

Status of Piano Accompaniment Education in China

Haochen Li

National Academy of Music “Prof.Pancho Vladigerov”, Sofia, 1505, Bulgaria.

Abstract: Currently, piano education in China is developing rapidly, but due to historical factors, piano accompaniment education has not been developed simultaneously, and there are still some problems that hinder its development. By collecting the training programs and enrollment prospectus of some representative music colleges in China, this paper attempts to study the current situation of piano accompaniment education in China and establish a basis for future analysis of the problems that exist at the present stage of piano accompaniment education in China, in order to explore effective solutions to further promote its development.

Keywords: Piano Accompaniment Education; China; Status

1. Historical review of piano accompaniment-related seminars and forums

Piano accompaniment, a specific form of musical art performance, has been created since the introduction of the piano as an instrument, and with the development of music and piano manufacturing, the art of piano accompaniment has gradually become active on the stage of world music.^[1] Due to historical reasons, its emergence and development have encountered various difficulties. In the late 1990s, in addition to the more professional music academies, music academies or art academies were established as divisions at various universities. However, due to the limited conditions, only professional music academies and art academies of several universities can offer this major. Most other universities are temporarily unable to offer this major because they cannot meet the specific requirements for the Piano Accompaniment major.

With the rapid development of education in China, various music academies and universities are gradually gaining ground that nowadays China needs not only pianist accompanists who can perform tasks, but also teachers who can play a leadership role. As a result, various forms of professional forums and expert academic seminars are held in China. In 1998, the first Academic Symposium on Piano Accompaniment in China was held at Liaocheng Normal College, Shandong Province. The theme of the seminar is to summarize and exchange teaching experience in the field of piano accompaniment since the founding of New China and discuss the development of the art of piano accompaniment. The topic also includes a study of the relationship between soloist (instrumentalist or singer) and accompanist, the characteristics of piano accompaniment, the psychology of performance, technical methods and training. This has a positive effect on the further development of the art of piano accompaniment, the confirmation of its academic status, as well as on the reform and development of the discipline of music performance and music education in general. Professor Zhao Bixuan from the Central Conservatory of Music, as the initiator of the seminar, also said: “This is the first time that such a meeting is held in our country, but this is only the beginning, I hope that this meeting will play a role in the history of the development of Chinese music, will clarify some misunderstandings, will be able to dispel some doubts, especially to enable our fellow piano players to have a deeper understanding of piano accompaniment. a deeper understanding and more confidence in your career.”^[2] This opens an excellent platform for the development of the piano accompaniment. In 2000, the Second Symposium on Piano Accompaniment was successfully held at the Tianjin Conservatory of Music, which was more systematic, comprehensive and diverse than the previous one in both content and form. The topic of the seminar is to summarize and share the experience in teaching the discipline of piano accompaniment in the last years as well as the way forward. Prof. Svetlana Sokolova-Hatina from the St. Petersburg Conservatory of Music participated in the seminar, who presented the training of piano accompaniment students at the Russian Conservatory and conducted master classes and concerts to illustrate the importance of piano accompaniment

in a practical stage format. The two conferences successively discuss the place of this discipline in art education, indicate the direction and goals for its development and change its name to “coach”. The convening of these two conferences shows that China is paying more and more attention to the field of piano accompaniment and making efforts to develop it.

The Piano Instrument Department of Tianjin Conservatory of Music opened a “coach” course after the end of the First National Piano Accompaniment Symposium in 1998. It is the first academy in China to offer this course. The conduct of this course attracts the attention of the music community, removing the blind spots in the cultivation of piano accompaniment talents in China and laying the foundation for the future development of the accompaniment profession in China. In 2000, after the Second National Symposium on Piano Accompaniment, the Central Conservatory of Music and the China Conservatory of Music successively revealed this discipline.

From May 6 to 9, 2013, the first Piano Coach Forum was held at the China Conservatory of Music. They discussed four topics: “Professional Development and Training of Piano Coach in China”, “Multiple Roles of Piano Coach”, “Exchange of experience in cultivating Chinese folk Vocal Coach” and “They also held master classes, classroom demonstrations and concert performances.”^[3] This was the first special event held in China with collaborative piano as the core, and it was the first comprehensive platform built by all practitioners to enhance the level of leading Chinese piano chamber music performance and deepen its theoretical exchange, which caused great repercussions. In recent years, despite the fact that no symposiums and related festivals on Piano Coach have been held again, there has been a constant flow of various vocal and instrumental competitions and their concerts and festivals, which have also contributed to the rapid development of the discipline.

2. The construction of piano accompaniment discipline in existing music academy in China

In China, studies in this discipline mostly begin at the master’s level, and the research direction is mainly in the field of vocal music. Currently, there are eleven music conservatories in China, namely: Central Conservatory of Music, China Conservatory of Music, Shenyang Conservatory of Music, Tianjin Conservatory of Music, Shanghai Conservatory of Music, Sichuan Conservatory of Music, Xinghai Conservatory of Music, Xi’an Conservatory of Music, Zhejiang Conservatory of Music, Wuhan Conservatory of Music and Harbin Conservatory of Music. I have checked the latest 2021 enrollment catalogs and training programs of these conservatories in BA, MA and PhD, as well as their faculties, and now I am summarizing the status of the tuition offered in piano accompaniment as follows:

a) Central Conservatory of Music. The Central Conservatory of Music does not offer the “Piano Accompaniment” specialty at the bachelor’s degree, but only offers compulsory subjects such as: chamber music with piano, accompaniment, vocal accompaniment, piano improvisation. In the master’s degree, there is a specialty “Vocal Accompaniment”, a specialty “Opera Coaching” and a specialty “Instrumental Accompaniment”, which are in the departments of Vocal and Opera, Conducting and Orchestra. In the doctoral degree, there is a specialty “Opera coaching”, which is in the conducting department. It is the only higher education institution in China that offers a PhD in Piano Accompaniment (Coach).

b) China Conservatory of Music. The Chinese Conservatory of Music offers a master’s degree in piano coaching, which is subordinate to the piano department.

c) Shenyang Conservatory of Music. The Conservatory of Music in Shenyang opens the “Piano Accompaniment” specialty in the master’s degree, which is subordinate to the piano department. In addition, the Vocal and Opera Department has a curriculum led by vocal instructors. They are pianists who teach vocal students.

d) Tianjin Conservatory of Music. The Tianjin Conservatory of Music does not offer a piano accompaniment major, but a piano duet course has been created in the piano department. In addition, in the vocal department, the “Accompaniment” department has been opened with teachers who deal with accompaniment and training of vocal students.

e) Shanghai Conservatory of Music. The Shanghai Conservatory of Music does not offer a major in “Piano Accompaniment” at the undergraduate level, but only offers a compulsory course in “Piano Accompaniment”. For example, piano accompaniment courses (instrumental music, vocal music) and chamber music courses have been opened in the Piano department, while the conducting faculty has opened coaching courses. In the master’s degree, there is a major in Opera Coaching, a major in Partner Piano Art, and a major in Chamber Music, which are in the Vocal, Conducting, and Orchestral Departments.

f) Sichuan Conservatory of Music. The Sichuan Conservatory of Music offers a major in “Piano Accompaniment” only at the bachelor’s level, which is in the “Piano” department. It is the only music academy in China that offers training in this major at the undergraduate level.

g) Xinghai Conservatory of Music. The Conservatory of Music in Xinhai does not offer a “Piano Accompaniment” major, but in the “Piano” department there are courses for piano duets, ensemble, accompaniment, vocal pedagogy and accompaniment improvisation. And there are coaches in the vocal faculty.

h) Xi’an Conservatory of Music. The Piano Department of the Xi’an Conservatory of Music has a “Chamber Music” department, and the Vocal Department has a “Piano Accompaniment” department. In addition, the specialties “Vocal Coach” and “Instrumental Coach” were opened in the master’s degree, which is subordinate to the piano department.

i) Zhujiang Conservatory of Music. The Zhejiang Conservatory of Music offers a master’s degree “Coach”, which is subordinate to the piano department.

j) Wuhan Conservatory of Music. The Wuhan Conservatory of Music opens the “Piano Accompaniment” specialty in the master’s degree - the “Piano” department. In addition, the Piano Department has a Coach Department.

k) Harbin Conservatory of Music. The Harbin Conservatory of Music does not offer a Piano Accompaniment major, but does have coaching instructors in the vocal faculty.

3. Conclusion

In summary, piano accompaniment education in China started late and is still in the primary stage, although it has made good achievements in recent years, there are still uneven discipline construction, unclear professional division, and imperfect training programs and other problems. On this basis, we should consider how to solve these problems, establish a correct academic concept, build a comprehensive discipline system, form a teaching model that is in line with international standards, and further promote the development of piano accompaniment education.

References

- [1] Chen Shuyang, Research on the Development Direction of Piano Accompaniment Major: School of Arts, Jilin University, 2011, p.1.
- [2] Du Yuli, Construction and Curriculum of Piano Accompaniment in Music Colleges in China, China Conservatory of Music, 2007, p.5.
- [3] Cui Mingming, Historical Evolution and Current Development of Piano Coach: Music Life, 2022