

## **A Combination of Cultural Awareness and Comprehensive Musicianship: Introducing *Microkosmos from Chinese Nationalities* by Henglu Yao**

### **1. Henglu Yao (b. 1951)**

- a. Chinese composer and music educator
- b. Professor at the Central Conservatory of Music (China)
- c. An active member of Society for the Promotion of New Music (SPNM) and the National Association of Composers/USA (NACUSA)
- d. Compositions
  - i. Chamber music, piano solo, symphony, choir, art song
  - ii. Published by prominent Chinese music publishers
- e. Other Projects
  - i. Books
  - ii. Articles
- f. Compositional style
  - i. Integrates Western and Chinese musical elements
  - ii. Chinese folk song
  - iii. Post-tonal

### **2. About *Microkosmos from Chinese Nationalities***

- a. A collection contains 24 piano solo pieces that adopts the musical themes of 24 Chinese folk songs
- b. Bilingual performance notes (Chinese and English) and two musical notations (Chinese and Western)
- c. Includes a CD recording of 24 pieces
- d. Educational purpose
  - i. Comprehensive musicianship
  - ii. Cultural awareness
- e. Ranging is from late intermediate to early advanced levels
- f. Style
  - i. Each piece contains a main compositional trait
  - ii. Chinese national mode harmony in a contemporary style
- g. The categorization of 24 pieces based on the compositional trait
  - i. Interval (8 pieces)
  - ii. Rhythm (4 pieces)
  - iii. Contrapuntal (4 pieces)
  - iv. Style (3 pieces)
  - v. Chinese instruments (2 pieces)
  - vi. Others (3 pieces)

### 3. Selection of 6 pieces from each group

#### Group 1 (Interval): No.10 “Sculling” – Chromatic Progress in Half Step

- Playful and natural
- Technical & Musical challenges
  - Parallel double 4<sup>th</sup> in both hands
  - Voicing through various accompaniment patterns
- Late intermediate



Figure 2: “Sculling,” mm. 16-18.

#### Group 2 (Rhythm): No.19 “Clapping Hands and Stretching Feet” – Altered tempos

- Driving
- Technical & Musical challenges
  - Changing meter and altered tempo
  - Complicated rhythm
- Early advanced



Figure 2: “Clapping Hands and Stretching Feet,” mm. 23-25.

#### Group 3(Contrapuntal): No.3 “Kicking the Shuttlecock” – Inversion & Imitation

- Joyful and spirited
- Technical & Musical challenges
  - Both hands’ articulation changes constantly
  - Control of multi-voice on one hand
- Late intermediate



Figure 3: “Kicking the Shuttlecock,” mm. 13-16.

Group 4 (Style): No.11 “White Moon” – Passacaglia Style

- Lullaby, peaceful
- Technical & Musical challenges
  - Changed in 3 different tonal centers
  - Shifting meter and tempo frequently
- Early advanced



Figure 4: “White Moon,” mm. 19-22.

Group 5 (Chinese instruments): No.14 “Happy Shepherd Boy” – Pedal with Chinese *Sheng*

- Lyrical and peaceful
- Presents the character of Chinese woodwind instrument *Sheng* that often sustains multiple notes simultaneously
- Technical & Musical challenges
  - Textural balance
  - Involves a large number of tie notes
  - Changes of the tempo and time signature
- Late intermediate



Figure 5: “Happy Shepherd Boy,” mm. 1-3.

Group 6 (Others): No.15 “Picking up Articles” – Staccatos

- Vivid and energetic
- Technical & Musical challenges
  - Staccato in a fast tempo
  - Frequent changes of the register
  - Overall cohesion of dynamic and tempo
- Early advanced



Figure 6: "Picking up Articles," mm. 4-7.

#### 4. Bibliography

Liang, Fayong (梁发勇). "Analysis and Review of *Microkosmos* from Chinese Nationalities." *Piano Artistry* 5 (May 2019): 42–47.

Magrath, Jane. *The Pianist's Guide to Standard Teaching and Performance Literature*. Van Nuys, CA: Alfred Publishing, 1995.

Yao, Henglu (姚恒璐). *Microkosmos from Chinese Nationalities*. Shanghai: Shanghai Conservatory of Music Press, 2017.