

## A Study on the Nationalization of Piano Works in Southwest China

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Piano music in southwestern China distinguishes itself from traditional Western piano music by its incorporation of local ethnic music and cultural elements. These elements encompass a wide range of expressions, including ethnic folk songs, dance music, and instruments from various ethnic minorities. Composers of these piano works engage in extensive research and investigation to assimilate the essence of local ethnic music culture, infusing it into their compositions.

**Objective:** This research aims to analyze the interplay between piano compositions and ethnic music culture in southwestern China. It seeks to uncover how piano music and ethnic music converge, intertwine with their respective cultural roots, and ultimately give rise to innovative and distinctive musical styles.

**Results:** The findings of this study underscore the impressive capabilities of Chinese composers to navigate the complex tonal systems and rich cultural tapestry inherent in Chinese ethnic music. Through their inventive compositions, these composers not only pay tribute to tradition but also contribute to the ongoing evolution of Chinese music. This dynamic fusion of tradition and creativity ensures that Chinese music continues to thrive as a vibrant and enduring cultural expression on the global stage.

**Conclusion:** The research illuminates the remarkable confluence of piano music and ethnic music culture in southwestern China. By merging diverse cultural elements and embracing the complexity of rhythms and improvisational creativity, composers create compositions that resonate with profound depth and richness. This dynamic fusion not only preserves tradition but also propels Chinese music into a dynamic and ever-evolving realm, ensuring its enduring presence in the global musical landscape.

**Keywords:** Southwest China; Piano; Music; Nationalization

### 1. Introduction

The content of piano music in southwestern China is diverse, and the adapted materials mainly come from folk melodies, dance music, and works adapted based on the characteristics of ethnic instruments. Researchers have found that the number of works adapted from folk songs is significantly higher, indicating the significant influence and status of folk music in Chinese music culture. In traditional Chinese music, folk songs are the most popular and widespread form, with strong regional and ethnic characteristics, and are deeply loved by the people. Therefore, when analyzing music forms, it is necessary to consider the cultural background in which the song is located, in order to better understand the meaning and meaning of the song. Secondly, the analysis of music forms can reflect specific values and aesthetic concepts in cultural backgrounds. In different cultural backgrounds, people's preferences, appreciation standards, and artistic practices for music may vary. The analysis of musical forms can reveal the cultural influences that composers encounter during the creative process, and convey and express specific cultural values through their works. In the process of adapting and creating traditional folk music, composers not only retain the basic elements of the original folk music, but also

vigorously explore and promote the cultural ideas contained in folk music.

## **2. Research Objectives**

This research aims to analyze the interplay between piano compositions and ethnic music culture in southwestern China. It seeks to uncover how piano music and ethnic music converge, intertwine with their respective cultural roots, and ultimately give rise to innovative and distinctive musical styles. To analyze the relationship between piano music works and ethnic music culture in southwestern China.

## **3. Research Method**

The southwestern region of China has rich and diverse ethnic cultures and musical traditions, such as Yunnan, Guizhou, Sichuan, and other provinces. The piano works in these places often incorporate elements of local traditional music, including folk songs, dance music, and the performance methods, melodies, rhythms, etc. of traditional instrumental music. These works not only enrich Chinese music culture, but also contribute to the diversity of world music culture. This article selects four works as samples from the published collections "Flowers Blooming -100 Years of Chinese Piano" and "Original Essence of Chinese Piano Works in the New Era", and analyzes them using observation and interviews as research tools.

### **3.1 Overall and Sampling**

#### **3.1.1 Overall**

This article takes a total of 50 piano music works belonging to the southwestern region of China from the published works "Flowers Blooming -100 Years of Chinese Piano" and "Original Essence of Chinese Piano Works in the New Era" as the research overall. The "Flowers Blooming -100 Years of Chinese Piano" was edited by Pu Fang and Tong Daojin, published by Shanghai Conservatory of Music Press in 2015. This book takes time as the meridian and genre as the latitude, systematically sorting out the development trajectory of Chinese piano art, and gathering excellent piano works created by Chinese people worldwide over the past century, providing indispensable and valuable information for Chinese piano music researchers. The "Original Essence of Chinese Piano Works in the New Era" published by People's Music Publishing House selected 15 works created by famous Chinese composer Zhang Chao in recent years. The collection of works has signed a cooperative publishing copyright agreement and purchase agreement with Schott Publishing Company in Germany.

#### **3.1.2 Sampling**

Four samples were selected from the total of 50 works, including Zou Xiangping's "Impromptu - Dongxiang Drum Tower", which won the first place in the "Himalayan Cup" - Chinese Style Piano International Composition Competition in 1995, and Zhang Zhao's "Sound Poem (Hani Love Song)", which won the third prize in the "San Carlo" National Piano Works Competition in 2007, and Huang Huwei's piano suite "Painting of Bashu", which has been included in 11 music dictionaries and Chinese music history books and selected in the large-scale series of "Collection of Chinese Music Works for a Century", the Chinese Piano Composition Recommendation for the 10th National Youth Chinese Piano Performance Competition of the Cardanza Cup, and the designated track "Numa Ami" by Zhang Chao from the Yunnan themed piano work group at the Dali Art Festival. And these four piano music works belong to the representative works of Yunnan Province, Guizhou Province, and Sichuan Province within the research area.

Time	Composer	Title of work	Honor
1958	Huang Huwei	"Painting of Bashu"	Loaded with 11 music dictionaries and Chinese music history books, and selected in the large-scale series of "Collection of Chinese Music Works for a Century"
1987	Zou Xiangping	"Impromptu - Dongxiang Drum Tower"	Won the first place in the "Himalayan Cup" - Chinese Style Piano International Composition Competition in 1995
2007	Zhang Chao	"Sound Poem (Hani Love Song)"	Won the third prize in the "San Carlo" National Piano Works Competition in 2007
2017	Zhang Chao	"Numa Ami"	The Chinese Piano Composition Recommendation for the 10th National Youth Chinese Piano Performance Competition of the Cardanza Cup, and the designated track "Numa Ami" by Zhang Chao from the Yunnan themed piano work group at the Dali Art Festival

Figure 1: Tabulated by Chen Xi, July 2023

### 3.2 Research Tools

To make the research more authentic and effective, this study mainly uses three research tools: literature review, observation, and interview.

#### 3.2.1 Literature review

This article will conduct in-depth research on piano music works in southwestern China from the perspective of musical form. Therefore, the necessary information will be collected from relevant books, papers, journals and other written materials, analyzed and summarized, so that this article can have a more objective and accurate understanding of piano music works in southwestern China.

#### 3.2.2 Observation

This article will observe the video of the performer's performance in the form of an online video, and will conduct an observational study from two perspectives: how skillful the performer is, and whether the performer understands and expresses the music well.

#### 3.2.3 Interview

There are two types of interviewees in this article. One is a piano performer, Dr. Yang Yang, who studied in England; The other category is composers, who are mainly the original authors of the four works, as Mr. Huang Huwei has passed away and is also influenced by objective factors. Therefore, the researchers collected and organized three previous interview records and literature materials on Zou Xiangping's own interpretation of the works, and used them as data references for this article. They are Li Xiaoyin's "Road of Love in Music" - Interview with Contemporary Composer Zhang Zhao's "Numa Ami" published in "Music Life" in 2022, and Zhang Kai's "Eastern Soul of Piano" - Interview with Contemporary Composer Zhang Chao published in "Piano Art" in 2018, Du Mengsu's interview records on "Paintings of Bashu" in "Words of Music and Tune of Music" - Interview Record with Professor Huang Huwei, Composer and Music Educator" published in "People's Music" in 2013, and Zou Xiangping's "Dongxiang Drum Tower and My Improvisation" published in "Music Exploration" in 2001 as research references.

Interview Form on Piano Performers' Performance of Chinese-style Piano Music Works
1. Do you think the "Nature performance method" proposed by Zhang Chao is applicable in the actual performance process? Is it suitable for popularization?
2. What aspects do you think performers should pay attention to when re-creating piano music works from these ethnic minority areas? How can we better interpret the composer's creative intention? Do you have any suggestions to share with our generation of performers?

Figure 2: Tabulated by Chen Xi, July 2023

### 3.3 Data Collection

#### 3.3.1 Literature Research

The literature data collected in this article mainly comes from China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), with a total of 2417 journal articles searched for the keyword "Chinese Piano Music", of which 452 are core journals, accounting for approximately 18.7% of the total number; there are a total of 128 journal papers searching for keywords "Yunnan Piano Music", "Guizhou Piano Music", "Sichuan Piano Music", and "Chongqing Piano Music", of which 21 are core papers, accounting for approximately 16.4% of the total number. According to the collected data, most of them conduct ontology analysis on piano music works. Overall, since 2006, the number of literature has been increasing year by year, indicating that the academic community places greater emphasis on Chinese style piano music works.

#### 3.3.2 Observations

The compositions played by influential pianists were screened through the online platform. After a comparative study, its observation subjects were "Numa Ami" published by pianist Liu Ziyu<sup>1</sup> on Bilibili's website on May 21, 2021, the piano suite "Painting of Bashu" performed by Ying Shizhen<sup>2</sup> on Bilibili's website on November 13, 2021, and "Hani Love Song" published by pianist Shen Wenyu<sup>3</sup> on Bilibili's website on June 21, 2021, and "Impromptu - Dongxiang Drum Tower" performed by Tan Xiaotang<sup>4</sup> on Bilibili website on May 24, 2021.

#### 3.3.3 Interviews

The interview was conducted for the following three purposes: firstly, to gain a clearer and specific understanding of the background and inspiration behind the creation of the work; secondly, which ethnic minority elements are used in creation; thirdly, how to learn, accept, and learn from Western music during the creative process, whether there are obstacles in integrating Chinese and Western music, and how to solve them.

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<sup>1</sup> Ying Shizhen: Excellent piano educator and former professor of the Central Conservatory of Music. She is listed in "Famous People in Chinese Contemporary Art", "Directory of Chinese Musicians", "Dictionary of Chinese Experts' Names Volume IX", "World's Famous People in Cambridge", etc.

<sup>2</sup> Shen Wenyu: Chinese pianist, graduated from the Karlsruhe State University of Music, was named "China's top ten young pianists" in 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Shen Wenyu: Chinese pianist, graduated from the Karlsruhe State University of Music, was named "China's top ten young pianists" in 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Tan Xiaotang: Young pianist, professor of the Central Conservatory of Music, won the first prize of the "Second Sendai International Piano Competition" in 2004.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

The data obtained through literature review, interview forms, observation tables, and comparative analysis will be validated by industry experts.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Nationalized Characteristics of Melody Development

In the process of adapting and creating Chinese style piano works, in order to add ethnic color, composers not only extract the sound columns of ethnic modes as music materials for creation, but also develop and create traditional Chinese melodies. "Double sentence structure" is a special technique of repetition, which was initially related to the "learning tongue" of accompanying instruments (Li Jiti, 2004). This structural feature refers to the use of repetition in adjacent parts, forming the form of "double sentence structure". By repeating each part in sequence, a corresponding effect is produced, which has the function of emphasizing the tone and emphasizing the artistic conception.

In Zhang Zhao's "Hani Love Song", the 14th and 15th stanzas adopted the technique of imitating polyphony, which gave the melody development of the music a characteristic of "double sentence". In this technique, the melodies between two parts alternate and complement each other, making the music compact and coherent. The effect is like the echo of the call from the mountains, one after another, very vivid.



Figure 3: "Original Essence of Chinese Piano Works in the New Era"

Name: Zhang Zhao's "Hani Love Song"

The extraction and creation of ethnic tone sequences is a creative technique that does not directly reference ethnic or folk tones, but deconstructs and reorganizes them based on the mastery and absorption of folk and traditional music, and creates new melodies with ethnic characteristics based on the composer's understanding of the music. The works created using this technique, even without familiar melodies, are very unique in style. The application of ethnic modes is not simply the adaptation of folk songs, but the integration and creation of ethnic music elements, such as the popular "Sea vegetable tune" in Yunnan, China<sup>5</sup>.

Zhang Zhao's piano piece "Numa Ami" adopts the Yi people's "Haicai Tune" mode and sound sequence for editing. In the first section, the low pitched part uses a typical seaweed tone, with a column chord of "C-E-G". In sections 1-4, the III level G note is widely used as a tail decorative note, providing support for the following melody direction and the VI level main note. The low pitched part in the fifth section adopts the unique big jump of "Haicai Tune", forming a minor seventh chord  $\#E - \#D$ . The  $\#1a$  in the high pitched melody of the sixth section absorbs the musical elements of the Yi people's "sea vegetable tune", and is a variant in the  $\#c$  Yu tone. Similarly, the  $\#re$  of the high pitched melody in the 22nd stanza is also a variant note in the  $\#f$  Yu tone. This use

<sup>5</sup> Haicai Tune: Ethnic traditional local music of Honghe Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan Province, China, has been made one of the four major tones of the Yi ethnic group in southern Yunnan Province.

of inflection tones makes the music brighter and warmer, and changes the color of the previous music.



**Figure 4:** Original Essence of Chinese Piano Works in the New Era by People's Music Publishing House  
Name: Numa Ami

In the exploration of Chinese-style piano compositions, composers have embarked on a journey to infuse these works with nationalized characteristics, drawing upon a rich tapestry of ethnic and folk influences. One prominent method in achieving this is the creative utilization of melody development techniques. This approach extends beyond the mere extraction of sound columns from ethnic modes; it involves the ingenious development and reimagining of traditional Chinese melodies.

The research also delves into the concept of "ethnic tone sequences," a creative approach that deconstructs and reorganizes folk and traditional music elements to construct entirely new melodies with distinct ethnic characteristics. This method goes beyond straightforward adaptation; it integrates and innovates upon ethnic music elements, such as the incorporation of the Yunnan "Sea Vegetable Tune" in Zhang Zhao's piano piece "Numa Ami." Here, we see the meticulous utilization of specific tonal sequences and inflection notes that infuse the music with unique vibrancy and warmth, showcasing the composer's mastery of ethnic modes.

In conclusion, the research underscores the multifaceted and innovative nature of Chinese-style piano compositions in the contemporary era. Composers are not content with simple adaptations but actively engage in the deconstruction, reconstruction, and creation of melodies that bear the unmistakable imprint of ethnic and folk traditions. Through techniques like the "double sentence structure" and the creative application of "ethnic tone sequences," these compositions not only pay homage to China's diverse musical heritage but also contribute to the evolution of a distinct and vibrant contemporary musical landscape.

#### 4.2 Display of Nationalization in Harmony

To express different themes and visual sensations, composers configure different styles of harmony and pursue various colors of music. Traditional Chinese ethnic music differs greatly from Western classical music in terms of harmonic language. Therefore, when creating Chinese style music, composers try to avoid using traditional Western harmony techniques and instead use non triple stacked chords, deviating from the functionality of Western harmony, thereby enhancing the diversity and nationality of harmony.

In Kam Grand Choirs, pure fifth intervals are often used, which have the characteristics of ethereal sound and usually run in parallel. The so-called empty fifth is actually a type of pure fifth interval, because it sounds more ethereal, so it is also called an empty fifth.

The empty fifth interval in Kam Grand Choirs is not only commonly used in parallel, but also as an independent consonant interval. In the piece "Impromptu - Dongxiang Drum Tower", the introduction part, the

presentation part, the bass part, and the 93-96 bars all use an empty fifth chord. The extensive use of empty fifth chords not only enhances the ethereal sound effect, but also fully demonstrates the rich ethnic flavor of the music.



Figure 5: "Flowers Blooming -100 Years of Chinese Piano" edited by Pu Fang and Tong Daojin  
Title: "Impromptu - Dongxiang Drum Tower"

In the realm of music composition, the pursuit of different themes and visual sensations has led composers to explore diverse styles of harmony and a wide spectrum of musical colors. Notably, the distinction between traditional Chinese ethnic music and Western classical music becomes apparent when examining their harmonic languages. When composers embark on the creation of Chinese-style music, they intentionally deviate from traditional Western harmony techniques. Instead, they opt for non-triple stacked chords, thereby departing from the conventions of Western harmony. This departure serves to enrich the diversity and enhance the distinct national character of Chinese harmony.

In conclusion, the exploration of harmony in Chinese-style music is a testament to the composer's creative prowess in navigating the nuances of cultural and stylistic distinctions. By deliberately diverging from Western harmonic norms and embracing unique elements such as "empty fifth" intervals, composers infuse their compositions with an unparalleled sense of diversity and nationality. This research illuminates the profound ways in which harmony shapes the character and identity of music, ultimately showcasing the dynamic interplay between tradition and innovation in the world of music composition.

#### 4.3 Nationalized Application of Chinese Traditional Mode and Tone

The ethnic tone system in China consists of five levels: Gong, Shang, Jiao, Zhi, and Yu, which is different from the major and minor tones in the West. Unlike Western modes, in Chinese ethnic modes, the five tones of Gong, Shang, Jiao, Zhi, and Yu do not have a fixed pitch. They can be sung on different pitches like a roll, but with slight variations. In terms of the relationship between palace tones, Chinese ethnic tones can be divided into two categories: "same palace tone system" and "different palace tone system".

The "Homophonic Tonality System" refers to a musical mode in which two or more scales share the same tonic note. For instance, the "Sentimental Melody" of "Painting of Bashu" employs an ethnic scale based on the C tonality system, consistently using the G-Zhi tone as the tonic. Both the main theme and the two variation sections are presented in the G-Zhi tone, thus forming an ethnic scale within the homophonic tonality system.

The "Non-Homophonic Tonality System" refers to modes that are composed of two or more scales with different tonic notes. This category includes both "Non-Homophonic System with Identical Scales" and "Non-Homophonic System with Different Scales".

The "Aba Night Club" adopts the "Non-Homophonic System with Identical Scales", with the D-Yu tone as the fundamental tone of the A section, the connecting part changed to the  $\sharp$  f-Yu tone, and the B section adopted the A-Yu tone. The reproduction section returns to the D-Yu tone. Although they have the same tonality and are all

Yu tones, the palace sound is different, thus forming the "Non-Homophonic System with Identical Scales", with the D-Yu tone - f-Yu tone - A-Yu tone - D-Yu tone as the fundamental tone.

And "Spring Suburbs of Rongcheng" is a typical "Non-Homophonic System with Different Scales". In the A section, phrase a uses the G-Zhi as the fundamental tone, while  $a_1$  adopts the B-Gong tone; In section B, phrase b is based on the G-Zhi tone, while  $b_1$  is converted to the  $\sharp C$ -Zhi tone; The high pitched part of the first line in the reproduction section adopts the E-Gong tone, while the low pitched part adopts the E-Shang tone. The second line shifts to the G-Gong tone. Therefore, it consists of G-Zhi tone,  $\flat B$ -Gong tone, C-Gong tone, D-Shang tone, G-Zhi tone,  $\sharp C$ -Zhi tone, E-Gong tone, G-Gong tone, and G-tone, forming the "Non-Homophonic System with Different Scales".

In conclusion, the research sheds light on the captivating world of Chinese ethnic music's tone system, marked by its distinctive five tones and nuanced tonal relationships. The "same palace tone system" and "different palace tone system" offer composers a rich palette for crafting compositions that resonate with the profound diversity and cultural richness of Chinese ethnic music. Through these intricate tonal systems, composers can create music that speaks to the complexity and depth of the musical heritage, enriching the tapestry of Chinese musical expression.

#### 4.4 Nationalization Characteristics in Rhythm and Beat

Zhang Zhao's "Numa Ami" forms a sharp contrast in the theme of the allegro in sections 37-41. He cleverly combines the characteristics of Hani folk music, the folk playing and singing "Ah Li" and "Haicai Tune" of the Yi Nisu branch, as well as the typical rhythm of local dance music "Luo Zuo", creating a unique musical atmosphere. At the same time, he used the four stringed piano as a commonly used accompaniment instrument in dance and singing, extracted the five degree tuning re-la, and used it as a bass material for piano. The high pitched voice retains the tonal contrast of the fifth and eighth degrees of free transition between true and false sounds in folk melodies, while the low pitched voice creates a cheerful dancing atmosphere by continuously dividing five sound intervals, as if dancing gracefully in the sky against colorful clouds. This creative style of pursuing beauty echoes human love songs, vividly and concisely describing the scene of a beautiful home in the composer's heart.

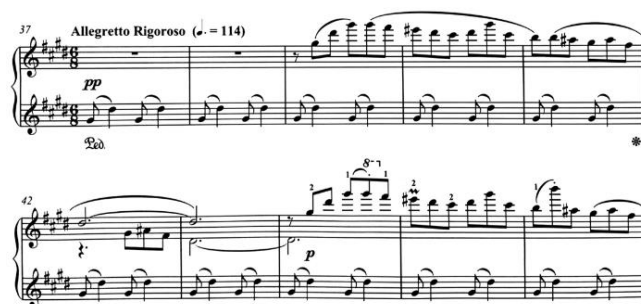


Figure 6: Original Essence of Chinese Piano Works in the New Era by People's Music Publishing House  
Name: Numa Ami

In traditional Chinese ethnic and folk music, free rhythm and irregular rhythm have always occupied an important position. The "Kam Grand Choirs" is famous for its rich and varied rhythms and rhythmic variations, with both regular and irregular free rhythms. Some big songs adopt irregular free rhythms, emphasizing the melody of the interlining part through continuous floral changes in long notes, making the entire interlining



rhythm free and flexible, with improvisation. The impromptu song "Dongxiang Drum Tower" also adopts the characteristics of free and varied rhythms and mixed rhythms in Dong music, with a total of 51 beats converted and 11 different types of rhythms. These rich and varied rhythms showcase the traditional music style of the Dong ethnic group, with a strong personal subjective color and improvisation. In the impromptu song "Dongxiang Drum Tower", temporary stress marks are used to break the strength and weakness of the original rhythm. This special rhythm arrangement reveals the improvisation characteristic of "Duoye Dance" in Dong ethnic folk music. The application of this special rhythm arrangement in music fully reflects the ever-changing charm of Dong ethnic folk music.



**Figure 7:** "Flowers Blooming -100 Years of Chinese Piano" edited by Pu Fang and Tong Daojin  
Title: "Impromptu - Dongxiang Drum Tower"

These multifaceted rhythms authentically showcase the traditional musical style of the Dong ethnic group, characterized by a strong personal, subjective quality and a penchant for improvisation. In "Dongxiang Drum Tower," the strategic use of temporary stress marks disrupts the original rhythmic patterns, revealing the improvisational nature of the "Duoye Dance" within Dong ethnic folk music. This innovative rhythmic arrangement within the composition exemplifies the ever-changing allure of Dong ethnic folk music, underscoring the boundless creative possibilities that can be explored within the realm of traditional Chinese music.

In conclusion, this research unveils the intricate and multifaceted world of Chinese ethnic and folk music, where the fusion of diverse cultural elements, rhythmic complexity, and improvisational creativity converge to produce compositions of great depth and richness. Zhang Zhao's "Numa Ami" and the impromptu piece "Dongxiang Drum Tower" serve as vibrant examples of how music can encapsulate the essence of cultural diversity and human emotion, providing a window into the captivating and ever-evolving world of Chinese music composition.

## 5. Discussion

The works created by composers in southwestern China for western instrument pianos do not abandon traditional Chinese music culture, but represent a strong ethnic music characteristic. In terms of techniques, they draw on advanced foreign compositional techniques and theories, perfectly integrating the linear melody and vertical polyphonic harmony of traditional Chinese music, exploring the organic integration of piano music and ethnic music, and thus forming a new musical style. In addition, they constantly seek breakthroughs, introduce new elements, and convey the essence of national music with rich cultural connotations, showcasing the diversity and personalization of creative modes. In short, when southwest Chinese composers adapted and created traditional ethnic music, they not only retained its basic elements, but also inherited and passed the traditional cultural spirit of the Chinese nation in a more innovative way based on a deep understanding of ethnic music ideas.

The research findings underscore the remarkable and multifaceted nature of Chinese-style piano compositions in

the modern era. Composers in this genre do not merely settle for straightforward adaptations but rather proactively immerse themselves in the intricate process of deconstruction, reconstruction, and creative reinterpretation of melodies that proudly carry the indelible mark of ethnic and folk traditions. These compositions represent a dynamic bridge between the rich tapestry of China's musical heritage and the ever-evolving contemporary musical landscape.

One of the distinctive techniques that exemplifies this creative process is the "double sentence structure" (Chen, X. (2015)). By utilizing this unique approach, composers breathe new life into their compositions, infusing them with rhythmic and thematic contrasts that captivate the listener's attention. This technique not only showcases the composer's ingenuity but also serves as a vehicle for conveying intricate narratives and emotions within the music. Additionally, the research highlights the inventive use of "ethnic tone sequences" as a key feature of contemporary Chinese-style piano compositions (Li, Y., 2019). Composers draw upon their deep understanding of ethnic music's tonal intricacies to craft melodies that resonate with authenticity and cultural richness. This creative application enables these compositions to transcend mere imitation, transforming them into vibrant and unique expressions of Chinese musical identity. In essence, Xiao, L. (2017) mentions as these contemporary Chinese-style piano compositions represent a living testament to the nation's diverse musical heritage. They simultaneously pay homage to the centuries-old traditions while charting a path toward the evolution of a distinct and dynamic musical landscape. So, it concerns with the study of Zhang, W. (2020) reported; through their innovative techniques and creative mastery, composers contribute to a musical legacy that continues to captivate audiences and inspire future generations, ultimately ensuring the enduring vitality of Chinese music on the global stage (Yin, L. 2018).

The research delved deep into the intricacies of Chinese ethnic music's unique tone system, which is characterized by its five distinct tones of Gong, Shang, Jiao, Zhi, and Yu (Wei, J. 2017). These five tones stand in stark contrast to the Western major and minor scales, as they do not have fixed pitches but rather offer a spectrum of possibilities. This nuanced tonal system provides a wealth of opportunities for composers to draw inspiration from and create compositions that pay homage to China's rich musical traditions (Liu, X. 2019). One of the fascinating aspects we've explored is the classification of these ethnic tones into the "same palace tone system" and the "different palace tone system." This distinction allows composers to navigate a diverse tonal landscape, providing them with a range of options for composing music that authentically reflects the complexity and depth of Chinese musical heritage. Composers can strategically select tones from these systems to craft melodies that convey cultural richness and resonate with audiences on a profound level.

Moreover, our research has unveiled the intricate and multifaceted world of Chinese ethnic and folk music. These musical traditions are a testament to the fusion of diverse cultural elements, where rhythms are both complex and improvisational in nature. In our examination of Zhang Zhao's "Numa Ami" and the impromptu piece "Dongxiang Drum Tower," we have witnessed how music becomes a powerful vessel for encapsulating cultural diversity and human emotion. Zhao (2020) said "Numa Ami" exemplifies the fusion of diverse ethnic elements, with the composer skillfully blending Hani folk music (Wang, Y. 2018), traditional Yi Nisu branch melodies, and local dance rhythms. This creative process results in a musical composition that transcends boundaries, offering listeners a vivid glimpse into the rich tapestry of Chinese culture and heritage. Similarly, "Dongxiang Drum Tower" showcases (Huang, L. 2019). the profound impact of rhythm and improvisation in Dong ethnic folk music. With a plethora of rhythmic variations, this composition captures the essence of the Dong culture and their penchant for improvisational creativity. The unique use of temporary stress marks to disrupt the rhythm further accentuates the dynamism and improvisational nature of Dong ethnic music.

## 6. Conclusion

Although the research area selected in this paper only involves piano works from provinces and cities such as Yunnan, Guizhou, Sichuan, and Chongqing in the southwest region, and cannot represent the diversity of the entire China, it is hoped that this research approach and method can provide some guidance and reference for piano works research in other regions. For example, applying this research method to piano music research in different regions such as Northeast, Northwest, and Central China can help further explore the characteristics, stylistic differences, and cultural backgrounds of piano works in each region. This will help enrich our overall understanding of Chinese piano music and promote communication and cooperation in the field of music creation in different regions. The research highlights the remarkable capacity of Chinese composers to explore and navigate the intricate tonal systems and rich cultural tapestry of Chinese ethnic music. Through their innovative compositions, they not only pay homage to tradition but also contribute to the ever-evolving world of Chinese music. This dynamic fusion of tradition and creativity ensures that Chinese music remains a vibrant and enduring cultural expression on the global stage.

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