

Analysis of the "Symphonic" Characteristics of the First Movement of Beethoven's "Piano Sonata No. 3" in C Major

Muzixi Zhou

*Department of Music, Hebei Normal University, Shijiazhuang, China
Z18332351129@outlook.com*

Abstract. Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 3, Op. 2, as a landmark work of his early creation, contains the prototype of 'symphonic' creation that transcends genre boundaries. This article will focus on analyzing the first movement of the work to explore its symphonic characteristics. This movement demonstrates the practice of symphonic thinking in the structure of sonata form, with distinct dramatic conflicts and multi-layered weaves, such as the tension formed by the contrast of motives and the transition between tonal registers. As a crucial period for Beethoven's personal style formation in the early stages, the symphonic thinking of this work is the embryonic form of his later creations. The academic community believes that the symphonic core of this movement lies in the breakthrough of the fabric. Beethoven created a symphony like hierarchy and tension in his piano solo by integrating different acoustic dimensions. The first movement achieves a symphonic depth for the piano as a whole through fabric contrast, technique fusion, and structural expansion. Therefore, studying this piece is beneficial for sorting out the gaps in symphonic analysis of Beethoven's early works. This article uses literature review and score analysis to reveal the specific manifestation of symphonic characteristics in the first movement, providing practical reference value for the performance interpretation of the work. By exploring the symphonic characteristics of early works, it aims to make up for the lack of attention in existing research on the symphonic features of early works.

Keywords: Beethoven, The Third Piano Sonata, Symphony

1. Introduction

Ludwig van Beethoven was the most influential pianist and composer during the transition from Western classicism to romanticism. Beethoven composed a total of 32 piano sonatas, which are revered as the "New Testament" of piano music. In 18th century Europe, during a period of social change, Beethoven settled in Vienna and studied under Haydn. This artistic environment promoted the maturity of his creative style. Although Beethoven's hearing loss had begun to trouble him, it did not stifle his creative energy [1]. In 1795, he completed three piano sonatas for Op.2 and dedicated them to his mentor Haydn. Among them, the Piano Sonata in C major, Op. 2 No.3, is renowned for its magnificent techniques such as rapid chord decomposition and diphthong progression, as well as its rich expressive power. Becoming the most eye-catching part of the series.

Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 3 in C minor Op. 2 No.3, as an early representative work, reveals the emerging personal style in his tonal shaping and structural design. This piece demonstrates rich musical expressiveness and dramatic quality, particularly its pronounced "symphonic" feature, marking the maturity of Beethoven's early creative style. It breaks through the limitations of classical piano music, moving towards a more dramatic style.

The progress of piano manufacturing technology in the late 18th century provided Beethoven with a broader range and timbre space in his creation [2]. He was able to write melodies in extremely high or low ranges, creating rich color contrast. He uses different registers to simulate various symphonies, so as to enhance the layering and expressiveness of piano sound. He imitated brass instruments with heavy bass chords and octaves, imitate a woodwind instrument with crisp treble timbre, and use pedals to create a band like resonance effect. This "symphonic" thinking, permeates the entire work, but also becomes an important feature of its later creation.

Ludwig van Beethoven, a German composer and pianist, is one of the most influential pianists and composers in the western classical period. Beethoven composed a total of 32 Piano Sonatas, known as the "New Testament Bible" by later generations, which not only epitomized classicism, but also pioneered romanticism. Beethoven expanded and enriched the style of Vienna classical music school established by Haydn and Mozart. His works connected classicism and romanticism, and created philosophical spirit and personal ideal in music.

"Symphony" in the article refers to Beethoven's use of Symphony thinking and techniques in his creation, which makes the piano produce sound effects and expressiveness similar to symphony orchestra. The most direct expression of symphony is the imitation of timbre and sound [3]. Beethoven imitated the timbre of different musical instrument groups on the piano through special texture and playing techniques. Use heavy bass chords and octaves to imitate brass instruments, use crisp treble timbres to imitate woodwind instruments, and use coherent melody lines to simulate the singing of string instruments. The imitation of timbre enriches the sound level of piano [4].

The multi-level texture and voice part are the core characteristics of symphony. Beethoven's piano works often have complex voice part relationships, which enables the works to convey the effect of instrumental dialogue. In the main theme of the first movement of the Piano Sonata No. 3, the double tones of the right hand are like the melody lines of the first violin, and the left hand is like the timbre of the double bass and Cello, forming a string quartet like texture. This multi-level texture gives music a symphonic sense of space. The contrast between range and intensity is also an important performance of symphony. Beethoven's works frequently use strength contrast, such as sudden strength and sudden weakness, to create a strength change and timbre contrast similar to that between different instrument groups in symphony. This technique enhances the drama of the music and gives piano music a symphony like tension.

The first movement of the Third Piano Sonata, as the opening of the whole piece, is the only movement in the whole piece that can systematically reflect symphonic creation. the structure of the movement embodies a complete symphonic concept. The presentation part shows the timbre of different instrument groups, such as the string of the main part and the brass tube of the end part. The expansion part depicts the motivation in different sound areas. The reproduction part is responsible for the return of the theme and the sublimation of the sound, which completely covers the whole process of Symphonic thinking from "presentation development solution". From the perspective of the theme, the first movement is the founder of the "heroic temperament" of the whole song. The shaping of this heroic temperament comes from the symphonic sound design. It starts with a main chord in C major and determines the solemn tone like a symphony Overture.

Beethoven transcended the conventional scope of classical piano sonatas. It also laid the foundation for the symphonic creation of his later works.

Literature review

Domestic research on Beethoven's Piano Sonata mainly focuses on the analysis of works, performance interpretation and style discussion. In the musical analysis and performance interpretation of the first movement of Beethoven's Third Piano Sonata, Tang W.H. analyzed the movement from the perspectives of harmony, texture and color, pointed out that the first movement had a distinct contrast of strength and symphonic sound textures, and stressed that Beethoven's early works had reflected the creative characteristics of symphonic piano works [5]. This study provides an important reference for understanding the symphonic characteristics of the work. Foreign research on Beethoven's Piano Sonata is more systematic. Charles Rosen analyzed Beethoven's piano sonata from the perspective of the evolution of musical form and style in Beethoven's Piano Sonata: a brief guide [6]. Rosen emphasized Beethoven's contribution to the expansion of piano music structure and the innovation of sound textures. Rosen believes that Beethoven's Piano Sonata "elevates instrumental music to the highest level of art," which indirectly affirms the value of Beethoven's Symphonic thinking.

In a word, the research at home and abroad on the symphonic characteristics of Beethoven's early works is relatively limited, leaving room for expansion for this study.

This study is of great value in music theory and performance practice. In theory, by analyzing the symphonic characteristics of Beethoven's early works, we can deepen the understanding of Beethoven's creative thinking development. In performance, the analysis of symphonic characteristics can provide theoretical basis and performance ideas for performers, and help them grasp the style of works.

The purpose of the study is to analyze the symphonic characteristics of the first movement of Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 3, clarify the specific performance of "symphonic" in the first movement, and analyze the symphonic thinking embodied in the first movement in four aspects: the dynamic change of texture, the tension construction of dynamic expression, timbre characteristics, and the harmonic support of motivation development.

2. The embodiment of "symphony" in the first movement of the work

2.1. Dynamic change of fabric

The texture of the first movement is from sparse to dense, single to composite, like a slow spreading process of a symphony orchestra [7].



Figure 1. Opening of the first movement

The chord of the first motive of the main part (see figure 1) is not a simple repetition of a single voice part, which contains the logic of string quartet. The resolute decomposition form of the main

chord in C major is developed in a tokata rhythm [8]. The right-hand double tone creates a string like texture through the comparison of progressive and jumping tones. Each voice part has a clear division of labor. The upper voices in the right hand correspond to the first and second violins respectively, and the left-hand submediant and bass correspond to the Viola and Cello respectively. Beethoven simulated the voice part relationship of the Quartet through the manual part. The four voice parts achieve a compact and non crowded level in two octaves [9].

Starting from section 13 (see figure 2), the spectral plane turns to a chord texture with two hands' octaves superimposed. The main triad of c-e-g blooms on the keys with a solemn tone similar to that of a brass instrument ensemble, which is in sharp contrast to the delicacy of the main part. Create a magnificent atmosphere in which the numerous horns sing in unison. This kind of texture upgrade reaches a climax at the end, and the music score example starts from section 85 (see figure 3). Through the playing skill of decomposing octave with both left and right hands, the sound processing here reproduces the horn style momentum of the theme, so as to form a echo between the paragraphs [10]. It imitates the summoning tone of the brass instrument, with a compact rhythm, creating a brilliant effect like the full play of the band, pushing the presentation to a climax.



Figure 2. The transition of the first movement



Figure 3. The closing section of the first movement

2.2. Tension construction of dynamic expression

The intensity of the opening movement (see figure 1) P is a simulation of the balance aesthetics of the vocal parts of the string quartet. It highlights the level of the four vocal parts through the

restrained volume. The separation of the vocal parts under this weak intensity completely continues the opening logic of Beethoven Op.18 String Quartet. Instead of the grand volume, it transmits the musical style with the clarity of the vocal parts, which is a typical embodiment of "Symphony", and also lays the structural foundation for the subsequent expansion of symphony.



Figure 4. Measures 46-55 of the subordinate theme

(see figure 4) the emoticons of the sub part "Dolce" add soft colors to the overall sound effect, making the melody present a dialogic development [11]. The high pitch and low pitch are divided into two large melody lines, which are constantly imitated like a dialogue. The harmony of the low pitch seems to be the timbre of the brass instruments in the symphony, which is similar to the dialogue effect of different instrument groups in the symphony.



Figure 5. Measures 91-93 of the development section

The unfolding part (see figure 5) constructs a strong dramatic tension through the creative development of the presentation part. The FF at the end of the presentation section suddenly changes to PP, which is only presented as a single tone, making the music form a brief silence after a strong contrast. Such extreme strength contrast creates a strong suspense effect, like a symphony orchestra suddenly stopped after the full play, leaving only the violin like solo line continuation motivation, forming a tense expectation effect after a strong contrast [12]. After 97 bars, the intensity rose to FF. The right hand broke down the arpeggio to simulate the brightness of the violin. The heavy chord of the left hand echoed the low tone of the brass tube. The dissonance interval revealed the tension of the instrument group under the collision of strength. This is a manifestation of symphony.

2.3. Timbre characteristics of musical instrument group: the combination of texture function and band logic

2.3.1. String timbre



Figure 6. Measures 27-37 of the subordinate theme

The two voice parts of the presentation part (see figure 6) have a strong singing quality, and the left hand is paved with the decomposition of chords by eighth notes. The right hand here needs to "slow down the key" to simulate the timbre of string instruments, such as the warmth of violin vibrato . At the same time, the melody of the high voice part adds decorative notes. In section 78 (see figure 7), two hands play trills at the same time. The fast rhythm is similar to the "string shaking" effect of the violin, which conforms to the characteristic of the violin that uses trills to enhance singing [13]. The tone is bright and penetrating. This is the "string feeling" produced by the combination of decorative sound and texture level.



Figure 7. Measures 78-81 of the closing section

2.3.2. Brass timbre

Copper tubes are often used to strengthen stress and create a sense of dignity, which is achieved by the dense texture in the bass area of the piano [14]. In the typical case of octave chords in sections 13-20 of the connecting part (see figure 2), the texture is as thick as a band copper tube, which is the effect of texture density [15].

2.3.3. Woodwind timbre

Woodwind is good at voice part dialogue. Piano is realized with a few levels of contrapuntal texture. As a representative instrument of Woodwind Group, The flute is characterized by a bright and crisp timbre. Beethoven presented the bright and light timbre characteristics of the flute by decomposing arpeggio and legato texture on the piano [16]. Starting from section 97 (see figure 8), the right hand decomposition arpeggio requires a rapid and firm touch to maintain articulation, so as to maintain the granularity and continuity of the sound.



Figure 8. Measures 96-107 of the development section

2.4. Harmony support of motive deployment

Sections 135-139 (see figure 9) as a transitional stage, with the return concentration of the main motive as the core, turns the motive of unfolding the partial cleft into a sixteenth-note progressive sequence with the dominant tone as the axis, retaining the motive core. Finally, the motivation falls to the subordinate voice, and the harmony falls to the subordinate seven. The closed-loop connection between the main theme of the 140 bar reproduction part and the main chord in C major paves the way for a condensed presentation of symphonic logic.



Figure 9. Measures 132-140 of the development section

3. Conclusion

This study is based on the symphonic characteristics of the first movement of Beethoven's Piano Sonata No.3 in C major Op.2 No.3, closely follows the specific performance of "symphonic" in the first movement, analyzes the core research purposes of symphonic thinking in the four dimensions

of texture, strength, timbre and harmony, and systematically responds to the research purposes of presupposition.

From the specific research findings, the symphonic characteristics of the movement are not simply imitated by orchestral music, but re-created according to the structural characteristics of the piano, forming a clear expression in four dimensions: in the texture dimension, through the precise sound part layer of String Quartet, the texture expansion makes the sound level more three-dimensional and strengthens the symphonic characteristics. From the delicate dialogue of chamber music to the advanced stereo of Symphony Orchestra; In the dimension of strength, according to the logic of "tension construction", through the comparison of extreme strengths and weaknesses, a structure that aligns with the symphonic narrative is constructed; In the timbre dimension, through specific key touch techniques and texture design, the warm texture of string music group, the flexibility of the woodwind section and the heavy tension of copper pipe group are completed. In the dimension of harmony, driven by the fluctuation of tension, the piano symphony is endowed with dramatic conflict and emotional level through the alternating comparison of consonance and dissonance chords, which has become the core driving force for the advancement of symphony.

At the theoretical level, through the systematic analysis of the symphonic characteristics of the four dimensions of the movement, the specific form of Beethoven's early symphonic thinking is clearly presented, which offers essential insights for deepening the understanding of the development of Beethoven's creative thinking from early exploration to maturity; At the level of performance practice, the analysis of texture processing, strength control, timbre simulation, and harmony tension provides a theoretical basis for performers, helping them accurately grasp the core style of the work "the integration of the intimacy of chamber music and the grandeur of orchestral expression", and realize the deep excavation of the connotation of the work.

Although this study has completed the systematic analysis of the symphonic characteristics of the movement, there is still room for further expansion in the broader and deeper exploration, as well as in the scope and depth of comparison. In the future, it can be further deepened: expand the scope of research, compare the symphonic characteristics of this movement with Beethoven's other two sonatas in Op.2, Piano Sonata No. 17 in D minor (Pathétique), op.13 and other works in the same period, and explore the laws and differences of Beethoven's early symphonic thinking. This paper introduces the textual research of Beethoven's relevant creative manuscripts and the combing of contemporary music review historical data to explore the artistic inheritance relationship between Haydn and Mozart, and the Creative Aesthetics of Vienna's classical music school, so as to provide richer academic support for understanding the causes of the symphonic characteristics of the movement, and promote the development of Beethoven's early piano music research in a more comprehensive and multidimensional manner.

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