



Traditional Fusion

—The Piano Etude of Charles Camille Saint-Saëns (OP.111)

Yushuai Li

School of Arts, Zhejiang Normal University, Jinhua, China

Email: 1224352843@qq.com

How to cite this paper: Li, Y.S. (2024) Traditional Fusion. *Open Access Library Journal*, 11: e11557.
<https://doi.org/10.4236/oalib.1111557>

Received: April 10, 2024

Accepted: May 27, 2024

Published: May 30, 2024

Copyright © 2024 by author(s) and Open Access Library Inc.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0).

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Open Access

Abstract

Charles Camille San-San is the most outstanding musician, pianist, and organic pianist in France in the late 19th century. Saint-Saëns created a large number of symphony, opera, violin, and piano works. Persons, Saint-Saëns has also made important contributions to the development of the French school. Saint-Saëns created and published three piano etudes in his life, namely OP.52, OP.111, and OP.135 made for the left hand. The song reflects Saint-Saëns's superb composition skills and personal style. This article starts with the environmental background and music creation concept of Saint-Saëns, and selects piano etude OP.111 as the object. It mainly explains the three major aspects of the historical environment, music characteristics, and performance interpretation.

Subject Areas

Music

Keywords

Practice Song, Saint-Saëns, Musical Style, Piano Performance, Music Characteristics

1. Introduction

Charles Camille Saint-Saëns is the most outstanding musician, pianist, and organic pianist in France in the late 19th century. In Saint-Saëns's music works, opera, symphony, etc., have achieved great success. For example, Saint-Saëns's "First Symphony" is considered to be one of the greatest music works in France, and the orchestra "Skull Dance", which is adapted by many composers later. They are considered one of the greatest musicians in France. It can be said that Saint-Saëns is good at the creation of all works. The most famous works are

“Animal Carnival”, “Third Symphony” “Tube Piano”, and “Second Piano Concerto”.

As an important representative of the French School, Saint-Saëns has also made important contributions to the development of the French Music School. Saint-Saëns created and published three piano etudes in his life, namely OP.52, OP.111, and OP.135 made for the left hand. Saint-Saëns labeled the title for each piano etude. It has greatly exerted the attributes of the piano instrument, which reflects Saint-Saëns’s superb composition skills and personal style in this set of piano etudes. Saint-Saëns once said: “I am a person who is both harvested. This may be a big disadvantage, but I can’t change it: a person’s personality cannot be changed.” Because of this, Saint-Saëns’s creation is in the traditional tradition. On the basis of continuously integrating new elements and continuously broadening the road of French national music.

2. Creation of Saint-Saëns piano Etude (OP.111)

2.1. The Creative Background of Saint-Saëns’ Piano Etude (OP.111)

In 1789, the French Revolution brought France into a wave of modernization. Capitalism continued to deepen in France, and various historical opportunities continued to emerge. Revolution, struggle, development and opportunities continued to gather here. The French Revolution is both the end of history and the starting point of the new future. Throughout the 19th century after the French Revolution, history was classified into two parts. The first part was in the middle of the 19th century. A whole of each other, the second part is the second half of the 19th century. The first stage is the period of Impressionism. As the end of romanticism and realism, it also affects many aspects of literature and painting. It was at the end of the 19th century. At this time, it was on the eve of the First World War. Various music and culture emerged endlessly, and music got rid of the original style and constantly updated.

In 1871, the defeat of the Prussian France war brought a series of influences. The French people no longer advocated politics and no longer yearned for war. The people turned their attention to all aspects of art. The French National Music School has begun to rise. Musicians of national musicians have adopted the excellent culture and excellent music themes of their own countries to express their tenacious will and patriotic feelings. Freedom, nationality and patriotism are the distinctive identifications of national musicians [1]. The National Music Association, this association aims to revive the traditional French national music and regularly stage the music works of French composers. These works are short, exquisite in form, and gorgeous in style, and in line with the style of French traditional music. He has created many excellent and exquisite music works and made a lot of contributions to the development of the French national music school. The French people love for their own nation. This is an important opportunity for the rejuvenation of national music. French music critics also

presented all the best praises to French music: beautiful, lively, witty, simple, concise clear, pure, sober, elegant, colorful, and strict... These beautiful vocabularies ultimately express the French people's love for their national music in the most condensed expression "new classicalism" [2]. Saint-Saëns's piano etude (OP.111) was created in 1899, and it was also the product of this period. Between this, Saint-Saëns has created the symphony poem "Skull Dance", the opera "See Sun and Dalira". This set contains Saint-Saëns's very mature creative technique and individual music style.

2.2. OP.111 Creative Purpose (OP.111)

Etude is a musical genre used to train performers' basic skills. It is widely used in shorter works. Its main purpose is to develop or study a special aspect of performance technology, such as Chopin's etudes Op. 25. The earliest musical genre that had the function of etudes in the Baroque period, with the development of the times, etudes in the Romantic period are very different from those before. The etudes in the Romantic period are far from meeting the dual requirements of composers and performers for music and technology. The etudes in the Romantic period have a richer expression of the development of technology. Various performance technical forms have begun to appear, and multiple performance techniques may also appear in the same piece of music. At the same time, richer musical expression is also one of the focuses of creation. Etudes need to be able to better meet the composer's inner needs for music. The concert etudes that are full of gorgeous technical performance and musical appeal also appeared in this period. Saint-Saens' etudes were also created during this period. The purpose of creating Saint-Saens' etudes is more inclined to two aspects. First, the integration and supplement of piano techniques: Saint-Saëns composed six etudes in his Piano Etudes (op.111). He gave each etude a title, indicating the technical points or musical expression of each etude. First, there is a comprehensive supplement in terms of technical categories. This set of etudes includes octaves, thirds, chromatic scales, finger changes on the same note, tremolo and other performance techniques. Many technical types before the Romantic period have also been sorted out and integrated. Secondly, there is a comprehensive supplement in terms of musical style. Two of Saint-Saens' six etudes are composed in polyphonic techniques, and the other etudes are also full of polyphonic thinking. These etudes also integrate classical, romantic and even impressionistic musical styles. Second, the practice of French national music style: Saint-Saens is a French romantic musician in the late period. He has both the national musical elements of French music and the romantic music style. After the establishment of the French National Association, Saint-Saens was committed to the revival of French music. Therefore, he tried to integrate national music elements in many of his works, including not only the use of French national music but also the embodiment of French artistic characteristics. He tended to create short, exquisite and musically expressive musical works. These six etudes are Saint-Saens's

attempt to revive French music after the establishment of the French National Music Association. On the basis of regular structure, he also tried rich and colorful musical colors, hoping to seek the development of nation and music in this set of etudes.

3. Music Characteristics Characteristics

3.1. Inheritance to Traditional Music

The music in the romantic period is mostly innovative and dares to make new creations in the genre, such as symphony poems, romantic songs, etc. French music naturally has its own characteristics. As a model of traditional French traditional art, Saint-Saëns's music style characteristics of the eighteenth century in his music creation perfectly integrate the characteristics of the music style characteristics of the 19th century. On the basis of inheriting the traditional European classical music culture, it highlights its unique personal uniqueness. The characteristics of music language make the style elegant, restrained, simple and romantic [3]. In Saint-Saëns's music, Saint-Saëns's creation is created very much. Multi-structured rigorous music works are close to the structure of the classical period and even the Baroque period in structure. The creative style is based on the characteristics of neoclassicism, neo-classicism denies the title and subjectivity of romanticism, and also denies the fantasies derived from romanticism. The composer should ask the subjectivity in music to show the classical balance and balance in a calm and objective attitude. Saint-Saëns emphasizes the rigorous form of the form when creating. Six poems in the practice music (OP.111) adopt a regular binary form or ternary form. Similarly, Saint-Saëns's interest in ancient music is also reflected in it. In this etudes, Saint-Saëns also uses the music genre before romanticism such as Prelude and Fugue, Toccata, etc. Second, in the late 19th century, the French national music school inherited the French national music school and revived the music character of many French nations. As one of the important figures of the French national music school, Saint-Saëns also actively developed the characteristics of traditional French music. France is a nation that loves dance. Louis XIV held a large-scale Dance. France also has a variety of dance types, such as Waltz and Minuet. Saint-Saëns has named after the dance songs in his two other piano etudes. Although there are no direct names in the practice song (OP.111), it also has long lines, lyrical melody forms, and vibrant dance rhythm. In terms of tone and tone use, the main use of natural size, and medieval tone, etc. in Saint-Saëns's works, etc., follow the tradition of French music logically, based on clear tuning, and are more traditional in the transfer method. The use of tone and other forms, while combining emerging harmony, changes rhythm types to show the characteristics of neoclassicism.

3.2. The Abstraction of Music

Saint-Saëns is a musician developed in the late nineteenth century. This period is

in the late romantic and neo-classical period. The characteristics of music and the content of music are intuitively reflected. In addition to some title music, such as *The Carnival of the Animals*, Saint-Saëns's music still requires the analysis of music text to understand its musical character. The sound of harmony, and the tone and departure of the tone, make the center's tone blur but not deviate from the music center. Although it follows the traditional tone writing techniques, it shows a sense of abstraction. The entire music shows the hazy and abstract feeling of French music. Saint-Saëns's music is objective, with an orderly, well-trained, ever-changing flood [4].

3.3. The Regularity of Music Creation

Saint-Saëns is a bridge that undertakes Lococo style to classical romantic style. Composers of the same period as Saint-Saëns, such as Liszt, Chopin, Mendelson, Schumann, etc., especially Liszt and Chopin have a deeper impact on his creations. Therefore, his creation is full of a strong romantic atmosphere. Of course, the influence of *The Great Trio of Vienna* on him is also very significant [5]. As a representative composer in the period of neoclassicism, Saint-Saëns's music is full of the characteristics of the era of the neoclassical period. From the perspective of the subjective consciousness and strong personal emotional expression of the expansion in music; put forward the idea of "returning to Bach", adopting the absolute music form of "music is music", paying attention to the technology and form in music, not content, instead of emotional expression in the art form, instead of emotional expression instead of emotional expression Essence From a specific form of expression, pursuing the balanced symmetry of the melody and rhythm requires restoration of the Baroque period and early classicalism such as Kuplan, Hunder, Pussel, etc. Creative style and specific techniques; promote fresh and standardized curved structures, oppose free and loose structures; promote pure music, the form of the genre before the rejuvenation of romanticism (*Toccata*, *Grand Concerto*, *Fugue*, *Chaconne*, etc.), oppose it against Title music. The curved structures used in these etudes are stable and regular. More standard classical structures are used to create the characteristics of romantic sentence lines and complex curvature structures. In terms of vigor, it is more staircase, and it is more transposed in turning. This multi-faceted form of rules also reflects the rigor of Saint-Saëns's creation.

4. Performance Interpretation

The first piece is called "Major Third and Minor Third". As the title suggests, Saint-Saëns uses a technical approach to compare the major third interval and the minor third interval in the piece, which includes the technical points of the major third and the minor third, the colors of the major third and the minor third, the horizontal progression of the major third and the minor third, etc. From the technical point of view, the Triple meter technology of the right-hand part continues, and there are sixth and fifth of meter. The focus is on the devel-

opment of two parallel sounds that require smoothness and uniformity, and there is a certain challenge to the particularity of the human structure. The five fingers cannot be exactly the same as long. Similarly, the strength of each finger is different. The angle is also different. The uniformity of the performance is quite difficult than the single sound. On the basis of the continuous transformation of the interval, the right hand also maintains the operation of the double-sound part. The stability of the palm has higher requirements, and at the same time, the fingerprint is limited. In the 17 s of the 17th section (**Figure 1**), it began to turn to the left hand three times. The backhands gradually merged. In addition, it is worth noting that the “big three-degree and small three-degree” piano etude also has the consideration of Saint-Saëns himself in music colors. Although the three-degree and the next Triple meter are only one sound, the harmony color brings is not the color of the color. The same, at the same time, there is a change in tone, which is also in line with the emphasis on the color as the representative of the French school.

The second song is “TRAITS CHROMATIQUES” (**Figure 2**), a small tone, the speed is a small allegro. Saint-Saëns emphasizes color changes in this piano etude. The main expression of the entire song is in a fast semiciscellarized schedule and the interval and sound comparison. Some technologies are similar to the technology in the car quickly practiced. The main points of the technology are that they need to be carried out steadily when they play quickly, In the same strength, the faster the lower key, the brighter the sound, the more granularity of it; the lower key is slow, and the sound looks soft [6]. In the interval and sound parts, Saint-Saëns chose a variety of three, five degrees, and six degrees. Almost every section changes in the sound, and the multiple changes in the semi-step and harmony of the harmony. Among the erratic feeling, there is a kind of abstract impression. In addition, Saint-Saëns also uses a polymer writing method in this piano etude. The notes are in eight groups, and the beginning of each group is also contained in the melody line as one day. Due to the vagueness of tone and harmony, this piano etude also gives people an abstract feeling. Although Saint-Saëns uses traditional forms



Figure 1. Third and minor third 17 bars.

N°2. TRAITS CHROMATIQUES

a Monsieur LOUIS LIVON

C. SAINT-SAËNS
Op. 111

Figure 2. Individual color.

in this etude, the changes in harmony and the use of Chromatic Scale make the center tone of this song constantly weakened. The center tone of the first song is constantly weakening, and the feeling of tone is not very sufficient. The harmony, polyphonism, and semicoicon are in the same important position, bringing the most prominent abstract impression characteristics of the French school. This is also Saint-Saëns. One of the important features of creation is rich in color changes, and at the same time, it also implies the development of music in the 20th century, providing material for the 20th century music, reflecting the development trend of music in the 20th century.

The third piano etude is named “PRELUDE ET FUGUE” (**Figure 3**), composed of prelude and Fugue. This is a work created in Baroque style, showing Saint-Saëns’s idea of reviving classical writing. In this piano etude, first of all, the part of the prelude, Saint-Saëns uses an eight-degree chord as the main manifestation, using chords as an outline, and the two sounds in the chords are outlined by the melody line. The remaining sound is left. The form of continuous sound continues to repeat. As the prelude part, Saint-Saëns is also full of complex writing techniques. Sometimes the two melodies are in the outer part of the two hands, and sometimes one of the one. Only the inner voice of the hand, one hand as the external sound, and the manifestation of the left and right hands alternately. It can be regarded as a prelude to three or even four-sound parts. Therefore In addition, unlike the second piano etude song, because the technical form used is a chord, the size of the hand will inevitably limit the performance of the play and the expansion and stretching of the hand must be done before practice.

The Fuge part is three parts (**Figure 4**). The first is the distribution of tone. Saint-Saëns uses the alternating transformation of the same size of the main sound, and the subordinate and the subordinate sound tone, showing different tone colors. Second, in the melody of the melody, in the melody of the melody In terms of, the balance between Saint-Saëns pursuing a sound is not just a simple repeat of motivation, but also a short development at the end (**Figure 2**). Overall

the Baroque style writing, reflecting the Saint-Saëns's ancient music to ancient music to ancient music.

The fourth piano etude is named "LES CLOCHES DE LAS PALMAS" (Figure 5),

N° 3. PRELUDE ET FUGUE
en MI ♭ mineur

à Monsieur CHARLES MALHERBE C. SAINT-SAËNS
Op. III

Mod^{to} agitato (84=d)

PRÉLUDE

Figure 3. Preludes and fugues.

Mod^{to} espressivo (80=d)
sempre legato

FUGUE

Figure 4. Preludes and fugues part.

N° 4. „LES CLOCHES DE LAS PALMAS“

à Mademoiselle CLOTILDE KLEEBERG

C. SAINT-SAËNS

Op. 111

Figure 5. The bells of Las Palmas.

B major, line board, this is the only title practice song in this set of the piano etude, this is the main practice of writing techniques. Qu, the left hand is the sound of the melody, the right hand is the technical piano etude, and the repeated sound type of the right hand can be regarded as the echo of the bell. In the use of tone, Saint-Saëns uses traditional relationships to create. In the entire practice song, Saint-Saëns adopted a lot of repeated ways to write and changed the feeling of far-end with a strong and weak change. In addition, the most important thing in this song is the portrayal of sound color. As an important representative of the French school, Saint-Saëns naturally is a creative point that the French school attaches great importance to. For the main feature, Margaret Lang once described her school: “Clear, accurate, and delicate. Even though it pays the most attention to elegance and moderation instead of strength, it first focuses on balance and semi-sense. The top is never ambiguous.” Under the uniform treatment of the right hand, the bell continues to be stable, and the bass of the left hand supports the music of the high voice. When dealing with the technology of the right hand, pay attention. A sound will also be linked together. As a melody line link, it must highlight its existence appropriately, but it cannot emit the tone that affects the atmosphere.

The fifth practice is named “Big Three Colors” (Figure 6), D major, active allegro, and the use of tone is the relationship between D major and B minor. This song is not on the D major. Compared with the first piano etude, the first “big three degree and the small three degrees” emphasizes a three-degree piano etude and sound transformation in the position. In this song, the junior juniority did the movement of the larger range. At the same time, there was a position in the position and a horizontal direction of more than an octa. It is more difficult to use on the semi-level steps. The use of the semi-step also makes the feeling of tone more vague in this song. The musical materials of the left hand are very rich, including the sound transformation form of the sound of the sound, using frequent harmony transformations to perform differently, there are long lines of intervention connection, as well as long lines of decomposition chords, various melodies, various melodies The form of expression also reflects the amazing creativity of Saint-Saëns.

The last piano etude song is called “Tocata” (Figure 7), F major, Allegro, this piano etude is adapted from the piano and band in the third movement of the fifth piano concerto in Saint-Saëns. The material of these is not exactly the same. When creative practice, it was re-adjusted. In this song, Saint-Saëns still adopts a retro creative method to use the form of “Tocata” to create. A dazzling form of music genre has high technical skills and improvisation. The important technical point of Tocatta is the fast performance of the left and right hands alternately, not only the alternation of the single sound, but also chords, octa, eight degrees, eight degrees. The alternate performance of Zhenyin and other contents is also reflected in this song. In Saint-Saëns’s “Takata”, almost all of the technical points of the first five, eight degrees, large distance jumping, decomposition chords, three degrees technology, singing melody, dual sound, harmony color, typical transformation, typical transformation The technical and music points are included in it, and the use of tone is more in recent relationships such as the size of the main voices. There are also various forms of dance in “Takata”. From the beginning of the introduction, it is a very lively and lively dance performance. The decomposition of the theme is also a happy dance. In this piano etude, the overall creative method follows the traditional creative method, which is more neat, and is basically a square integer structure with four small sections as a phrase.

N° 5. - TIERCES MAJEURES CHROMATIQUES

à Monsieur EDOUARD RISLER G. SAINT-SAËNS
Op. 111

Vivace (144 = ♩)

Figure 6. Three shades of color.

N^o 6. - TOCCATA
(d'après le Final du 5^{ème} Concerto.)

à Monsieur RAOUL PUGNO C. SAINT-SAËNS
Op. 111

Figure 7. TOCCATA.

Because the practice music “Takata” comes from the third movement of the fifth piano concerto in the F major, the symphony is also one of the important features of this piano etude. Saint-Saëns will use the band’s method to create each chapter. The introduction part uses octave bass and double-tone semitone performance which is like a dialogue between the percussion instruments and strings in the band. When performing, pay attention to the performance of symphonicity. The bass is thick enough, it is wrapped, and it cannot be stiff. It requires elastic sound effects to imitate percussion with elastic and echo sound effects.

5. Conclusions

Saint-Saëns has created three sets of piano etudes in his life, namely works 52, works 111, and practice music works for the left hand 135. These three sets of piano etudes running through Saint-Saëns’s creative career can also represent the creation of Saint-Saëns music creation.

In the history of Western music, Saint-Saëns played an important role in the late period of romanticism in the period of neoclassicism. On the basis of inheriting traditional European music, Saint-Saëns highlighted his unique music language and organically combined the two. Together, introduce Western music into a new period. For French national music, Saint-Saëns is the rejuvenation of French music. Saint-Saëns is good at discovering the essence unique to French music. This set of piano etudes is a new attempt by Saint-Saëns under the fusion of two identities. However, due to the limitations of the author’s thinking, the writing of Saint-Saëns music style cannot be fully comprehensive. In subsequent studies, we can explore the diversity of Saint-Saëns’s music style by analyzing the various forms of music in Saint-Saëns, and integrate the differences and connections between the music style and Saint-Saëns’s music style.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

References

- [1] Stiegne, G. (2013) A Study on the Composition and Performance of Saint-Saëns' Six Concert Piano Etudes, Op. 111. Master's Thesis, Shaanxi Normal University, Xi'an.
- [2] Ji, T.T. (2019) The Aesthetic Views of Romanticism and National Music in the 19th Century. *Art Education*, No. 11, 2.
- [3] Li, M.Y. (2016) Performance Research on Busoni's Piano Adaptation of Chaconne. Master's Thesis, Hebei Normal University, Shijiazhuang.
<https://doi.org/10.7666/d.Y3003492>
- [4] Pan, W. (2017) Rhythm Training of Modern Music in Sight Singing and Ear-Training. *Art Research: Journal of Art of Harbin Normal University*, No. 1, 2.
- [5] Cao, X. (2014) Creating a Harmonious and Resonant Artistic Conception: Exploring the Touch Technique and Timbre Effect in Piano Performance. *Music Time and Space*, No. 10, 1.
- [6] Zheng, X.S. (1996) Comparative Study of Piano Schools in the World in the 20th Century. *Music Research*, No. 3, 10.