

Musical Analysis and Composition of Variation Music

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The Asian Conference on Arts & Humanities 2019
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

The purpose of research is to analyze characteristics of variation music and to find applications of variation techniques. The structures of variation music have a theme and several variations. Each variation presents an original theme with different variation techniques. Variation composing includes several techniques, such as ornamentation, transposition, inversion, retrograde, augmentation, diminution, imitation, and change of tempo. According to this study, variation techniques are applied to create a new composition of variation music. In research method of this paper, the variation techniques of Mozart's twelve variations on "Ah, Vous dirai-je, maman," are analyzed. Based on the analytic results of melodic variations, rhythmic variations, harmonic variations, and tonality variations. Melodic variations use decorated and inharmonic tones in the first variation; rhythmic variations change the duration to syncopated off-beats in the fifth variation; harmonic variations use the circle of fifths in the seventh variation; and tonality variations change the major mode to the parallel minor mode in the eighth variation. Through the analytic results of variation techniques, an innovative variation music piece named "Transform" is to be composed. The variation music "Transform" is electronic music, 4/4 beat, the theme has eight measures, and have four variations. In the music piece "Transform," the melody uses ornamentation and inharmonic tone; the rhythm change duration with augmentation and diminution; the harmony change chord progressions; and the tonality change modes. From this paper, elements and techniques of variation music can be understood clearly. In future, variation music can be applied to music compositions of new styles.

Keywords: Musical analysis, Musical composition, Variation music, Variation techniques

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Introduction

Variation form has a theme and variations. The techniques of variation music applied in music compositions. Many experts study variation music in different field. Nelson (1948) mentioned that variation techniques apply in variation music. Simon & Wohlwill (1968) study an experiment of expectation role in music. Walton (1974) mentioned that the principles of variation form apply in variation music. Haimo (1997) study about the variation's development of Schoenberg's serial music. Hurry, Phillips, & Richards (2001) mentioned that music composing design in variation music.

Method

The methods in this study apply techniques of variation music. Variation techniques use ornamentation, transposition, inversion, retrograde, augmentation, diminution, imitation, and change of tempo. The different characteristics of variations are designed form a theme. The contents of variation music are analyzed in music compositions:

1. Analysis of Variation music

Mozart's piano composition on "Ah, Vous dirai-je, maman" has a theme and 12 variations (Figure 1). The music piece "Ah, Vous dirai-je, maman" uses melodic variations, rhythmic variations, harmonic variations, and tonality variations. Melodic variations use decorates and inharmonic tones in the first variation; rhythmic variations change the duration to syncopated off-beats in the fifth variation; harmonic variations use the circle of fifths in the seventh variation; and tonality variations change the major mode to the parallel minor mode in the eighth variation. Through the analytic results of variation techniques, an innovative variation music piece named "Transform" is to be composed.



Figure 1: The theme of the music composition "Ah, Vous dirai-je, maman"

2. Composing of Variation music

The music composition "Transform" uses the variation form (Table 1). The variation form of music composition "Transform" has a theme and 4 variations (Figure 2). In variation 1, the melody uses ornamentation and inharmonic tone (Figure 3). In variation 2, the rhythm change duration with augmentation and diminution (Figure 4). In variation 3 (Figure 5), the harmony change chord progressions to accompany the melody of music composition "Transform." In variation 4 (Figure 6), the tonality change modes from minor mode to parallel major mode.

The innovative music composition “Transform” applies the variations of melody, rhythm, harmony, and tonality. The variations use change of music elements to represent different characteristics.

Table 1: The variation form of the music composition “Transform”

Theme	Variation 1	Variation 2	Variation 3	Variation 4
Measure number 1-8	Measure number 9-16	Measure number 17-24	Measure number 25-32	Measure number 33-40

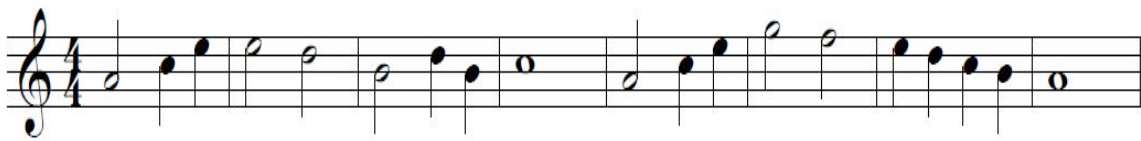


Figure 2: The theme of the music composition “Transform”



Figure 3: The variation 1 of the music composition “Transform”



Figure 4: The variation 2 of the music composition “Transform”

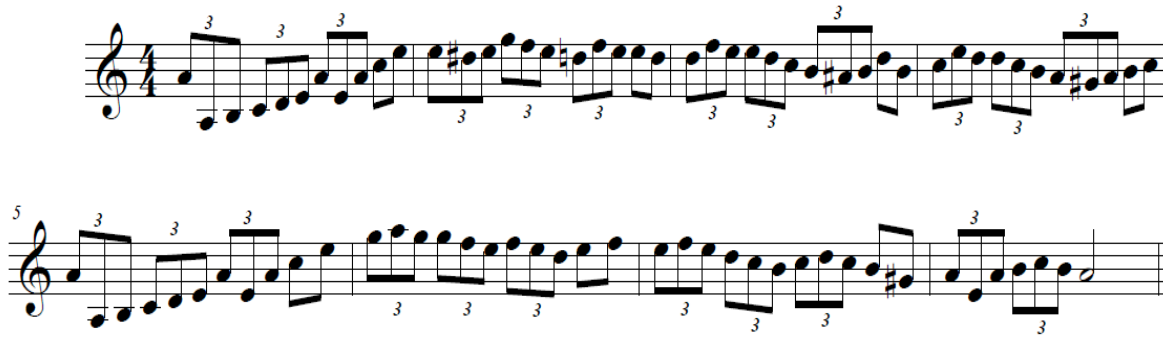


Figure 5: The variation 3 of the music composition “Transform”



Figure 6: The variation 4 of the music composition “Transform”

Results and Discussion

The music composition “Transform” applied the variation techniques to change melody, rhythm, harmony, and tonality of music elements. This is a way to compose music compositions with variation form. From this research, we can use variation techniques to analyze music pieces. In addition, this study is to represent the innovative composition of variation music “Transform.” Music learners can follow the principles of variation techniques to analyze and compose variation music. Variation music proposes the variable possibilities of music elements in music compositions. A theme of variation music can be changed to many situations that is interesting to appreciate the process of music composing.

Conclusions

Through the research of this study, we can find the methods of musical analysis and composition of variation music. From music analysis of variations, music elements and textures of variation music can be analysis and composing. The structures of variation form represent the different characteristics of variations. Innovative style and genetic algorithm composing music can apply variation techniques in the future.

Acknowledgements

This paper was supported by the Ministry of Science and Technology, Taiwan (MOST 107-2635-H-407-001).

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