

# COMPARISON OF TECHNIQUE PRACTICE AND PERFORMANCE OF CHINESE COMPOSERS WORKS WHO GOT INFLUENCED BY CHOPIN'S 24 PIANO ETUDES \*

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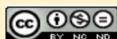
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## Abstract

This study explores the influence of Chopin's 24 Piano Études (Op.10 and Op.25) on the technique and expressive practices of contemporary Chinese piano compositions. Through a comparative analysis of Chopin's études and selected works by Chinese composers such as Zhao Xiaosheng and Chu Wanghua, the research reveals how Chinese composers have absorbed and transformed Chopin's pianistic language by integrating it with traditional Chinese musical elements, including pentatonic scales, folk melodies, and rhythmic aesthetics.

The findings demonstrate that this intercultural synthesis results in compositions that reflect both technical sophistication and distinct national identity. By examining these cross-cultural adaptations, the study contributes to a broader understanding of how Western musical paradigms are reinterpreted

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within non-Western cultural frameworks, enriching the global development of piano literature and performance practice.

**Keywords:** Chopin's Études, Chinese Piano Music, Cross-Cultural Composition, Technical Practice, Musical Expression

## Introduction

The development of piano art in the 19th century, particularly during the Romantic era, marked a significant turning point in Western classical music. Among the composers of this period, Frédéric Chopin holds a pivotal position. His 24 Piano Études (Op.10 and Op.25) not only established new technical standards for piano performance but also redefined the étude as a genre that integrates technical virtuosity with profound emotional expression. These works elevated piano études from mechanical exercises to rich artistic statements, influencing generations of composers and performers across the globe (Liszt, 1848).

In recent decades, as China's music education system has rapidly matured and integrated with global pedagogical trends, Chopin's compositional techniques and aesthetic philosophies have become deeply influential in the realm of Chinese piano composition. Chinese composers have not only adopted the technical frameworks of Chopin's études but have also sought to fuse them with traditional Chinese musical elements, such as pentatonic tonalities and folk-inspired melodic motifs. This fusion has led to a new wave of piano works that embody both the structural discipline of Western classical music and the expressive nuances of Chinese cultural identity (Chang, 2012).

Given this cultural and artistic context, it is both timely and necessary to examine how Chopin's Piano Études have shaped the technical practices and creative expressions of contemporary Chinese composers. This study aims to analyze representative works by Chinese composers who have been influenced

by Chopin's piano language, in order to shed light on how cross-cultural adaptation in piano composition manifests both technically and expressively. By exploring the interplay between technical inheritance and cultural innovation, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the evolving identity of Chinese piano music in the global landscape.

## Objectives

1. In order to study the performance techniques and musical style of Chopin's 24 piano études.
2. In order to study and compare the technical practices and expressions in the works of Chinese composers with those of Chopin's piano études.

## Literature Review

By reviewing the aforementioned literature, the author categorizes the research on piano études into several areas: A Study on the Historical Development of Chinese and Foreign Piano Etudes, On the Ontology of Chopin's Piano Etudes, Comparative Study on Chopin's Piano Etudes, Research on Other Aspects of Piano Etudes. This aims to further comprehensively explore and study the relevant literature on the relationship between Chopin's piano études and Chinese piano works.

### 1. A Study on the Historical Development of Chinese and Foreign Piano Etudes

The authors trace *Historical Evolution and Origins of Chinese-style Piano Etudes* summarizes the development of Chinese-style piano études. It divides the evolution into four stages: before 1949, 1949 to 1965, 1966 to 1978, and 1979 to the present. The paper explores the prosperity of each historical stage in terms of compositional techniques, performance skills, quantity of works, and types of compositions. It analyzes and summarizes the successful experiences and

shortcomings of Chinese-style piano etudes, thereby enriching and developing the composition and performance practices of Chinese-style piano etudes (Dou & Yang, 2007).

The author trace *On the Systematic Construction of Chinese-style Piano Etude Composition*. This paper examines the systematic classification of Western piano etudes, the connotation of constructing a systematic approach to Chinese-style piano etudes, and the foundation of systematic construction based on historical and current creation. It explores the categorization of works under the systematic construction mindset. The article deepens and clarifies the process of systematically constructing Chinese-style piano etudes, stating that the "systematic" value of Chinese-style piano etudes can be theorized and analyzed. It also suggests that "composition is the urgent task, and 'Chinese style' is the core issue to be overcome." From this, it is clear that piano composition is the most important field of study for building the "Chinese style" music. Therefore, theoretical research should begin with the foundational systematic creation of Chinese-style piano etudes and gradually establish a macro-system encompassing creation, teaching, performance, competitions, and theoretical research (Dou, 2017)

The author trace *A Historical Review and Theoretical Analysis of Western Piano Pedagogy*, which systematically reviews the development history of Western piano pedagogy. The article covers topics such as Western Piano Pedagogy in the 18th Century, Western Piano Pedagogy in the 19th Century, and Western Piano Pedagogy in the 20th Century. By examining various historical documents and research materials on piano pedagogy, the paper helps us understand the development of piano performance techniques and teaching methods throughout different periods (Zhou ,2009).

The authors trace *The Development and Evolution of Foreign Piano Etudes* follows the trajectory of the etude's development. Through an analysis of works such as Clementi's The Art of Playing the Piano, Cramer's 60 Piano

Etudes, Czerny's The Piano Etudes Collection, Chopin's Etudes, Liszt's Etudes of Advanced Piano Techniques, and Bartók's Microcosmos, the article offers a profound discussion of the evolution of etude composition ideas across various periods. The authors propose that "Liszt and Chopin elevated the piano etude to a new height, with sophisticated techniques encompassing a wide range of new piano techniques. At first glance, it seems like a purely technical piano texture, but in fact, it emphasizes both the beauty of piano sound and the expression of the composers' profound creative ideas and distinctive, original artistic images. This appears to be a return to Bach's era but is, in fact, a rejection of the classical-era ideas of Czerny." This insight suggests that the emergence of Liszt's and Chopin's Piano Etudes can be seen as a revival of Bach's compositional ideas from the Baroque period, yet, in essence, a negation of the classical-era Czernian approach (Wang & Chen, 2001).

## 2. On the Ontology of Chopin's Piano Etudes

Chopin's piano etudes are renowned for their technical challenges and expressive depth. They stand as a testament to his innovative approach to piano music, which transcends traditional formal structures. The ontological examination of Chopin's Piano Etudes reveals a complex interplay between technical virtuosity and emotional expression.

The author trace "Life of Chopin" was written shortly after Chopin's death and is divided into two parts: "Composition" and "Life". The author alternates between first-person and third-person narrative styles, beginning with an analysis of Chopin's compositional characteristics, then exploring the Polish nationalistic elements and technical aspects of his piano works, and finally focusing on Chopin's personal life. The book is structured clearly, starting from the reader's familiarity with Chopin's works, making it easier for readers to gain a deeper understanding of Chopin himself and his creative process. Through its authenticity, detailed narrative, and delicate writing, the book aims to convey the

unique style of Chopin's music in the Romantic era, as seen through Liszt's perspective, and to highlight the spiritual connection and resonance between the Romantic composer Chopin and Liszt (Liszt, 1848).

The authors of *An Analysis of the Complete Chopin Piano Works: Polish National Edition* focus on performance issues, examining sound, time, form, piano technique, and more. The book provides interpretative analysis and detailed guidance on Chopin's piano works, including specific instructions on fingering, legato, and pedaling, supported by theory. It serves as a guide for performers and an encyclopedia on the significance of various editions in musical interpretation (Jan & Paweł, 2017).

The author trace *Chopin Etudes: A Guide to Teaching and Performance* is a specialized theoretical work that has been refined through professional practice and training. It provides a detailed overview of the Chopin Etudes, including work introductions, performance techniques, and musical content. The book is divided into two main sections, "Opus 10" and "Opus 25", with 24 chapters in total. Each chapter focuses on two main aspects: "solving technical difficulties within the works" and "emphasizing the expression of musical content." (Chang, 2012).

### 3. Comparative Study on Chopin's Piano Etudes

The author trace *A Brief Comparative Analysis of Chopin's and Liszt's Etudes* is an early comparative study of the etudes by these composers. It provides a deep analysis, showing that the works are a perfect blend of music and technique, achieving high artistic expression. The author compares the etudes from various aspects, such as background, compositional techniques, technical focus, and musical content. This analysis reveals Chopin's and Liszt's unique styles and artistic pursuits in their etude compositions, offering a comprehensive and insightful understanding (Xu, 2007).

The author trace *Listening to Multiple Interpretations of Chopin's Etudes* aims to explore the importance of interpretive versions and the portrayal of

Chopin's Etudes in different performances. The article takes a macro perspective and provides an in-depth analysis of performances by eight outstanding pianists: Pollini, Magaloff, Horowitz, Arrau, Ashkenazy, Backhaus, Nelson Freire, and Cortot. Through listening, comparison, and analysis of these renowned pianists' interpretations, Liu Jiangping aims to extract valuable insights from their performances as a reference for exploring and revealing the deeper meanings of Chopin's piano etudes. These pianists' distinctive playing styles showcase not only their unique understanding of Chopin's works but also their individual artistic pursuits and technical mastery (Liu, 2010).

The author trace *A Comparative Study of Chopin's Etudes and Rachmaninoff's Etudes-Tableaux* analyzes the similarities and differences between the piano etudes of Chopin and Rachmaninoff in terms of overall style, technical features, musicality, tonal system, and performance techniques. The study explores their contribution to enhancing performance skills. Although both composers were active during the same period, they each exhibited their own individuality and style. Despite some differences in their works, as masters of Romantic music, both Chopin and Rachmaninoff maintained a considerable degree of consistency in their compositional concepts. In performance practice, recognizing these similarities and differences is crucial for performers, as a deep understanding of these elements allows for a more accurate interpretation of the works (Liang, 2009).

## Methodology

1. Literature Review: Based on the research questions designed for the topic, relevant literature will be collected, organized, and reviewed. The literature review method relies on existing theories and facts to analyze, organize, or reclassify the literature for research purposes. By studying and analyzing the literature, the paper aims to summarize the research questions and provide

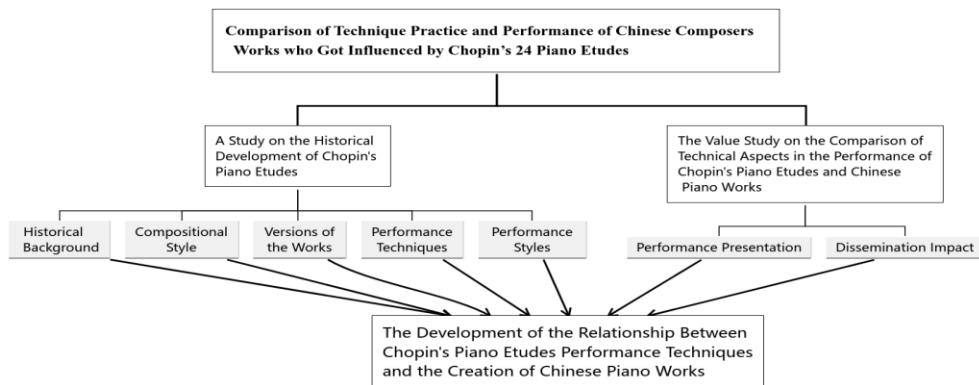
theoretical support and foundation for the study. The literature involved in this research includes monographs, theses, and dictionary entries related to Chopin's piano Études.

2. Historical Research: This method involves using collected historical documents to study the overall development of the research object in chronological order or in the sequence of its development. Some scholars refer to historical research as "longitudinal research." In this study, historical research will be applied to organize and analyze the history of piano Études and related aspects, such as the development of piano techniques and the study of the music itself. This will help establish a solid theoretical foundation for the paper.

3. Music Analysis: From the perspective of musicology, this method involves conducting a multidimensional analysis of piano Études from different historical periods (Baroque, Classical, Romantic). It focuses on analyzing and interpreting the overall structure of the music, including formal structure, harmony, melody, and tonality. Combined with the artistic stylistic features of the piano Études, this method aims to present a thorough investigation of piano performance techniques.

4. Comparative Method: This method involves studying and judging the similarities or differences between objects or individuals. Comparative research can be understood as an approach to examine two or more related objects based on certain standards, identifying their similarities and differences, and exploring general and specific patterns. In this paper, the comparative method will be used to analyze the theoretical research on piano performance techniques across different periods. By studying the performance techniques of piano Études from various periods, the innovative aspects of Chopin's piano performance techniques and their influence on later generations will be explored and explained.

5. Conceptual Framework



**Figure 1** Conceptual Framework (Source: Constructed by researchers)

## Results

This article will select representative works for comparative study, aiming to demonstrate that the creation of Chinese piano works is influenced by Chopin's piano études, and that there is a certain correlation between them.

### 1. Chopin's Piano Etudes Op.10 and Their Comparison with Chinese Piano Works

Chopin's Piano Etudes Op.10 have significantly influenced future generations with their technical and musical qualities. Inspired by these, Chinese composers have developed piano pieces featuring Chinese characteristics, innovating technically and expressing unique national flavors. They have skillfully merged the technical challenges of Chopin's Etudes with traditional Chinese musical elements.

Chopin's Piano Etude Op.10 No.1, known as the "Voyage of the Fugue," replicates the style of a choral chant through the use of broken chords and arpeggios. In this Etude, the right hand continuously plays broken chords and arpeggios, while the left hand provides steady chords or octave placements. From a score analysis perspective, the rhythmic pattern of the piece reveals a

certain regularity, with the chords arranged in arpeggio form and played in ascending or descending sequences in units of four notes.



**Figure 2** Chopin's Piano Etude Op.10 No.1, Measures 1-6 (Source: Constructed by researchers)

The difficulty of this piece lies in the need to accurately play a pattern spanning multiple octaves at an extremely fast speed. As the music intensifies, the performer must convey the rise and fall of single notes with a romantic touch, creating a powerful sense of emotional release. Arpeggios, as a special form of broken chords, emphasize coordination between the hands, wrists, and arms. Additionally, Chopin cleverly incorporates dramatic elements in this Etude, making the entire piece filled with tension and emotional fluctuation.

Zhao-Xiaosheng, as a prominent contemporary Chinese composer, pianist, music theorist, and educator, holds an important position in the field of piano composition. His piano work "Waves Rolling", as an etude focusing on right-hand arpeggio techniques, shows a clear influence from Chopin's Piano Etude Op.10 No.1 in its overall structure. The integration of the pentatonic scale and right-hand arpeggio techniques in this piece has a critical impact on the tone color and smoothness of the performance. When playing Waves Rolling, the fingers are naturally curved, and the fingertips should touch the keys as if gently holding a ball. This hand shape allows for optimal force at the moment of

contact with the keys, ensuring that each note sounds clearly and powerfully. For example, when playing a C major arpeggio, the right hand starts with the thumb (1st finger), followed by 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th fingers. The movement of the fingers on the keyboard should remain smooth, as if gliding across a calm water surface, avoiding any jerky or shaky motions.



**Figure 3 Waves Rolling, Measures 1-4** (Source: Constructed by researchers)

When comparing the two works, in terms of rhythmic treatment, Zhao-Xiaosheng's Waves Rolling employs a quintuplet pattern, creating a turbulent and continuous musical effect. This rhythmic pattern not only challenges the performer's finger agility but also demands precise control over the rhythm. In contrast to the more regular rhythm in Chopin's Piano Etude Op.10 No.1, Waves Rolling features a rhythm that is more fluid, relaxed, and elongated. This variation in rhythm adds more depth and dynamism to the music.

In terms of emotional expression, while both works are etudes, they each carry different emotional connotations. Chopin's Piano Etude Op.10 No.1, with its Romantic hues and sense of emotional release, reflects Chopin's deep understanding of music and emotional expression. Zhao-Xiaosheng's Waves Rolling, through its unique national elements and rhythmic treatment, conveys a

passionate and heroic emotion, as if taking the listener into the vast ocean, feeling the surging waves and their power.

In conclusion, while Chopin's Piano Etude Op.10 No.1 and Zhao-Xiaosheng's Waves Rolling share common ground in technical training, they differ greatly in musical style, rhythmic treatment, and emotional expression, reflecting the distinct artistic pursuits and creative philosophies of the two composers. Through a comparative analysis of these two pieces, we can better understand the compositional characteristics of both composers and draw inspiration from their works to enhance our own musical expression.

## 2. Comparison Between Chopin's Études Op.25 and Chinese Piano Works

Chopin's Études Op.25 has provided Chinese piano compositions with a dual paradigm of technical innovation and artistic expression. Through creative adaptation, Chinese composers have not only expanded the expressive scope of the piano but also constructed a unique musical language within a cross-cultural dialogue. This approach, which integrates Western techniques with Chinese musical aesthetics, offers valuable methodological insights for contemporary composition.

Among Chopin's études, Étude Op.25 No.7 stands out for its extraordinary melodic beauty and profound expressiveness. Compared to other études in the collection, this piece places a greater emphasis on musical expression rather than technical virtuosity. It demands exceptional tonal control, as repeated notes are subtly woven into two melodic lines, evolving as the music progresses to provide harmonic support and melodic continuity.

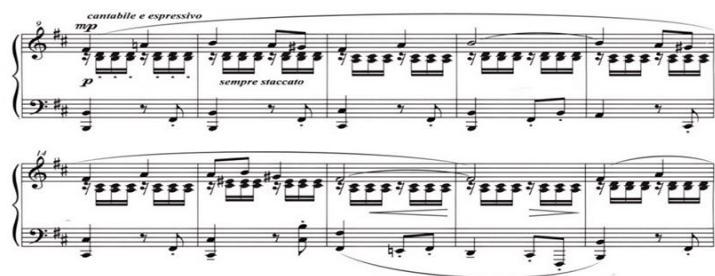


**Figure 4** Chopin's Piano Etude Op.25 No.7, Measures 1-6 (Source: Constructed by researchers)

In terms of performance technique, the “pp”(pianissimo) marking in the score indicates that the performer must play with an extremely soft dynamic. Particularly in passages with repeated notes in the inner voices, it is unnecessary to press each note to its full depth, as this helps maintain the fluidity and continuity of the music. When playing double notes, the performer uses two different fingers, with the thumb’s touch position placed on the slanted side of the fingertip. This touch technique aids in controlling both the volume and direction of the sound. To ensure even and consistent tone production, the fingers and palm must maintain an appropriate level of tension—neither too rigid nor too relaxed. Additionally, the fingertips should remain on the same horizontal plane, ensuring uniform key depth and producing a balanced sound.

Chu Wanghua's "In That Faraway Land" draws inspiration from Chopin's Étude Op.25 No.7, incorporating double-note techniques with elements of traditional ethnic music. Through the skillful use of melody, rhythm, and harmony, the piece vividly conveys a strong national character. The integration of double-note passages into the original song's graceful and expressive melody enhances its depth and dimension. In the piano arrangement, double notes frequently interact with the main melody, creating a distinctive harmonic effect.

In the thematic section, the main melody appears in the upper register, while double notes provide harmonic support in the inner voices. For instance, in measures (9–18), the right hand plays the melody while incorporating inner-voice double notes, while the left hand reinforces the harmony with simple chords and single-note bass lines.



**Figure 5** “In That Faraway Land”, Measures 9-18 (Source: Constructed by researchers)

When performing this piece, the pianist must employ distinctive touch techniques to accurately convey its rich ethnic character and musical expressiveness. A multi-voiced touch approach is required, with the upper melodic line clearly articulated and connected smoothly. For the inner voices, to maintain rhythmic integrity, the performer can use the finger pads for touch while carefully controlling both speed and pressure. Additionally, coordination between the fingers and wrist is crucial; subtle wrist rotations facilitate smooth finger movement across the keyboard, ensuring a flowing and continuous melody.

By comparing Chopin’s Étude Op.25 No.7 and Chu Wanghua’s “In That Faraway Land”, we can observe that, despite their stylistic differences, both compositions demonstrate the composers’ profound musical understanding and technical mastery. Chopin’s work is renowned for its lyrical beauty and deep

emotional expression, while Chu Wanghua's piece captivates listeners with its strong ethnic character and intricate performance techniques.

## Discussion

The comparative analysis of Chopin's 24 piano études and Chinese piano compositions reveals a rich landscape of cross-cultural musical synthesis. Through examining representative works such as Zhao Xiaosheng's *Waves Rolling* and Chu Wanghua's *In That Faraway Land*, it becomes evident that Chinese composers have not merely imitated Chopin's techniques but have actively transformed them to align with national cultural aesthetics. Chopin's études, originally conceived as a fusion of technical rigor and poetic expression, provided Chinese composers with a structural and expressive framework. However, when recontextualized within the Chinese musical environment, these frameworks were reinterpreted to reflect local idioms—particularly through the incorporation of pentatonic scales, regional rhythmic patterns, and folk melodic styles. In Zhao's work, the emphasis on fluid arpeggios and non-standard rhythmic groupings echoes the gestural flow found in traditional Chinese instrumental performance, demonstrating how Western pianistic textures can be localized in service of national expressivity. Similarly, Chu Wanghua's adaptation of lyrical inner-voice writing from Chopin's Op.25 No.7 allows for the integration of folk themes and harmonic layering, creating a narrative that is emotionally nuanced yet culturally rooted.

What emerges from this study is a clear model of compositional hybridization in which Chinese composers negotiate between inherited Western pianistic traditions and indigenous musical values. This dynamic process enriches the expressive potential of the modern Chinese piano repertoire and contributes to the development of a unique compositional voice that is both technically sophisticated and culturally distinctive. The findings affirm that Chopin's études

serve not only as pedagogical and artistic milestones within the Western canon but also as fertile ground for innovation in non-Western contexts. Through localized reinterpretation, they become catalysts for cultural dialogue rather than symbols of stylistic dominance.

In conclusion, the research demonstrates that the influence of Chopin's piano études on Chinese composers extends far beyond surface-level imitation. It involves a complex engagement with pianistic technique, musical structure, and expressive intent—transformed through the lens of national identity and creative innovation. The integration of Chopin's technical elements with Chinese stylistic features reflects a broader cultural phenomenon in which global musical models are adapted to serve local artistic narratives. This cross-cultural synthesis not only deepens our understanding of how musical techniques travel and evolve but also highlights the vitality and distinctiveness of contemporary Chinese piano composition within the global classical music discourse.

## Recommendation

### 1. Theoretical Recommendations

Deepening Cross-Cultural Comparative Research in Music. Current academic research on Chopin's Études primarily focuses on technical innovations and Romantic stylistic analysis. However, there is a lack of systematic studies on how Chinese composers have absorbed Chopin's techniques and integrated them into the context of Chinese national music. It is recommended to establish a cross-cultural research framework to systematically examine the ways in which Chinese composers incorporate Chopin's technical elements into their works. Further analysis should explore how these techniques are adapted within the framework of pentatonic scales and national harmonic language.

Enhancing Historical Contextualization and Periodization Studies. Existing literature lacks a detailed classification of the different stages in which Chinese

composers have been influenced by Chopin. It is suggested that research should be structured around the historical development of 20th-century Chinese piano music, examining different historical periods—such as the early 20th century, the early years after the founding of the People's Republic of China, and the post-reform era—to analyze generational differences in how composers have incorporated Chopin's techniques.

## 2. Practical Recommendations

**Micro-Level Analysis of Technical Integration.** A morphological approach to music analysis is recommended to quantitatively assess the extent to which Chopin's signature techniques—such as black-key passages, broken arpeggios, and polyphonic textures—have been modified and integrated into Chinese compositions.

**Developing a Pedagogical System.** It is advisable to extract the universal technical principles found in Chopin's Études—such as finger independence training and voice layering control—and incorporate them into instructional materials tailored to Chinese compositions.

In conclusion, Chopin's Piano Études serve as a timeless reference for both technical innovation and artistic achievement in Chinese piano music composition. Future research should enhance historical depth and cross-cultural dialogue in theoretical studies while exploring new pathways for technical integration and educational dissemination in practice. These efforts will contribute to the global recognition of the Chinese piano school and its unique artistic expression.

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