a teaching program that includes 4 method books and 6 repertoire books.

The four method books include:

Enlightenment and Foundation (Vol. 1)

Enlightenment and Foundation (Vol. 2)

Music and Technique (Vol. 3)

Music and Technique (Vol. 4)

The six repertoire books include:

Chinese compositions

Etudes

Polyphonic compositions

Larger-scale compositions

³¹ Yongbo Chai, ed. *Dan Zhaoyi's Writings on Piano Education*. Shanghai Music Publishing House, Shanghai. 2011, Oct. ISBN: 9787807518723, p. 253.

Concert etudes

Foreign compositions

Professor Dan and the *New Paths* committee members strived to create a solid foundation both musically and technically for beginner students. In the first two volumes of *Enlightenment and Foundation*, they introduced the basic musical concepts and fundamental techniques needed to play the piano. These fundamentals include: basic hand form, relaxation, finger support, arm weight, different articulations (such as *legato* and *staccato*), slurs, dynamics, grouping and phrasing, intervals, double notes, chords, scales, arpeggios, pedaling, and polyphonic music. In volumes three and four of *Music and Technique*, the pieces range from early intermediate to early advanced levels. Representative pieces in volume four include Burgmuller's *Ballade*, Op. 100, No. 15; Kuhlau's *Sonatina in A Major*, Op. 59, No.1; Liszt's *Consolation in Db Major*, S. 172, No. 3; and Scarlatti's *Sonata in C Major*, K. 159.³²

The six supplementary repertoire books include more choices to expand students' repertoire.

In the *Chinese Composition* collection, representative compositions are chosen from contemporary Chinese composers' works, such as *Liuyang River* by

³² Zhaoyi Dan, ed. *New Paths: The Basic Piano Course for Beginning Students, Music and Technique*, vol. 4. People's Music Publishing House. 2016, Oct. ISBN: 9787103052891.

Jianzhong Wang; *Colorful Clouds Chasing the Moon* by Jianzhong Wang; and *The Dance of Waterweeds* by Zuqiang Wu and Mingxin Du.

In the *Larger-scale Works* collection is Tan Dun's *Eight Memories in Watercolor*, a Chinese piano suite containing eight character pieces. The *Larger-scale Works* collection also includes *Variations on a Theme by Paganini* by Isaak Berkovich and *Romanian Folk Dances*, Sz. 56, by Bartók.

The *Etudes* collection includes selections from Czerny's Op. 261, Op. 139, Op. 599, Op. 849, Op. 718, and Op. 823. Additionally, the collection categorizes the etudes by a variety of techniques such as scales, broken chords and arpeggios, chromatic scales, double-notes and chordal technique. The technique level is appropriate for elementary to intermediate level students.

The *Foreign Compositions* collection is divided into three sections. The first section, "Character Pieces", contains pieces written by Western classical Romantic, Impressionist, and Contemporary composers. It contains pieces such as "Happy Farmer", Op. 68, No. 10 and "Soldier's March", Op. 68, No. 2 from Schumann's *Album for the Young*, Op. 68. Also included in the collection are pieces from Tchaikovsky's *Album for the Young*, Op. 39, such as "An Italian Song", Op. 39, No. 15; "The Dance of Naples", Op. 39, No. 18; Brahms's *Hungarian Dance*, WoO1, No. 5; Debussy's "Le Petit Negre", L. 114; Bartók's

“Song of the Wanderer”, from “*For Children*”, SZ 42, Book 2, No. 7; and Prokofiev’s *The Dance of Tarantella*, Op. 65, No. 4.

The second section of the *Foreign Compositions* collection contains jazz-style pieces. There are seven pieces written by British composer Pam Wedgwood, such as *Spider in the Bath* and *Mr. Changing Mind*. “Pam Wedgwood is internationally recognized as one of the most prolific and successful British composers of popular repertoire for young instrumentalists”.³³ Found also in the collection are compositions by British Jazz composer David Honeywell, such as “All That Jazz!” (Op. 78) and American jazz pianist and composer Kevin Olson’s *Susanna Boogies*.

The third section is titled “Selected Pieces for Concert”. It contains pieces such as *Prelude*, Op. 43, No. 1, by Reinhold Gliere; *Venetian Boat Song*, Op. 19, No. 6, and *Songs without Words*, Op. 102, No. 3, 4, 5 by Mendelssohn; *Waltz in E minor*, Op. Posthumous, by Chopin; “October- Autumn Song” and “November - Troika”, from Tchaikovsky’s *The Seasons* Op. 37a; *March of the Dwarfs*, Op. 54, No. 3 by Grieg; *Clair de Lune*, by Debussy; and *Widmung*, S.566/R.253, by Schumann/Liszt, and more.³⁴

³³ <http://www.fabermusic.com/we-represent/pam-wedgwood>.

³⁴ *New Paths: The Basic Piano Course for Beginning Students, Foreign Compositions*. People’s Music Publishing House, Beijing, 2020, March. ISBN: 9878103056998.

The *Polyphonic Compositions* collection contains representative Baroque works such as “Courante”, BWV 816 by J. S. Bach; “Allegro” from the *Seventh Suite*, HWV. 432 by Handel; *Two-Part Invention in b minor*, BWV 786, No. 15 by J. S. Bach; *Five-tone Scales*, Sz. 107, No. 78 by Bartók; and *White Snow* by Chinese composer Hua Lin. The level of the pieces collected in this book ranges from elementary to early intermediate.

The *Concert Etudes* collection contains etudes written by Zhaoyi Dan himself, such as *Missing Xi-er*, which is a piano transcription of passages from the Chinese opera *The White-haired Girl*, scene 5.³⁵ *Beating the Tiger, Climbing up the Mountain* is another transcription in the collection by Zhaoyi Dan and includes musical passages from the Beijing Opera *The Taking of Tiger Mountain*, scene 5. The collection also has *Concert Etude*, Op. 46, No. 2 by MacDowell; Kabalevsky’s *Etude* Op. 27, No. 26; and the French-Canadian-American composer Calixa Lavalée’s etude, *The Butterfly*. The concert etudes in this collection are appropriate for intermediate to early advanced students to perform.

³⁵ “The White-haired Girl” is a Chinese opera ballet written by Jinxuan Yan. The Chinese libretto is by Jingzhi He and Yi Ding.

CHAPTER 3

SELECTED PIANO SOLO WORKS BY ZHAOYI DAN

A selection of Zhaoyi Dan's piano compositions was published in the book *Dan Zhaoyi's Piano Works* with a CD recording made by Dan's student Jingdan Gu.³⁶

³⁷ The collection contains Dan's works from elementary to advanced level. Some are Dan's own compositions, while others are transcriptions of Chinese traditional instrument music, folk songs, ballet, and Peking operas. Dan wrote diverse compositions to serve different pedagogical purposes. The selected piano works written by Dan are listed below, categorized by pedagogical levels:

1. Elementary level: "Five Children's Piano Pieces"
 - *Beautiful Flowers are Blooming*
 - *In the Meadow*
 - *Planting Sunflowers*
 - *A Story of the Shepherd Boy*
 - *Yaxshi*

2. Intermediate level:
 - *Facing the Sun* (from "Ten Etudes")
 - *Chasing Xi-er* (from "Ten Etudes")
 - *The Impression of Zither* (from "Ten Etudes")
 - *Flying a Kite*
 - *Longing*

3. Advanced level: *Night Banquet of Shu Palace*

³⁶ Zhaoyi Dan, *Zhaoyi Dan's Selected Piano Works*, Shanghai Music Publishing House, Shanghai, 2011, Oct. ISBN: 978-7-80751-871-6/J. 801.

³⁷ Jingdan Gu began taking piano lessons with Prof. Zhaoyi Dan at the age of 7 years old. She participated in many national and international competitions and won over 10 golden medals and first place. In 2009, at the age of 16, she won second place at the Darmstadt International Chopin Piano Competition in Darmstadt, Germany. See Dan, Zhaoyi. *Zhaoyi Dan's Piano Works*, Shanghai Music Publishing House, Shanghai, 2011, Oct. ISBN: 978-7-80751-871-6/J. 801, pp. 118.

As part of Dan's compositional process, he often consults with his colleague and friend Huwei Huang, a prolific Chinese composer who teaches composition at Sichuan Conservatory of Music. In 1973, Dan composed his early-stage piano composition *The Cowboy is looking forward to the Red Army* (which was later renamed *A Story of the Shepherd Boy*) and asked for Huwei Huang's opinion. Huwei Huang recognized Dan's talents in composition and gave his work many compliments, as well as suggesting some minor revisions. From that point forward, Dan added composing new piano works to his already busy teaching schedule. He told Huang his composing concepts and purpose. First, he would like to write pieces with notable Chinese musical characteristics. Second, he would like to write piano music for pedagogical purposes— meaning that the musical compositions would be written to develop student's musicality and interpretation, helping students express their feelings and emotions while also developing a well-rounded technique. Because of these goals, each etude usually has one single technical task designed for the student to master. Third, no matter if writing a concert piece or etude, he wanted to combine musical content and technical purpose together in a work.³⁸

Dan's first piano work was written in 1956 when he was in the High School of Sichuan Conservatory of Music. It was titled *Country Road*. He originally wrote it as homework for Harmony class.³⁹ Dan has a deep love of traditional Chinese

³⁸ Preface written by Huwei Huang in the book *Zhaoyi Dan's Piano Works*, by Zhaoyi Dan. Shanghai Music Publishing House, Shanghai, 2011, Oct. ISBN: 978-7-80751-871-6/J.801.

³⁹ Zhaoyi Dan, *Zhaoyi Dan's Selected Piano Works*. Shanghai Music Publishing House, Shanghai, 2011, Oct. ISBN: 978-7-80751-871-6/J.801, pp. 8-9.

music and folk tunes of his home town, of which he has transcribed many into solo piano compositions.

In the next section of this paper, I will discuss selected piano works by Zhaoyi Dan, ranging from elementary to advanced levels through compositional analysis, as well as performance and pedagogical suggestions.

Chinese Pentatonic Scales

In Dan's compositions, he combines Chinese pentatonic scales with Western compositional techniques. In order to analyze Dan's works, identifying these scales is important. There are five pentatonic scales called the *Gong* mode, *Shang* mode, *Jiao* mode, *Zhi* mode, and *Yu* mode, shown below:

C Gong mode: C-D-E-G-A

D Shang mode: D-E-G-A-C

E Jiao mode: E-G-A-C-D

G Zhi mode: G-A-C-D-E

A Yu mode: A-C-D-E-G

Elementary Level — *Five Children’s Piano Pieces*

1. “Beautiful Flowers are Blooming”

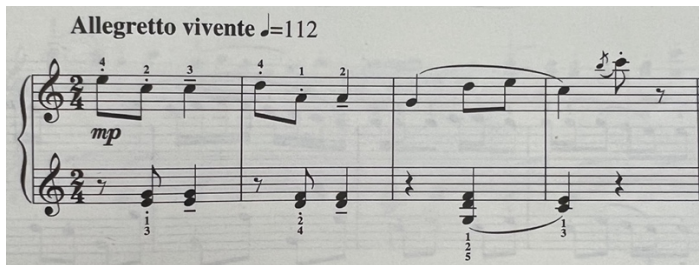
The following five elementary pieces were written specifically for young piano students based on their cognitive and pianistic abilities. Dan uses programmatic titles to describe vivid musical characters and engage students in their study.

The first piece, “Beautiful Flowers are Blooming”, is a transcription of the children’s song *The Sweet Fragrance of Friendship Blooming*, originally by Weicai Li and Wei Ye, which was written in numbered musical notation.⁴⁰ The numbered notational system was first introduced by Jean-Jacques Rousseau and uses the first eight numerals as substitutes for the eight notes of the scale. It was very popular during the twentieth century in China.⁴¹ Example 3 is the original song *The Sweet Fragrance of Friendship Blooming*, while the realization of the numbered notation of this song in C# Major is shown in example 4.

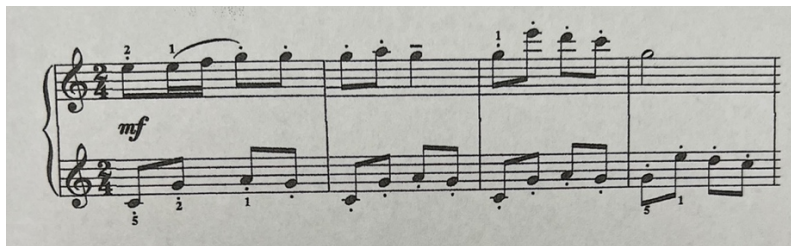
⁴⁰ Zhaoyi Dan, *Zhaoyi Dan’s Selected Piano Works*. Shanghai Music Publishing House, Shanghai, 2011, Oct. ISBN: 978-7-80751-871-6/J.801, p. 16.

⁴¹ “Number Systems” in Kennedy, Michael. *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Music*. Fourth Edition. Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, 1996. ISBN: 0-19-280037-X, p. 522.

Dan transcribed “Beautiful Flowers are Blooming” into C Major for piano solo. Under the piece’s title, he wrote “innocent and lively” to describe the character. It is written in simple binary form with a four-measure introduction (mm.1-4, see example 5). The varied articulations in the melody establish the lively character, as shown in example 5. In the first section (mm. 5-20), the staccato left-hand accompaniment also helps to create the character (see example 6). In the second section (mm.21-36, see example 7), a variation of the same melody is played in sixteenth notes with the left-hand accompaniment altering between an Alberti bass and staccato bass line. There is a short coda in mm.37-42 that ends the piece with an energetic *crescendo*.

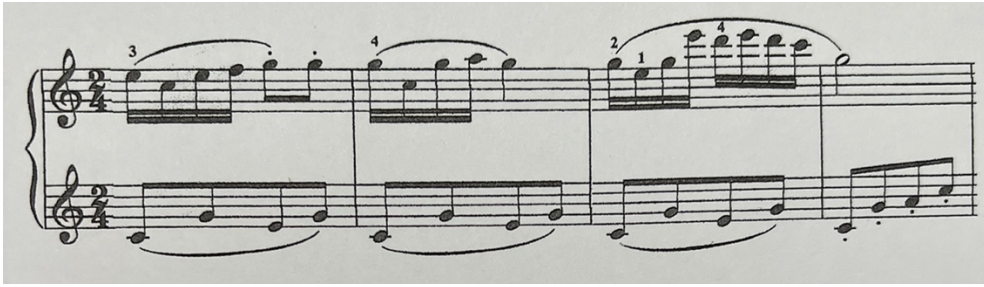


Example 5: *Beautiful Flowers are Blooming*, by Zhaoyi Dan (mm. 1-5).⁴³



Example 6: *Beautiful Flowers are Blooming*, by Zhaoyi Dan (mm. 5-8).

⁴³ Zhaoyi Dan, *Zhaoyi Dan's Selected Piano Works*. Shanghai Music Publishing House, Shanghai, 2011, Oct. ISBN: 978-7-80751-871-6/J.801, p. 1.



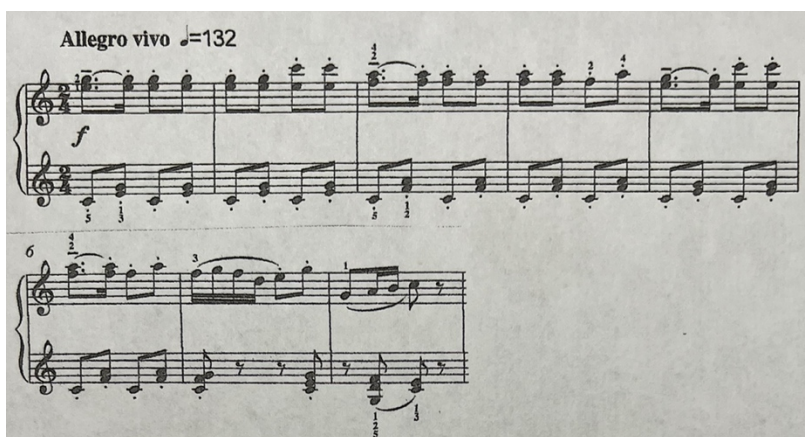
Example 7: *Beautiful Flowers are Blooming*, by Zhaoyi Dan (mm. 21-24).

Pedagogical Suggestions

Teachers and students should pay special attention to a few things. First, both staves are in treble clef, which is unusual for elementary level pieces; therefore, a young student who is accustomed to reading the left hand in bass clef might need practice reading both hands in treble clefs fluently. Secondly, the frequently changing articulations, as well as grace notes and rests, need to be discussed and demonstrated on the piano, with the students able to replicate these musical figures accurately before the piece is assigned. Thirdly, the dynamic range of this piece progresses gradually from *mezzo-piano* to *mezzo-forte* to *forte* and then back to *mezzo-piano*. Students should thoughtfully bring out these dynamic changes to add contrast. This piece is also useful for teaching young students how to combine their knowledge of music theory with performance practice. Asking students to name and identify the left-hand chordal patterns and find the cadences in the piece will help with phrase shaping, sectionalizing the structure of the piece and memorization.

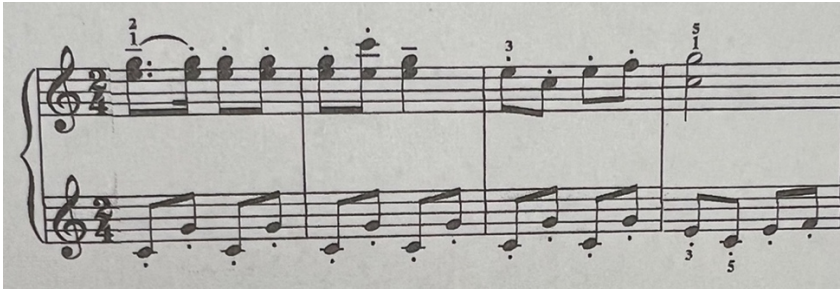
2. “In The Meadow”

The melody of this piece is a transcription of a song by Jinzhi Liang. Dan transcribed it as a pedagogical study of 3rds and 6ths in C Major. The tempo is *Allegro vivo*, with a time signature of 2/4. It starts with an energetic, *forte* 8-measure introduction (mm. 1-8) (see example 8). The first section (mm. 9 – 24, see example 9) consists of 8-measure antecedent and consequent phrases. The melody is written with alternating double- and single-note fragments, making the technical challenge appropriate for elementary students to handle. In the second section (mm. 25-40), the left hand begins the melody (see example 10), then the right hand joins in an octave higher. The consequent phrase has 6ths in the right-hand melody until the end of the piece, articulated with staccatos and two-note slurs. The six-measure *coda* (mm.41-46, see example 11) contains a running sixteenth-note passage, then ends with a perfect authentic cadence.

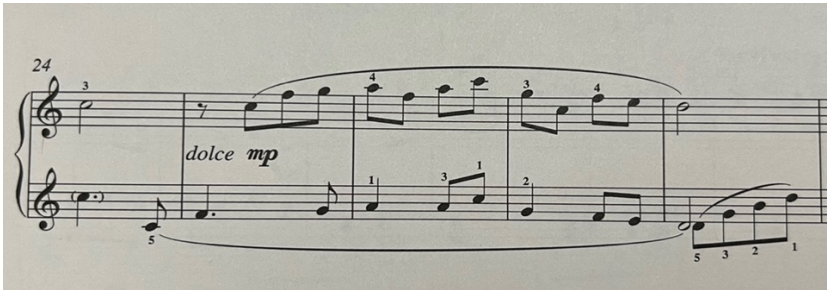


Example 8: “In the Meadow”, mm.1-8.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Zhaoyi Dan, *Zhaoyi Dan's Selected Piano Works*. Shanghai Music Publishing House, Shanghai, 2011, Oct. ISBN: 978-7-80751-871-6/J.801, p. 18.



Example 9: "In the Meadow", mm. 9-12.



Example 10: "In the Meadow", mm. 24-28.



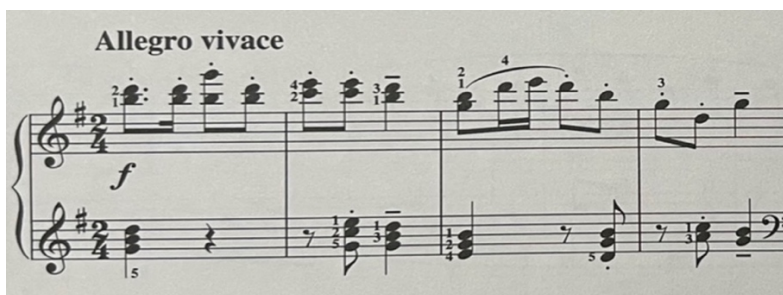
Example 11: "In the Meadow", mm. 41-46.

Pedagogical Suggestions

This piece combines double-note technique with musicality for elementary students. Beginners will likely find it difficult to bring out the top note of the thirds and sixths to showcase the melody. Teachers need to guide the student to be aware of the different arm weight proportions between fingers. For instance, dropping more arm weight on the top note first by using forearm, then adding the bottom note softly will create proper voicing. In the left hand, the staccato bass notes need to be emphasized for harmonic support. The two upper notes of the triad need to be played softly so as not to interfere with the right-hand melody. In the second section (see example 10), when the legato melody switches to the left hand, the right hand joins in with an embellished version of the melody. A suggested way for students to practice this is by mastering the left hand and right-hand phrases individually, then putting the two hands together and listening for proper balance.

3. “Planting Sunflowers”

“Planting Sunflowers”, adapted from a children’s song with the same name, is in G Major and marked *Allegro vivace*. In 2/4 time signature, the style is very similar to “In the Meadow”, but more technically difficult. It starts with a *forte* four-measure introduction (mm. 1-4, example 12), then the melody begins in m.5 at a *mezzo-forte* dynamic level (see example 13). Compared to “In the Meadow”, this piece contains a larger variety of articulations, including staccatos, slurs, tenuto, accents, semi-legato and accented staccatos. The different touches are specifically notated in the score, requiring students to follow them accurately. Starting in m. 15, the melody switches to the left hand and is marked *dolce* (see example 14). In mm. 30-33, the introduction repeats as a four-measure transition followed by the return of the main melody with a new sixteenth-note Alberti bass accompaniment in m. 34 (see example 15). The left-hand accompaniment pattern in mm. 44-50 is written in two voices (see example 16). The top melody and bass line need to be emphasized more than the middle running sixteenth notes. This requires good listening skills and control of different touches.

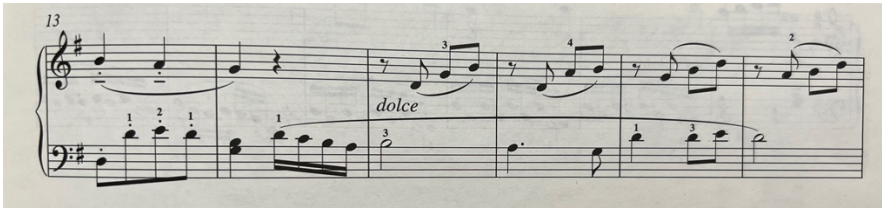


Example 12: “Planting Sunflowers”, mm. 1-4.⁴⁵

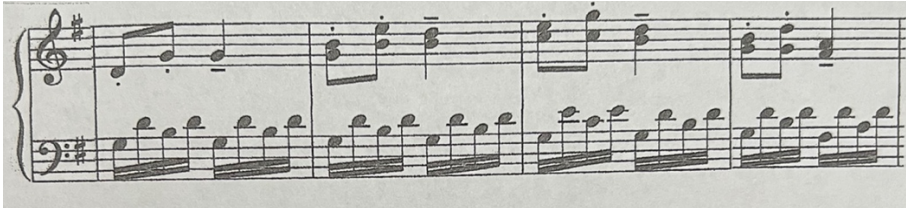
⁴⁵ Zhaoyi Dan, *Zhaoyi Dan’s Selected Piano Works*. Shanghai Music Publishing House, Shanghai, 2011, Oct. ISBN: 978-7-80751-871-6/J.801, p. 20.



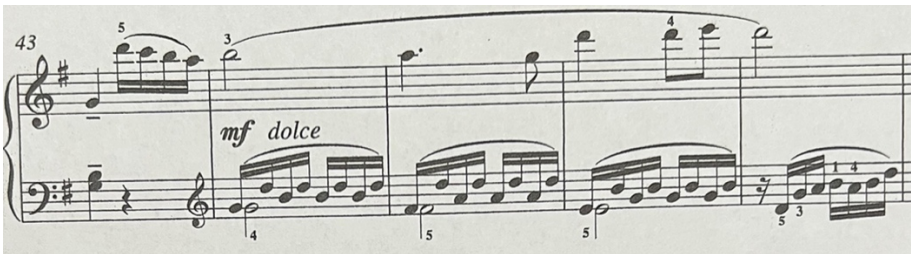
Example 13: "Planting Sunflowers", mm. 5-8.



Example 14: "Planting Sunflowers", mm. 13-18.



Example 15: "Planting Sunflowers", mm. 34-37.



Example 16: "Planting Sunflowers", mm. 43-47.

Pedagogical Suggestions

There are several technical challenges in this piece. In order to play the dotted eighth-note rhythm in thirds accurately (see example 12), a separated technical practice of wrist staccato in thirds and sixths would help a lot, such as those provided in *The Virtuoso Pianist in 60 Exercises*, Part III, by Charles-Louis Hanon. Students can practice the precision of the right-hand dotted rhythms with an added sixteenth note accompaniment in the left hand. To keep the left-hand sixteenth-note Alberti bass steady and flowing requires good control of each individual finger and the grouping motion of a flexible wrist and fore-arm rotation. With good support of the left-hand fifth finger, dropping a little more arm weight on the bass notes and lightening up the upper notes will produce a beautiful grouping of this pattern (see example 15). Finger-pedaling the bass notes to create two voices is a comparatively hard technique for young students to handle (see example 16), but adds a warm resonance and creates a smooth bass line.

4. “A Story of the Shepherd Boy”

Dan composed “A Story of the Shepherd Boy” in 1973. The piece won third place at the Sichuan Province Excellence in Compositions Competition in 1981. “A Story of the Shepherd Boy” is a Theme and Variations on a folk tune in Daxian City, Sichuan Province. Written in A Yu mode: A- C- D- E- G, it contains the theme, seven variations and a coda. The theme (mm. 1-8) is titled “the suffering shepherd boy, a little slow” and contains a mixture of 4/4 and 2/4 time signatures. It consists of four short phrases and is written in a *mezzo-piano* three-voice texture (see example 17).



Example 17: “A Story of the Shepherd Boy”, Theme, mm. 1-2.⁴⁶

Pedagogical Suggestions

Dan’s young student Yu Lei once played this piece. In order to help Yu have a better understanding of the piece, Professor Dan wrote a letter to Yu’s father.⁴⁷ In this letter, he wrote: “In the theme, the first phrase is a light sighing by the

⁴⁶ Zhaoyi Dan, *Zhaoyi Dan’s Selected Piano Works*. Shanghai Music Publishing House, Shanghai, 2011, Oct. ISBN: 978-7-80751-871-6/J.801, p. 22.

⁴⁷ “A Letter to Lei Yu”, by Lei Yu’s father. Zhaoyi Dan, *Zhaoyi Dan’s Piano Works*. Shanghai Music Publishing House, Shanghai, 2011, Oct. ISBN: 978-7-80751-871-6/J.801, pp. 103-104.

shepherd.”⁴⁸ The first phrase ends with a descending minor third from C to A (see example 17). The second phrase is a repeat of the first phrase. In order to avoid an exact musical repetition, the second phrase should be played softer, like an echo suffering inside the shepherd boy’s heart.

In Variation I, Dan writes “innocent” and “a little faster”, as shown in example 18. Dan modifies the mood of the shepherd boy’s melody by changing the pure legato in the theme to staccato articulations and adds some mordents. The left-hand chords are mostly staccato, as well. This variation embodies the innocent shepherd boy carelessly playing on the grassland.



Example 18: “A Story of the Shepherd Boy”, Var. I, mm. 9-10.

In Variation II, Dan writes the title “Pay a debt by labor” (see example 19). This variation starts with a *fortissimo* dynamic, indicating an impending disaster to the

⁴⁸ “A Letter to Lei Yu”, by Lei Yu’s father. Zhaoyi Dan, *Zhaoyi Dan’s Piano Works*. Shanghai Music Publishing House, Shanghai, 2011, Oct. ISBN: 978-7-80751-871-6/J.801, p. 103.

shepherd boy. At this point in the piece, the shepherd boy is forced to go to the owner's house and pay off his debts through performing heavy labor.⁴⁹



Example 19: “A Story of the Shepherd Boy”, Var. II, mm. 17-19.

The composer accents each phrase very carefully in this variation. As seen in mm. 18-19, the descending two-note slurred sixteenth-note melody starts at *fortissimo* in m. 18 with accents on both notes. Then in m. 19, as the melody moves downward, only the first note of the two-note slurs is accented. This detailed and altered accentuating sound effect needs to be produced well through practice. The dynamic also drops to *forte*. This variation ends with a *ritardando* and each melodic note holding a tenuto, depicting the shepherd boy's heavy and angry feelings. The melodic notes need to be held for their full value and the pianist should avoid a harsh sound by dropping natural arm weight from the shoulder (see example 20). Students can practice this with free-fall of a completely relaxed arm.

⁴⁹ “A Letter to Lei Yu”, by Lei Yu's father. Zhaoyi Dan, *Zhaoyi Dan's Piano Works*. Shanghai Music Publishing House, Shanghai, 2011, Oct. ISBN: 978-7-80751-871-6/J.801, p. 103.



Example 20: “A Story of the Shepherd Boy”, Var. II, mm. 27-28.

Variation III is marked “Heavy labor” with the tempo *Lento*. It is in C Yu mode: C- Eb- F- G- Bb. The beginning left hand opens the variation with tenuto quarter notes, reflecting the shepherd boy’s heavy workload and miserable life (see example 21).



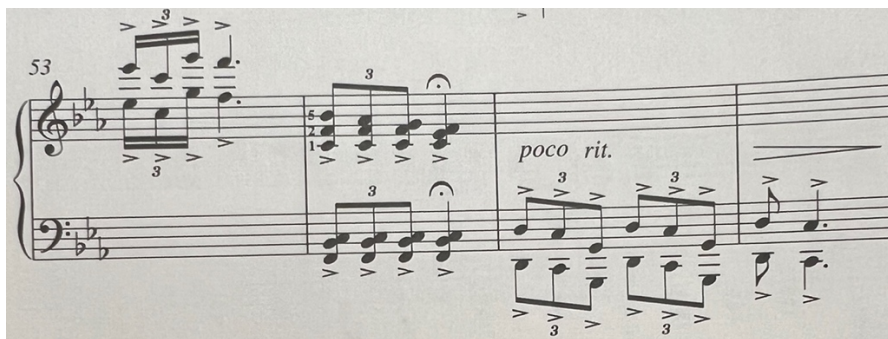
Example 21: “A Story of the Shepherd Boy”, Var. III, mm. 29-32.

At the end of Variation III, Dan indicates that the performer should proceed *attacca*, or without stopping, into Variation IV. Variation IV is titled “Angry Revolt” in a *Presto* tempo. It begins with fast-running sixteenth notes and a crescendo building to *forte*, then *fortissimo*. The character of this variation is furious (see

example 22). The composer combines 3/4 and 2/4 time signatures for this variation. Additionally, the micro-beat subdivisions change throughout, requiring students to count steadily to avoid rushing, which would reduce the powerful *fortissimo* strength of the shepherd boy's angry emotions (see example 23).



Example 22: "A Story of the Shepherd Boy", Var. IV, mm. 44-45.



Example 23: "A Story of the Shepherd Boy", Var. IV, mm. 53-56.

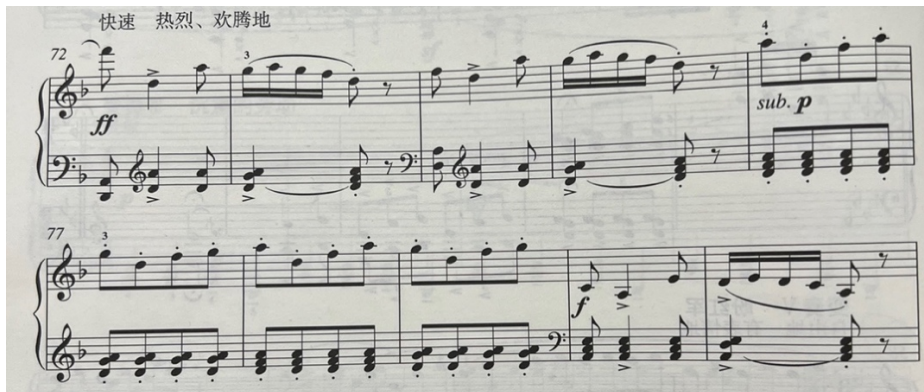
In Variation V, Dan writes at the beginning "Looking forward to the Red Army", and "expressively, freely". It is in G Yu mode: G- Bb- C- D- F. The dynamics in this variation change from *piano* to *mezzo-piano*, then get softer all the way to *pianississimo*. This short variation consists of only ten measures made up of two

short repetitive phrases and a two-measure *codetta*. The left hand plays rolled triads to add to the expressiveness of the sound (see example 24).



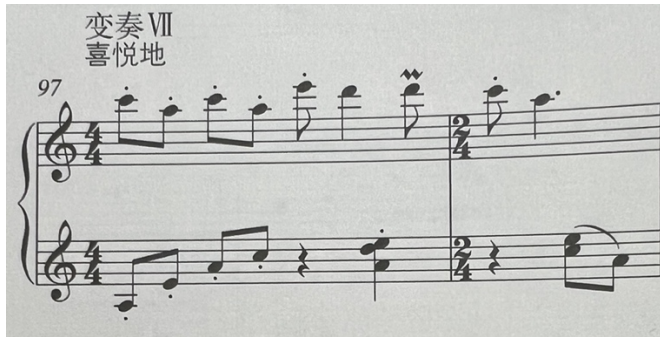
Example 24: “A Story of the Shepherd Boy”, Var. V, mm 58-59.

Variation VI is marked “Liberation Celebration” and “brightly”. After a running figure of sixteenth note triplets, the melody starts with a *fortissimo* syncopated rhythmic pattern. The composer indicates this character is “fast, passionate, and rejoicing”. It is in D Yu mode: D- F- G- A- C. The second phrase starts with *subito piano* in eighth-note staccatos. The dynamics then change between the phrases, alternating between *forte* and *piano* (see example 25).



Example 25: “A Story of the Shepherd Boy”, Variation VI, mm. 72-73.

Variation VII is in A Yu mode: A – C – D – E – G, with “joyful” written as the character (see example 26). The time signature alternates between 4/4 and 2/4. At the end of this variation, the composer indicates *attacca* to the coda, which continues the happy, celebratory mood.



Example 26: “A Story of the Shepherd Boy”, Variation VII, mm. 97-98.

5. “Yaxshi”

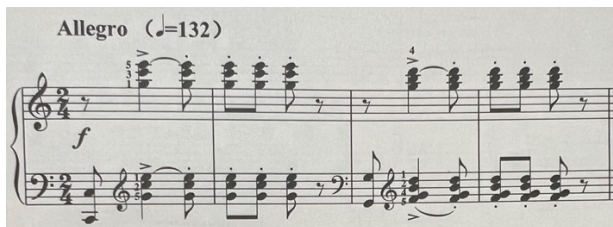
“Yaxshi” is a word in the Uighur language which means “good”. Dan transcribed this piece from a song composed by Zulong Lu (b. 1928) and uses this dance-like grand finale to end his set of five children’s pieces.⁵⁰ It starts with a fourteen-measure festive *forte* introduction, then the melody begins in m. 15 marked *cantabile*, which means in a smooth singing style. The middle voice is played by the right hand, with the left hand playing both the bass voice and crossing over to play the top voice as well. The piece features strong chordal sections, fast-

⁵⁰ Zhaoyi Dan, *Zhaoyi Dan’s Selected Piano Works*. Shanghai Music Publishing House, Shanghai, 2011, Oct. ISBN: 978-7-80751-871-6/J.801, p. 27.

running sixteenth notes, staccato chords, and a free cadenza-like phrase at m. 83.

Pedagogical Suggestions

Dan uses syncopated rhythms in the opening section (mm. 1-14) to create the dance-like quality of the piece (see example 27). The left-hand jumps from the bass to the upper chords need to be practiced separately in order to play them accurately in tempo. When practicing the big jumps, students need to maintain a well-formed hand, while keeping the shoulders and arms relaxed. For each jump, the student should focus on the placement of the thumb, using the arm's circular motion to bring the hand to its position.



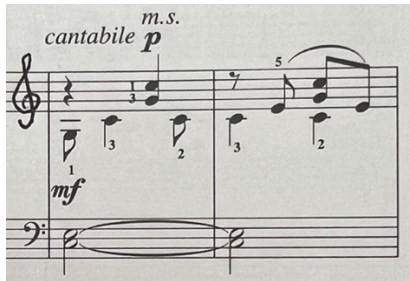
Example 27: "Yaxshi", mm. 1-4.⁵¹

The melody starts in m. 15 in the middle voice played by the right hand.

Accompanying the melody are left-hand bass chords, as well as treble chords played by the left hand crossing over the right. This three-voice texture needs to be played with good balance. The student should project the melody by using the

⁵¹ Zhaoyi Dan, *Zhaoyi Dan's Selected Piano Works*. Shanghai Music Publishing House, Shanghai, 2011, Oct. ISBN: 978-7-80751-871-6/J.801, p. 27.

full arm weight of the right hand, then the left-hand cross-over chords should be played as softly as possible. Careful use of the damper pedal is also necessary in order to hold the bass harmonies while the left hand crosses over to play the top voice. The pedal should be cleared every two measures from m.15 to m.22 (see example 28), then every measure from m. 23 to m. 25.

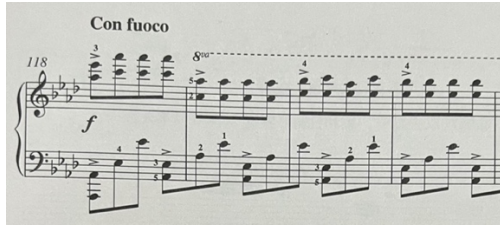


Example 28: “Yaxshi”, mm. 15-16.

In m. 84, Dan writes *Da lento accel. poco a poco*, with the tempo accelerating to *presto* at m. 100 with *sempre staccato* moments. Finally, in m. 118, as shown in example 29, Dan writes *Con fuoco*, which means “in a fiery manner”, as the texture and rhythmic groupings become more complicated. For the right hand, the metric accents occur every fourth eighth note, while in the left hand, the metric accents are marked on every third eighth note. It requires a great deal of practice for the two hands to successfully coordinate this hemiola effect.

Practicing different touches in the two hands makes it easier to put the two complicated rhythmic patterns together. When practicing the right hand four-note groups, drop arm weight with emphasis on the first chord (along with a looping motion of the wrist to group the four notes together), then play the following three intervals more lightly by using wrist staccato. For the left hand three-note groups,

drop with accents on the first interval from the shoulder and the following two notes can be played lighter by using finger staccato. The different physical touches reinforce the different feelings of the two hands' patterns, which will allow each individual rhythmic pattern be heard more clearly when playing hands together.



Example 29: *Yaxshi*, mm. 118-121.

This set of *Five Children's Piano Pieces* are arranged in progressive order. The repertoire is suitable for children's understanding and the five pieces use comparatively simple rhythms and keys, other than the coda of the last piece. The melodies of all five pieces were transcribed from Chinese folk songs and children's songs. This familiarity helps children feel more connected to the music. Besides "A Story of the Shepherd's Song" which is dramatic and has different mood contrasts, the other four pieces are happy and lively to fit children's natural personalities. This is wonderful repertoire for young students to practice and learn.

Intermediate Level

1. “Facing the Sun” (from *Ten Etudes*)

Dan composed this character piece based on fragments from scene 8 of the Chinese Ballet *The White-Haired Girl*. The tempo for this piece is marked *moderato con brio*, which means “medium tempo in a vigorous manner”. The melody appears in right hand chords with the left hand playing running sixteenth note triplets. It is written in D major and simple binary form. The first section (mm. 1-8) is chordal with the melody in the top. In the second section (mm. 9-25), the melody switches to left hand rolled chords in the bass voice until the end of the piece. This character etude is a helpful study for playing chords with a beautiful, warm tone.

Pedagogical Suggestions

The blocked D major chords at the beginning of the piece suggest the warm sunlight, while the rolled dominant chords in the second measure bring a hopeful feeling. In order to produce a warm and beautiful singing tone quality to the chordal melody, students need to keep their arms relaxed and drop their natural arm weight slowly into the keys from the shoulder. They must also take care to hold each chord as long as possible and use dynamic shaping to create a smooth melodic phrase.

The left-hand triplet arpeggios need to be well-shaped and played evenly. Emphasizing the bass note of each harmony will help with this (see example 30). The right hand should be practiced separately with the pedal because it is playing two voices at the same time. The melody in the top voice extends from the dotted half note F# to two eighth notes E and D, then to E on the downbeat of the second measure. The two blocked octave chords falling on the second and third beats in the first measure need to be played softly to fill in the warm color of D major without disturbing the three-beat singing of the melody.

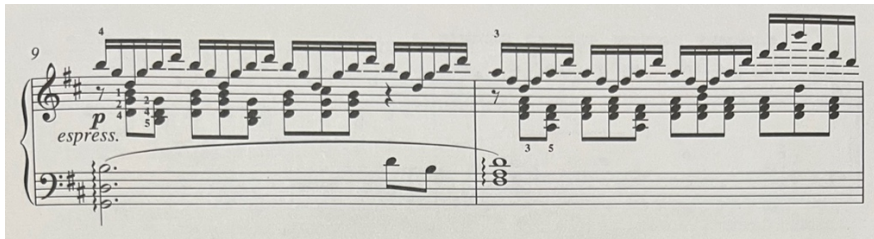


Example 30: “Facing the Sun”, mm. 1-2.⁵²

The second section, which begins in m. 9, has a more *tranquilo* quality and the roles of the right hand and left hand switch. The triads in the middle voice should be played lightly and flowingly by the left hand, while the melodic notes need to be projected by the left-hand thumb and second finger. Using the pedal helps hold the bass chords, but the two upper voices need to be played extremely softly (see example 31). In order to produce different tone colors in the melody

⁵² Zhaoyi Dan, *Zhaoyi Dan's Selected Piano Works*. Shanghai Music Publishing House, Shanghai, 2011, Oct. ISBN: 978-7-80751-871-6/J.801, p. 82.

and accompaniment, the left-hand melodic notes should be played with flatter fingers and a deeper touch into the keys. The right-hand sixteenth notes can be played with a *leggiero* touch on the top of the keys. The other challenge in this section is the different metrical groupings between voices. The middle voice chords are grouped in triplets creating more movement while the bottom voice is calmer, consisting of slow long notes and eighth notes.



Example 31: “Facing the Sun”, mm. 9-10.

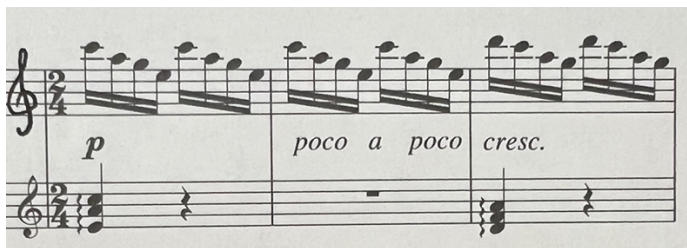
The dynamic design of the B section is a gradual *crescendo* from *piano* all the way to *forte*. The performer should plan for how much *crescendo* to use in each phrase. After reaching the *forte* climax, the piece gradually slows and quiets to *piano*. It also becomes rhythmically less active. The piece ends with broken arpeggios in both hands. The half notes on beats one and three need to be held by the damper pedal, which might require some practice for the student to coordinate (see example 32).

24
dolce
mp
p
Coda

Example 32: "Facing the Sun", mm. 24-25.

2. “Chasing Xi-er” (from *Ten Etudes*)

“Chasing Xi-er” is an etude adapted from fragments of the Chinese Ballet, *The White-Haired Girl*, Scene 3. The composer uses a series of running sixteenth notes to imitate the sound of the white-haired girl, Xi-er, running away from someone chasing her. The running sixteenth notes start in the right hand, then switch to the left hand, then back to the right hand in perpetual motion. At the indicated *Presto* tempo, it requires great finger control and wrist rotation to play this piece with evenness, clarity, and shape; however, the title and content of this etude inspire students’ imagination and creativity, making it more interesting than the Czerny etudes for younger players to learn (see example 33).



Example 33: “Chasing Xi-er”, mm. 4-6.⁵³

Pedagogical Suggestions

Using a rapid, independent finger technique is the foundation to playing this piece well. The right hand running sixteenth notes first need to be played in

⁵³ Zhaoyi Dan, *Zhaoyi Dan's Selected Piano Works*. Shanghai Music Publishing House, Shanghai, 2011, Oct. ISBN: 978-7-80751-871-6/J.801, p. 77.

groups of four notes with a light dropping on the fifth finger from the wrist, then softening the thumb for a slight diminuendo. The pianist must listen carefully for a smooth shaping and evenness of the rhythm, while keeping a loose wrist to group the notes well. Starting practice at a medium tempo will help to catch every detail of the pattern. Students should only increase tempo when they have full control of the fingers at a slower tempo. Practicing this on the closed keyboard cover will help the student listen for clarity and evenness of the rhythm. When playing at a fast tempo, the sixteenth notes need to be played lightly, while giving special attention to shaping the first note of each small group in order to create a longer phrase. I suggest aligning the bass note of the left hand rolled chords with the right-hand downbeat in order to bring out the rhythmic driving character of this piece. Practicing with a metronome will help to identify passages that might rush or slow down. A short and quick pedal can be applied to the rolled chords on the downbeat to add more timbral variety, taking care to not blur running sixteenth notes.

3. “Impression of Zither” (from *Ten Etudes*)

“Impression of Zither” is an original piano solo piece by Dan. The tempo is *moderato* and is in Eb Gong mode: Eb- F- G- Bb- C. The inspiration for this piece came from the zither, a traditional Chinese stringed instrument.⁵⁴ In this piece, Dan combines the *glissando* technique of a zither with legato embellishment figures of the piano. Fast running embellishment figures make the piece flow beautifully and freely, as shown in Example 34. It is a wonderful imitation of the sound of a zither.



Example 34: “Impression of Zither”, mm. 1-4.⁵⁵

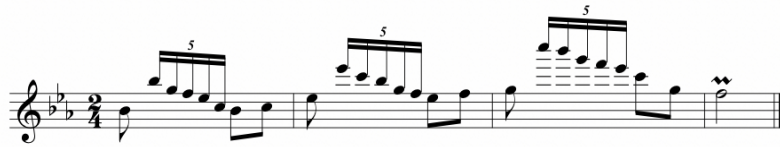
Pedagogical Suggestions

The melody in this piece is decorated with many embellishments. To find the melody, the student should play only the eighth notes in the first four measures, adding the last half note “F” (see example 35). After the student can project and shape the main melodic notes beautifully, then they may add the embellishing

⁵⁴ Chinese Zither is a plucked string instrument. It commonly has 21 strings. Others have 26 or 16 strings. Zither has a long historical period over 2500 years in China.

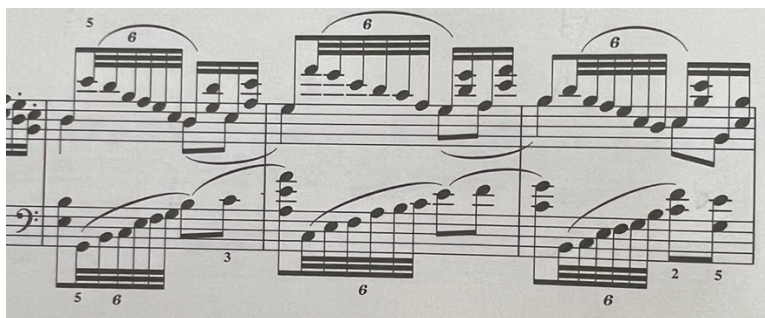
⁵⁵ Zhaoyi Dan, *Zhaoyi Dan's Selected Piano Works*. Shanghai Music Publishing House, Shanghai, 2011, Oct. ISBN: 978-7-80751-871-6/J.801, p. 94.

quintuplets. The left-hand fingering needs to be carefully thought out in order to smoothly connect the four sixteenth notes with the rolled chord on the downbeat of the following measure (see example 34).



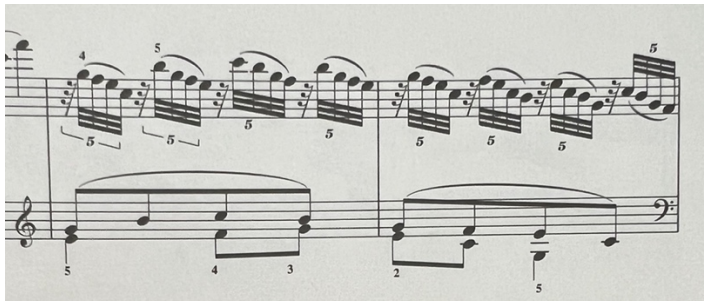
Example 35: “Impression of Zither”, mm.1-4, the melodic notes with the embellishing quintuplets.

More technically challenging parts of the piece start in m. 17. Now there are sextuplet ornamentations in both hands. Students need to practice both hands separately, as well as together, to ensure the sextuplets are played at exactly the same time (see example 36). Practicing with dotted rhythms can also help the hands to align.



Example 36: “Impression of Zither”, mm. 17-19.

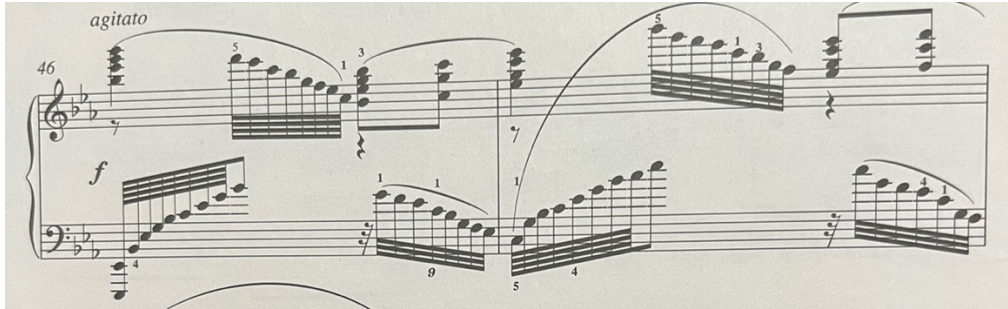
In mm. 21-24, the melody switches to the left-hand tenor, or top, voice and needs to be heard clearly above the bass voice. The right-hand quintuplets start with a thirty-second rest. When putting the hands together, students need to pay attention to the rhythmic evenness of the quintuplets with the right hand beginning immediately after the left hand's first note (see example 37).



Example 37: “Impression of Zither”, mm. 21-22.

The climax of the whole piece is in m. 46. Marked *agitato*, which means “in an agitated manner” (mm. 46-53), this is the most technically difficult section as the embellishments from earlier sections are combined (see example 38). The student must pay careful attention because the embellishment figures change quite frequently, but the tempo should remain steady. Students can practice by leaving out the blocked melodic chords and only playing the embellishments with a metronome at a slow tempo. The pianist’s fingers should stay close to the keys in order to use the most economical finger motions and keep the notes fast and smooth. This section should be practiced as early as possible and receive the

most hours of practice in order to be as polished as the other simpler sections in the piece.



Example 38: "Impression of Zither", mm. 46-47.

4. “Flying a Kite”

The theme of this piece was borrowed from a Sichuan *Qingyin*'s “Flying a Kite”. Sichuan *Qingyin*, or “sing a song”, is a type of Chinese folk song from the Sichuan Province. It was usually accompanied by the *pipa*, a Chinese traditional plucked-string instrument, also called the “Chinese lute”. It has a pear-shaped wood sound box with a varying number of frets ranging from 12 to 31.⁵⁶ Dan was born in Sichuan and has a strong love for his hometown folk tunes. Under the title, Dan wrote: “It is Qing Ming⁵⁷ in March. Sisters both went for an outing. The wind and the sun are warm and beautiful. Fly a happy kite into the blue sky.”⁵⁸

Pedagogical Suggestions

“Flying a Kite” is marked *adagio* and begins with a free unmetered introduction as shown in example 39. After a rolled chord with a trill, there is a single flourish written with *tremolos* and grace notes to imitate the sound of *pipa*, followed by a series of arpeggiated thirty-second notes that depict the imagery of flying a kite (see example 39).

⁵⁶ <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/pipa>.

⁵⁷ Qing Ming Festival: is a Chinese traditional ‘Tomb Sweeping’ Day in March, spring. On Qing Ming, people usually go visiting their ancestral graves.

⁵⁸ Zhaoyi Dan, *Zhaoyi Dan's Selected Piano Works*. Shanghai Music Publishing House, Shanghai, 2011, Oct. ISBN: 978-7-80751-871-6/J.801, p. 32.



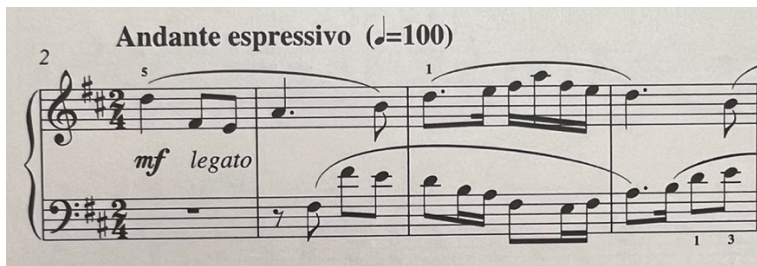
Example 39: “Flying a Kite”, m. 1.⁵⁹

Exercises for playing trills can be found in many finger technique training books, such as “*Hanon—the Virtuoso Pianist in Sixty Exercises for the Piano*”, Part III, “The Trill for all Five Fingers”. Practice metered trills with a metronome for evenness and clarity first, then practice at a faster tempo until the fingers can trill quickly, evenly and freely. Evenness is essential before increasing the speed of the trill. Tremolo practice requires a rotation motion of the forearm with a well-balanced control of the two side fingers. The three groups of tremolos need to be played with different dynamics from softer to louder and with a slower to faster tempo rubato to show the expressiveness of this cadenza. For an expressive rubato sound effect, the performer needs to feel the natural flow of the music.

The theme starts in m. 2, marked *Andante espressivo* in D Gong mode: D- E- F#- A-B. It is a two-voice linear texture with the left-hand countermelody entering in the second half of the first beat of m. 3 (see example 40). Playing with flatter

⁵⁹ Zhaoyi Dan, *Zhaoyi Dan’s Selected Piano Works*. Shanghai Music Publishing House, Shanghai, 2011, Oct. ISBN: 978-7-80751-871-6/J.801, p. 32.

fingertips will give more warmth to the tone. The arms should be loose and the wrists need to be flexible in order to group and guide the fingers. Students need to be aware of the different contours of the two voices and shape them properly. If the top voice is *mezzo-forte*, the bottom voice should be *piano* for a good balance.



Example 40: "Flying a Kite", mm. 2-5.

In mm. 24-39, the primary theme is slightly varied and played by the left hand while the right hand plays *leggiero* sixteenth-note triplets (see example 41). This musical figure produces the image of a kite flying freely in the sky. In order to play the left-hand melody warmly and expressively, the performer needs to have a slow touch and use their natural arm weight to sink down into the keys. Internally, the performer needs to sing through with the melody for a beautiful shape.



Example 41: “Flying a Kite”, mm. 24-25.

In m. 40, the composer writes *liscio*, which means to play very smoothly. The main theme is modified into flowing sixteenth notes, but the phrase structure is kept the same as the original theme (see example 42).

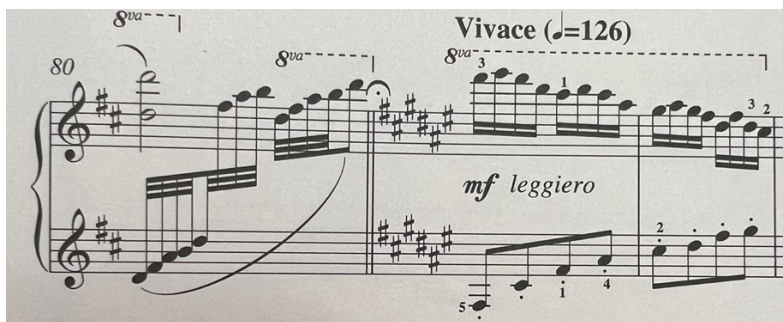


Example 42: “Flying a Kite”, mm. 38-42.

In order to play the sixteenth notes smoothly (m. 40), like a kite flying in the sky, the performer needs to minimize their finger motions by keeping their fingers as close to the keys as possible, while also using their wrists to group the notes and guide the direction of the melody to make a flowing sound. In this polyphonic texture (see example 42), the two voices breathe in different places. The phrases of the top and bass voices start and end at different spots. The performer needs to practice the phrasing and shaping of each voice separately. After the

performer has both melodies in mind, then they should put the two voices together, listening to both hands like a duet. The first section ends at m. 65 with a long trill on the tonic D held with a *fermata*.

The transitional section (mm. 66-80) is marked *rubato*, followed by a more energetic *Vivace* from mm. 81-104. The key changes to F# Gong mode: F#- G#- A#- C#- D# (see example 43) and both hands play on the black keys, making this section technically harder. It is reminiscent of Chopin's black key etude in Gb major. In order to make the fingers stand steadily on the black keys, the student must stay flexible and keep their fingers close to the keys. Practice the running black-key sixteenth notes at a slower tempo to ensure the accuracy and smoothness, then gradually play faster. Also, it will be very helpful to practice the black-key scales and arpeggios such as F# major and C# major.



Example 43: "Flying a Kite", mm. 80-82.

In m. 105, the composer changes the key signature to Eb major, implying the Eb Gong mode (see example 44).

Example 44: “Flying a Kite”, mm. 101-110.

Starting in m. 105, the melody contains various rhythmic patterns with staccatos and shorter slurs giving a lively character (see example 44). The carefully marked articulation of the right hand needs to be practiced alone, slowly and carefully. The melody alternates between single-note phrases and double-note phrases. For the double-note phrases, the different intervals (6ths, 5ths, 4ths, 3rds, and 2nds) require a bouncy wrist to play the rhythm agilely. The top notes need to be projected by carrying a bigger proportion of the arm weight.

Starting on the pickup beat to m. 117, by using a sequence of A natural, E natural, and B natural, then adding F#, C#, and G#, the piece finally modulates to E Gong mode: E- F#- G#- B- C# in m. 127 (see example 45).

Example 45: “Flying a Kite”, mm. 116-131.

In m. 149, the composer changes the key signature to G major with an *Agitato* tempo (see example 46). Dan adds C-sharp to this long transition phrase and finally returns back to the primary key of D Gong mode: D- E- F#- A- B at m. 161 with a *Vivace* tempo. The final phrase is marked *vivacissimo* and alternates two-hand octaves in sixteenth notes, growing to a final D major *sforzando* chord.



Example 46: “Flying a Kite”, mm. 149-150.

In example 46, the left-hand arpeggios need to be well grouped and played smoothly. Practice left hand alone without pedal for good finger legato and evenness of the triplets. The left-hand arpeggios should be practiced with three notes in a group at a slow tempo, then expanding the group to six notes, then finally as the composer indicated by grouping one well-shaped measure.

The frequent key changes – from D major, to F# major, Eb major, E major, G major, then back to D major – are the imitation of the kites flying and wandering in the sky, which make this piece very colorful and interesting for both the performer and listener.

5. “Longing”

“Longing” is a transcription of an art song called “That was me”, composed by the famous Chinese woman composer Jianfen Gu (b. 1935). It expresses a sad sense of nostalgia for one’s hometown. “Longing” starts with a feeling of calm and introversion and then builds to something more passionate and agitated. It is in F# Yu mode: F#- A- B- C#- E and in ternary form. The composer frequently alternates between three different time signatures (3/4, 4/4, and 2/4) in order to make the melody sound freer, like a recitative. At the beginning of this piece, the composer writes *Calma to rubato*. The texture is written out in three staves. The middle staff denotes the main *mezzo-piano* melody, while the top staff and the bottom staff are the harmonic accompaniment and *pianissimo* echo of the melody. The piece begins with a two-measure introduction (see example 47).

Calma to rubato

Example 47: “Longing”, mm. 1-3.⁶⁰

“Longing” was written in the following ternary form:

⁶⁰ Zhaoyi Dan, *Zhaoyi Dan's Selected Piano Works*. Shanghai Music Publishing House, Shanghai, 2011, Oct. ISBN: 978-7-80751-871-6/J.801, p. 44.

Introduction (mm. 1-2) – A (mm. 3-14) – A1 (mm. 15-26) – B (mm. 27-40) – A2 (mm. 41-57) – Codetta (mm. 58-60). In the following section, I will discuss the pedagogical suggestions according to the order of the musical form.

Pedagogical Suggestions

In the A section, the middle staff melody is played by the left hand. The left hand also needs to play the short melodic interjection in the bass voice (see example 48). The performer needs to adjust arm weight and the depth of touch to produce different sound layers. The right hand plays the running sixteenth notes in the high register, which should be played very lightly and gently with pedal to produce a blurry and distant background sound.

The image shows a musical score for Example 48, "Longing", measures 1-6. The score is in 3/4 time with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). It features three staves: a right-hand staff with running sixteenth notes, a middle staff with a melody, and a bass staff with a short melodic interjection. Dynamics include *pp* and *mp*. The tempo marking is "Calma to rubato".

Example 48: "Longing", mm. 1-6.

In the A1 section, the main melody remains in the middle staff, but is played in octaves (see example 49). For a legato and smooth shaping of the melody, the performer should minimize their vertical motion and use their arm to lead the hand more horizontally. The short melodic response to the main melody now moves to the top staff and is played very lightly and softly by the right hand. In the bottom staff, the left hand plays running sixteenth notes, increasing the passion and intensity of the nostalgic feeling towards one's hometown.



Example 49: “Longing”, mm. 15-16.

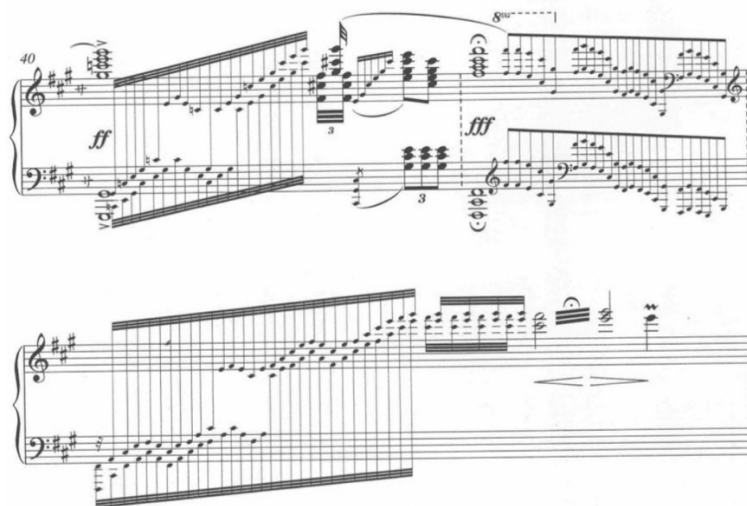
The B section starts on the last beat of m. 26 and is marked *Agitato* (see example 50). At m. 26, a *crescendo* builds from *forte* to *fortissimo* reaching a climax at m. 27. In m. 26, the downbeat F major blocked chord and bass octave F need to be hold by the right pedal while both hands play the two inner voice octaves. In order to produce a clear texture, the inner octaves should start softly and start to crescendo on the second beat. The right pedal needs to be fluttered through the running sixteenth octaves to avoid being too blur or muddy. Or the

performer can use the sostenuto pedal with the left foot to hold the bass octave “F#” and change the damper pedal more frequently with the right foot.

In the *Agitato* section, the left-hand accompanying chords are written in triplets while the right-hand melody remains in a duple feel. This two-against-three rhythm may require some slow practice to master the coordination. Again, practicing on the closed keyboard cover will help the student hear the rhythms very clearly. The arm weight proportion on each finger needs to be practiced carefully, as well, to bring out the top note of each chord. The bass octaves on the downbeat of each measure should be loud and full to ground the harmonies. The student also needs to be aware of the countermelody in the left-hand triplet chords. These need to be well-shaped and grouped according to each top note. The left hand should be practiced separately without pedal first, using finger legato to connect the triplets as much as possible. After both hands are coordinated and well-phrased, the student can add pedal on the downbeat octaves while listening carefully for the clarity of the moving lines and an overall full and grand sound.

Example 50: “Longing”, mm. 26-30.

This section continues to build until m. 40 when Dan writes a free cadenza (see example 51). While dotted bar lines are present to indicate groupings, this cadenza should be very passionate and virtuosic. The pianist must be careful not to overplay or produce a harsh sound when playing such loud dynamics. In order to play a warm and big round sound, the performer needs to keep their arms completely relaxed and avoid any pressing of the keys. The upper body needs to lean forward slightly to add body weight to the arm weight dropping into the keys to make the chords fully resonating.



Example 51: "Longing", m. 40.

After this extremely turbulent section, the dynamic drops down to *pianissimo* at m. 41 and is marked *tranquillo meno mosso*, which means calm and less fast.

The theme is reprised with some variation in m. 41 (see example 52). The texture drops down to only two voices: a single note melody and staccato broken chords, which sounds like sad rain drops of missing his hometown. The piece fades away to *pianississimo* in a closing codetta.



Example 52: "Longing", mm. 41-42.

The intermediate level pieces Dan wrote require well-trained technical facility and mature musicality. The last two pieces, “Impression of Zither” and “Longing”, can be categorized into either late-intermediate or early-advanced pieces. The musical structures are clear and well-organized, which makes memorization easier for the performer. Dan’s etudes are not only written for fast-running finger technique training (such as “Chasing Xi-er”), compared to Czerny’s etudes, they also have vivid musical characters. Additionally, the characters for each piece are suitable for young adults, and makes it more enjoyable for students to practice the rigid technique. Because the pieces are written in Chinese pentatonic scales, for the hands which are used to running notes written in Western major and minor scales and arpeggios, students have to retrain their fingers to play fast and accurately by making the most hands more flexible when realizing the different distances between the fingers.

Advanced Level

Night Banquet of Shu Palace

Night Banquet of Shu Palace was originally a large-scale Chinese traditional orchestral piece composed by Zhou Zhu, Shu Yu, and Weijie Gao in the early 1980s. It won first prize at The Third National Music Composition Competition in 1983 and depicts the *Night Banquet of Shu Palace* that took place in the early tenth century in China. *Shu* was a kingdom built up by King Jian Wang (847-918) in the western suburb of Chengdu, Sichuan Province, in Southwest China.

The whole piece consists of three sections in compound ternary form. The first section, the opening scene of the banquet, is in binary form. The orchestration of this section is very simple and graceful in order to set the scene of a clear and peaceful night as guests arrive. Tubular bells, Chinese gong chimes, and tinkle bells play the quiet introduction. The Chinese bamboo flute and *Zhonghu* then play the quiet melody.⁶¹ The *Zhonghu* is a low-pitched *Erhu* or bowed two-string instrument.

The second section portrays a dance called “Dance of Rainbow Gowns and Feather Robes” that was performed at the night banquet. This was originally a court dance performed by a group of female dancers, based on an ancient poem

⁶¹ Xilin Li, “*New Rhyme of the Old Music—My Opinion about Piano Solo Night Banquet of Shu Palace*”. The article was from the book by Zhaoyi Dan, *Zhaoyi Dan’s Selected Piano Works*. Shanghai Music Publishing House, Shanghai, 2011, Oct. ISBN: 978-7-80751-871-6/J.801, pp.109-110.

of the same name by the poet Juyi Bai (772-846) of the *Tang* Dynasty. The music of this court dance was originally composed by the ancient Chinese Emperor Xuanzong of the *Tang* dynasty.⁶² In the orchestral version, the musical form used in this section is a combination of a Rondo variation form with *Daqu*, a form for music and dances used in the *Tang* dynasty. It usually included sections of *Sanxu* (preparation), *Zhongxu* (development), and *Qupo* (climax). By utilizing these combined musical forms, the composers created the effect of a “play within a play”.⁶³

The third section is a reprise of the first section to depict the banquet’s end and the guests departing. In the coda, many instruments play glissandos, tremolos, and ornaments to express the melancholy in the hearts of the dancers and musicians, giving this section a sad and pensive feel.⁶⁴

Dan attended the premiere of the orchestral version of the *Night Banquet of Shu Palace* and was deeply touched by the performance, deciding to transcribe it into solo piano music. His piano student Heng Xie first performed the transcribed *Night Banquet of Shu Palace* piano solo piece at the Second Music Festival of Rongcheng Autumn of Sichuan in 1984.⁶⁵

⁶² Xilin Li, “New Rhyme of the Old Music—My Opinion about Piano Solo *Night Banquet of Shu Palace*”. The article was from the book by Zhaoyi Dan, *Zhaoyi Dan’s Selected Piano Works*. Shanghai Music Publishing House, Shanghai, 2011, Oct. ISBN: 978-7-80751-871-6/J.801, p. 110.

⁶³ *Ibid*, p. 110.

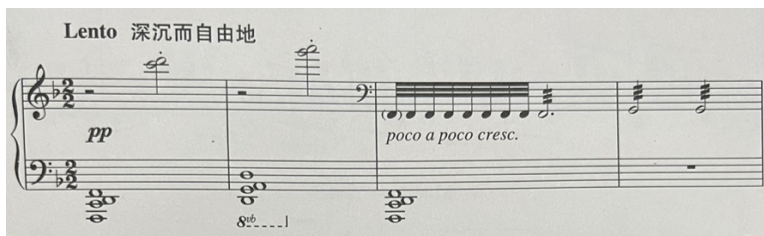
⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. 110.

⁶⁵ Zhaoyi Dan, *Zhaoyi Dan’s Selected Piano Works*. Shanghai Music Publishing House, Shanghai, 2011, Oct. ISBN: 978-7-80751-871-6/J.801, p. 70.

Night Banquet of Shu Palace (piano solo)

Introduction (mm.1-7)

In his transcription, Dan follows the basic existing orchestral structure. The Introduction (mm. 1-7) is marked *Lento* with a dynamic of *pianissimo*. The opening two chords imitate Chinese gong chimes and bells (see example 53).



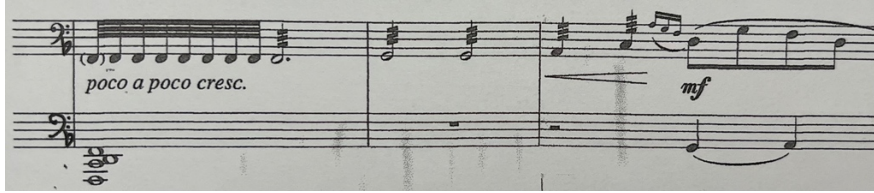
Example 53: *Night Banquet of Shu Palace*, mm. 1-4.⁶⁶

The repeated notes in the melody imitate the 'circular finger movement' technique (in Chinese, it is called *Lun Zhi*) of the Chinese plucked-string instruments such as the *pipa*, *yangqin*, and zither.

Pedagogical Suggestion for the Introduction

In mm. 3-5, the right hand should use this same 'circular finger movement' technique to play these repeated notes smoothly and evenly (see example 54).

⁶⁶ Zhaoyi.Dan, *Zhaoyi Dan's Selected Piano Works*. Shanghai Music Publishing House, Shanghai, 2011, Oct. ISBN: 978-7-80751-871-6/J.801, p. 51.



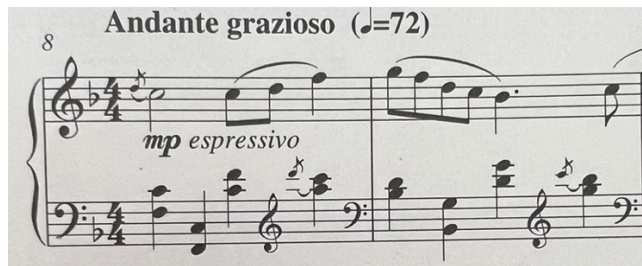
Example 54: *Night Banquet of Shu Palace*, mm. 3-5.

I suggest using 4-3-2-1 fingering. This pattern should be practiced from slow to fast by grouping four notes together, then eight notes together with a fast, plucking motion from the fingertips, while keeping a loose wrist and slight rotation to group the fingers. Meanwhile, gradually adjusting the arm weight will ensure a gradual *crescendo* from *pianissimo* to *mezzo forte*. This special 'circular finger motion' *crescendo* depicts ancient Chinese musicians playing their stringed instruments at the banquet.

Section I (mm. 8- 60): Binary Form A-B

The A section (mm. 8-25):

This section is in F Gong mode and contains two phrases. The first phrase (mm. 8-16) is marked *andante grazioso* and *espressivo* at a *mezzo piano* dynamic (see example 55).



Example 55: *Night Banquet of Shu Palace*, mm. 8-9.⁶⁷

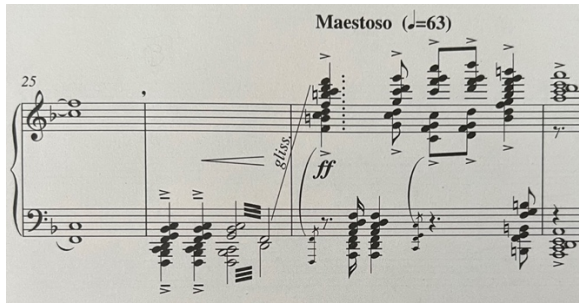
The melody of this phrase was originally played by a bamboo flute in the orchestral version of *Night Banquet of Shu Palace*. The second phrase (mm. 17-25) is *mezzo forte*, *piu mosso* and the right-hand melody is written in chords and octaves rather than a single-note melody like the first phrase. In the orchestral version, this consequent melody was played by a group of *erhus*.

The B section (mm. 26-60):

This section starts with one measure of transition (m. 26), which is accented by chords, tremolos and a glissando to imitate the sound of gongs, chimes and

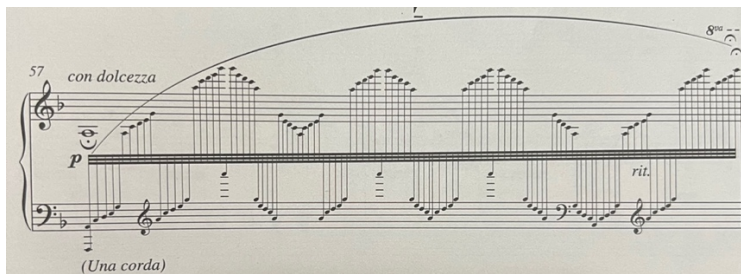
⁶⁷ Zhaoyi Dan, *Zhaoyi Dan's Selected Piano Works*. Shanghai Music Publishing House, Shanghai, 2011, Oct. ISBN: 978-7-80751-871-6/J.801, p. 51.

tubular bells. The melody starts at *maestoso*, *fortissimo* in m. 27 (see example 56).



Example 56: *Night Banquet of Shu Palace*, mm. 25-27.

This chordal section is meant to imitate the *tutti* sound of the whole orchestra. The melody was originally first played by the Chinese brass instrument *Suo-na*, followed by the Chinese bamboo flute in m. 30. The *Erhu* then leads the melody until the end of this section. In m. 29, Dan writes “*desinvolto*”, meaning that the character of this section is jaunty and lively. Section B ends with a free cadenza imitating the zither’s glissando (see example 57).

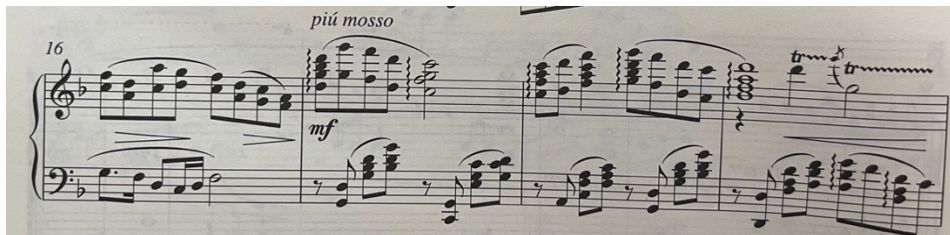


Example 57: *Night of Banquet of Shu Palace*, mm. 57, Imitating the zither’s glissando.

Pedagogical Suggestions for Section I

As shown previously in example 55, the main melody of Section I starts in F Gong mode. In the Chinese five pentatonic scale system, F Gong mode typically represents a happy and delightful mood. The melody should be played with an expressive, warm tone requiring the right hand to play more with the finger pads, rather than fingertips, shaping the direction of the phrase with smooth arm and wrist motions. Additionally, all of the grace notes should be played before the beat to keep the mood delicate and graceful.

In m. 17, the texture changes and is much more grand and chordal with the right hand melody now alternating between octaves and rolled chords (see example 58).



Example 58: *Night of Banquet of Shu Palace*, mm. 16-19.

In order to make a musical line of this chordal melody, the pianist must use a horizontal motion in their upper arm to guide the phrase direction and the fingers should remain close to the keys to minimize vertical motion. This section should

be practiced hands separately to work on phrase shape and voicing of the top notes.

The tremolos and glissando in m.26 lead into a short and majestic climax (see example 59).



Example 59: *Night of Banquet of Shu Palace*, mm. 26-28.

The two pentatonic chords in m. 26 need to be played with a strong sound by dropping the full arm weight into the keys and using a fast attack for the tenuto and accents. The tremolo that follows requires forearm rotation. The right hand *glissando* on the last beat must be heard above the left hand's continued tremolo. For a brilliant *glissando* sound, the pianist should use fingers 3 and 4, supported by the upper arm with a completely relaxed shoulder. In mm. 27-28, performers need to take care not to play all the blocked chords at the same volume. In order to produce a majestic and grand sound, this *fortissimo* phrase requires dropping both the natural arm weight and the upper back body weight into the keys with a well-controlled dynamic shape. The top melodic notes need to be projected with a bright and healthy sound, while also emphasizing the bass

notes. To achieve a balanced texture, the performer needs to have strong fifth fingers in both hands. The side muscle of the palm under the fifth finger, the weakest finger, is a great support and should be utilized. In order to learn the notes of this chordal phrase more efficiently, one can also practice it backwards. This is a useful exercise to locate and memorize the position of each chord faster on the keyboard.

This B section (mm. 26-60) is a festive scene in the Shu palace. It is an imitation of the orchestral *tutti* alternating with solo instrumental groups. Thus, the dynamic changes very frequently. The texture is complex and highly decorated (see example 60). M. 26 mimics the percussion instruments (drums, gongs, and chimes) with a crescendo to the majestic and dignified theme of the B section at m. 27 played by the brass instrument *Suona* (mm 27-29). In m. 30, the *mezzo piano* melody is played by bamboo flutes. In m. 31, the driving rhythm in the pentatonic chords push the music from soft to *forte*. Then, starting in m. 32, the melody is played by the *erhus*. In this transcription, the pianist must explore the dynamics very carefully and adjust the arm weight and touches to produce the frequent dynamic and color contrasts between phrases.

Maestoso (♩=63)

25

gliss.

ff

29

desinvolto

mp

31

f

8^{va}-1

2/4

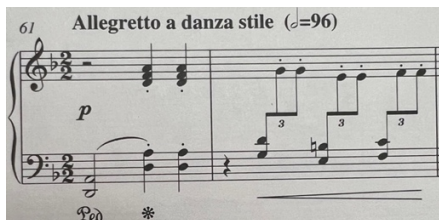
Example 60: *Night of Banquet of Shu Palace*, mm. 25-32.

Section II: Varied Rondo Form (mm. 61-309): C-D-C1-E-C2- F

The second section of this piece is the exotic dance scene, “Dance of Rainbow Gowns and Feather Robes” and is the longest section of the whole piece. It is composed in a rondo form with variations. For the purpose of this paper, I labelled the primary dance theme as “C”. In the orchestral version, this theme was played by the *Pipa*, a traditional plucked-string instrument. There are three subsections that I labelled respectively as D, E, and F. The C section returns twice; however, both iterations have different features, therefore I labelled these two sections as C1 and C2. After the third subsection F, there is no return of the dance theme. The passionate and fiery F episode is the climax of the whole dance. The structure of the second section is outlined below:

C (mm. 61-91) – D (mm. 91-132) – C1 (mm. 133-162) – E (mm. 163-216) – C2 (mm. 217-252) – F (mm. 253-309).

The next three subgroups of Example 54 show a comparison of the primary dance theme (C) to the dance themes in C1 and C2. The C theme (see example 61-1) starts softly and gently with a *piano* dynamic in d minor.



Example 61-1: *Night of Banquet of Shu Palace*, mm. 61-62, C dance theme.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Zhaoyi Dan, *Zhaoyi Dan's Selected Piano Works*. Shanghai Music Publishing House, Shanghai, 2011, Oct. ISBN: 978-7-80751-871-6/J.801, p. 56.

In the C1 dance theme (see example 61-2), the texture becomes fuller, played *fortissimo* and *focoso*, increasingly getting faster, all while staying in d minor. The melody changes to moving octaves in the left hand, while the right hand plays flowing triplet figures to make the dance more active.



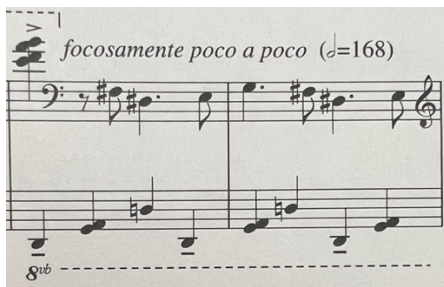
Example 61-2: *Night of Banquet of Shu Palace*, mm. 133-134, Dance theme of C1.

In section C2 (see example 61-3), the tempo is even faster, marked as *Presto Caldamente* and the dynamic is *fortissimo, con foco*. *Caldamente* means heartily and spirited; *con foco* means with fire. The time signature changes to 2/2 and the key is c minor. This passionate mood in C2 brings the whole dance to the climax. C2 transitions into the F section in m. 253.



Example 61-3: *Night of Banquet of Shu Palace*, mm. 217-218, Dance theme of C2.

The third subsection F (mm. 253-309) is the climax of the whole dance. At this point, the tempo reaches its fastest speed (see example 62). Dan writes at the beginning of this section *focosamente poco a poco*, which translates to “getting very fiery little by little”. The dynamics change from *pianississimo* in m. 278 to *fortissimo* and then building to *fortississimo* at m. 301. An eight-measure *sostenuto* whole-note phrase ends the section at *fortississimo* with a *diminuendo* at the end.



Example 62: *Night of Banquet of Shu Palace*, mm. 253-254, F episode.

From a technical standpoint, the C2 and F sections are the most difficult, mainly due to the leaps of blocked chords, octaves, and tremolos at quick speeds, as well as the very frequent and extreme dynamic changes. Not only is musical virtuosity essential to achieving the colorful characters of the *Dance of Rainbow Gowns and Feather Robes*, but an advanced technique from the player is demanded as well.

Pedagogical Suggestions for Section II

The primary dance theme of the C section begins in the left hand with perfect fifths jumping up an octave (see example 61-1). These are played with a slur followed by two staccatos. This carries into a triplet pattern that alternates between the left hand playing the main melodic notes and the right hand playing two staccato repeated notes.



Example 61-1: *Night of Banquet of Shu Palace*, mm. 61-62, C dance theme.

In my opinion, the rhythm of the triplet on each beat in m. 62 is a diminution of the rhythm in m. 61. Matching the articulation helps to convey a unified character. The top note of each left-hand fifth needs to be emphasized with crisp

articulation. The pedal can be applied lightly on each of the three beats in m. 62 to keep the sound from being too dry; however, the performer must listen carefully for the rhythmic clarity of the triplets.

The D section begins with the left hand mimicking a string instrument (see example 63, mm 95-97).

The image shows a musical score for two systems of piano music, measures 95-101. The first system (measures 95-97) features a right hand with triplets of eighth notes and a left hand with a melodic line. The second system (measures 98-101) continues the right hand's melodic line with triplets and the left hand's accompaniment. Dynamics include *mp* and *p*. A dashed line with a double bar and a vertical line indicates the end of the section.

Example 63: *Night of Banquet of Shu Palace*, mm. 95-101.

This is followed by the imitation of a percussion instrument playing the melody in a higher register (see example 63, mm 97-101). The light bell-like sound requires a fast touch on the top of the keys to produce a sparkling and crisp sound. The accentuated octaves also need to be well-shaped. To keep the flow of the phrase during the two against three rhythms in m. 97 to m. 100, the left-hand three-note cluster (Fx – G# - A) and the second and third notes of the triplets of the right hand need to be played very softly without interrupting the melody.

In the second episode section (E), the time signature changes to 3/4. Dan indicates this section as '*Gaiamente*', meaning lively and happy (see example 64, m. 163).

Example 64: *Night of Banquet of Shu Palace*, mm. 159-171.

Beginning in m. 165, Dan uses three staves: the top is an imitation of a bell ringing with staccatos, the middle staff has the main melody, played by alternating left and right hands (see example 64, mm. 170-171), and the bottom staff contains bass pedal tones and staccato broken octaves. The pedal tones need to be held by the *sostenuto* pedal. For a clear and layered sound texture, the main melody should always project as the loudest voice. The player needs to listen carefully to make the melodic tone consistent between both hands. Next in the hierarchy of voicing are the held notes in the outer voices. The softest voice is the broken octaves in the bottom staff, which should be played very lightly and steadily, as if from afar.

The E section transitions into the climax, C2, by returning to two staves and a duple meter (see example 65, m. 215).

The image shows a musical score for Example 65, spanning measures 215 to 219. The score is written for two staves (treble and bass clef) in 4/4 time. It begins with the tempo marking 'allargando' and the measure number '215'. The music features a series of chords and melodic lines. A dynamic marking 'rinforza' is present in measure 216. The tempo changes to 'Presto caldamente (♩=144)' starting in measure 217. The dynamic 'ff con fuoco' is marked in measure 217. The score includes articulation marks such as '8va' (octave up) and 'V' (accents). The music concludes in measure 219.

Example 65: *Night of Banquet of Shu Palace*, mm. 215-219.

Although C2 requires very fast speed and a *fortissimo* dynamic, the performer needs to keep the *con fuoco* emotion and physical execution under control in order to play with a warm, but loud and passionate tone. The blocked chords need to be properly grouped with consistent dynamic shaping. Mm. 217-241 are made of four sequenced phrases descending by whole steps from C – B \flat – G \sharp – F \sharp – E. Each phrase has six measures (see example 66). The first phrase (mm. 217-222) starts on a C minor chord in m. 217. This half note C minor blocked octave chord needs to be accented and held for its full value. The following two staccato blocked quarter note chords need to be lighter in order to create a dance feeling. The second phrase (mm. 223-228) starts on a B \flat minor blocked octave chord. Since the phrases are sequences, the performer needs to play each phrase with the same articulation and shape.

allargando **Presto caldamente** (♩=144)

215 *8va*
rinforza *ff con foco*

220 *8va*

225 *8va*

Example 66: *Night of Banquet of Shu Palace*, mm. 215-229.

The large jumps in the left hand (see example 66, m. 217) need to be practiced alone for accuracy. Creating a solid hand frame for the bass octave chords and leading with the thumb will help the pianist jump to the upper chord. The sound should be loud and full, but not harsh, by keeping the arm relaxed and dropping the natural arm weight into the key without attacking or pressing.

This C2 variation transitions into episode F, which starts in m. 253 (see example 67, m. 253).

Example 67: *Night of Banquet of Shu Palace*, mm. 250-259.

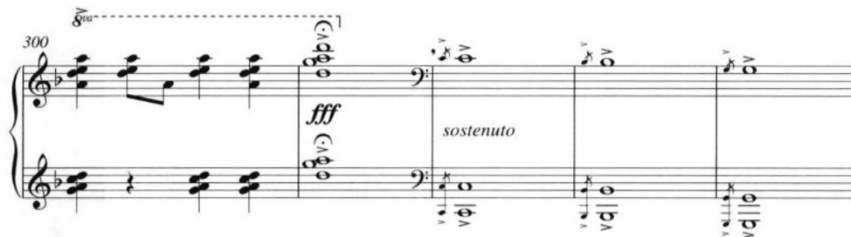
Episode F functions as a *coda* for this fascinating fiery dance. It consists of dramatic dynamic contrasts and register changes within short phrases (see example 67). After a short melodic segment, the melody switches to right hand blocked chords (see example 67, mm. 255-257) marked *mezzo piano* with accents, requiring less arm weight but a faster touch. Coordinating the rhythmic accents in both hands is complicated (see example 67, mm. 253-259), because the left-hand pattern is grouped in triple and the right-hand phrases is grouped in duple. This hemiola section lasts from m. 253 to m. 286. Students need to practice hands together slowly in order to bring out the left-hand bass D with tenuto correctly, while not disturbing the right-hand melody moving above it.

In m. 287, the F episode grows into a *fortissimo* section with accented chords made of perfect fourths and fifths that outline the pentatonic mode (see example 68).



Example 68: *Night of Banquet of Shu Palace*, mm. 285-289.

M. 285 is marked *allargando*, meaning to get gradually slower and more stately. This crescendos to a *fortississimo* whole-note chord with a *fermata*, then slows and calms down to end this dance section (see example 69).



Example 69: *Night of Banquet of Shu Palace*, mm. 300-304.

Section III: Inverted Reprise of Section I: B-A (mm. 310-337)

In Section III, the binary form of the first section is reversed. A truncated version of the B section returns first (mm. 310-327) with the A section (mm. 328-337) following. Example 70 shows a one-measure transition to the return of the B section at m. 311, which is in F Gong mode: F – G – A – C – D.



Example 70: *Night of Banquet of Shu Palace*, mm. 310-311, Return of B in Section III.⁶⁹

The return of the A section starts in m. 328 an octave lower than the primary melody in the first section, as shown in example 71.



Example 71: *Night of Banquet of Shu Palace*, mm. 328-330, Return of A in Section III.

⁶⁹ Zhaoyi Dan, *Zhaoyi Dan's Selected Piano Works*. Shanghai Music Publishing House, Shanghai, 2011, Oct. ISBN: 978-7-80751-871-6/J.801, p. 67.

This A section expresses the sad mood the musicians felt at the end of the banquet. The single melody diminuendos from *piano* to *pianissimo*, then to *pianississimo*, giving a somber ending to the piece.

Pedagogical Suggestions for Section III

By comparison, the truncated B section in section III (mm. 311-315, see example 72) is skillfully written as an almost complete duplicate of the measures written in the first B section (mm. 27-31, see example 73), the primary difference being that mm.32-45 in the original B section are omitted in the shortened B section. Mm. 46-54 (see example 74) are repeated in the shortened B section as mm. 314-322 with the left-hand accompaniment pattern changed only slightly in m. 322.

Comparing the similarities and differences of the two B sections will help with memorization for performance.

The image displays two staves of musical notation. The top staff, labeled with measure number 313, shows a melodic line in the right hand and a rhythmic accompaniment in the left hand. The dynamic marking *mp* is present. The bottom staff, labeled with measure number 315, shows a melodic line in the right hand and a rhythmic accompaniment in the left hand. The dynamic marking *f* is present in the first part of the measure, and *mp* is present in the second part. A slur is placed over the right-hand melody in measure 315, and a dashed line with a slur above it indicates a continuation or comparison of the melodic line.

Example 72: *Night of Banquet of Shu Palace*, mm. 313-316.

29 *desinvolto*
mp

31 *f*

Example 73: *Night of Banquet of Shu Palace*, mm.29-33.

45 *f*

47 *mp*

Example 74: *Night of Banquet of Shu Palace*, mm. 45-48.

The end of the truncated B section (mm.323-327) is altered from a big chordal texture in the first B section to a single melody with accompaniment (see example 75).



Example 75: *Night of Banquet of Shu Palace*, mm. 323-326.

The dynamic drops from *fortissimo* to *mezzo forte* to *mezzo piano* with a *diminuendo* to bring back the A section's melody in m. 328 (see example 76).



Example 76: *Night of Banquet of Shu Palace*, mm.327-330.

The whole piece then ends with a lonely single *pianissimo* melody played *piu lento*, dissipating into a *pianississimo*. The left pedal should be applied in the last measure in order to change the tone quality to a sad and *dolce* mood (see example 77).



Example 77: *Night of Banquet of Shu Palace*, mm. 334-337.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

Zhaoyi Dan's piano compositions, both his transcriptions and original creations, are a great contribution to the contemporary piano repertoire. Dan's pieces combine piano pedagogy and technical training with beautiful artistry. Both his transcriptions and original works reflect his love of Chinese traditional music and folk songs. The primary characteristics of Dan's piano compositions are vivid imagery, beautiful melodies, clear musical structures, and a positive and delightful mood, which make them easily loved by younger generations. Dan's loving, caring, and optimistic personality is reflected in his works and his compositions draw from a wide range of musical genres. By studying and teaching Dan's piano compositions, both teachers and students can gain valuable insights into and understanding of Chinese culture. The task of combining Chinese traditional music with Western musical instruments and compositional skills has been advocated for in China since the early twentieth century, with generations of musicians and composers devoting themselves towards this endeavor.

Dan is not only a great piano pedagogue and artist, but also a model to inspire more pianists to compose based on their life experiences and aesthetic views. Most of Dan's piano compositions are programmatic. They not only provide the performer with musical characters to guide their imagination, but also depict the characters through Chinese pentatonic modes. Just as Bartók's music brought exotic and high passionate characteristics of Roma music to Western

Europeans, Dan's music introduces some of Chinese life to pianists who might be unaware. I hope this paper will spark further interest in the study and performance of music by Zhaoyi Dan.

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