

A Brief Discussion on the Artistry in Piano Performance

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ABSTRACT

Piano performance art, as a discipline of theoretical and practical art, is undoubtedly a challenging learning process. Piano performance is based on the intention of the composer, and it is a process of secondary creation of piano works. Piano performance is dynamic, with sound, technique, stage, and audience. cultivation of piano performance ability and psychological quality is easily overlooked. However, successful piano performers can not only demonstrate high-level playing techniques but also show good psychological quality. piano learner and performer can experience and respect the creative connotation and emotion of the work, and the performer's technique, psychological quality, and musical performance are inter, interconnected, and mutually influential, jointly constituting the artistic beauty of piano performance.

KEYWORDS

musical interpretation playing techniques memory and stage practice; artistic elements

1 Musical Interpretation

1.1 Interpretation of Musical Expression Terms

When performing any piano piece, the interpretation of musical expression terms by the performer is extremely important. This is because musical expression terms represent the means by which composer conveys their central thoughts and emotions, and it is crucial for the performer to incorporate these into their performance. Below is an analysis of the musical terms in typical passages of the Chinese piano piece "Nu Ma Amei".

*** Numa Ame**
努 玛 阿 美
(2017)

Zhang Zhao
张 朝

The musical score for "Nu Ma Ame" by Zhang Zhao is presented in a standard musical notation format. The title is written in both English and Chinese. The score is in 3/4 time and the key signature is one sharp (F#). The tempo is marked "Rubato Adagio" with a quarter note equal to 42. The score includes various musical notations such as triplets, slurs, and dynamic markings like "p" (piano) and "espress." (espressivo). The score is divided into two systems, with the first system starting with a piano introduction.

"Rubato adagio": Translated as "free adagio" Example 1-1:

As can be seen from the musical example above, the musical terms are located in the early part of the piece. At this point, the should be conducted in combination with the theme and musical

language of the work: the time signature is 3/4, the speed is based on the quarter note with 42 beats per minute. For the musical term "Rubato adagio", it cannot be separated from the basic speed setting. The "free treatment can be appropriately paused on the long notes in these six bars. And the "adagio" treatment can be combined with the "weak" and longer in the musical example above. Finally, "express" is translated as "expressive". After the performer interprets the composer's creative intention and the realm to expressed, they should present the emotions in the music to the audience during the performance. The dense fluctuations of the melody in the right hand and the long notes in left hand accompaniment form a dynamic and static sound effect, jointly experiencing the unique gifts of nature, breathing in the moist and fresh air, as if being a fairyland.

1.2 Interpretation of the Structure, Style, and Innovation of Piano Works

The structure of a piano piece is like the framework of a building, supporting the development and evolution of the entire music. Before performing a piano piece one should first study the form and structure of the piece, the progression of the harmony, and the development of the melody. This helps the performer to grasp the framework and logical development of the piece, thereby presenting the layers and changes of the music more clearly. The same musical piece can have different interpretations and unique understandings the hands of different piano masters.

Additionally, musical works from different periods exhibit distinct performance style characteristics and reflect the social and cultural background and aesthetic orientations of their time. For instance, music from the Classical period focuses on formal regularity, structural balance, and clarity; Romantic period piano works emphasize emotional expression, individualized performance, and rich imagination modern and contemporary piano music often transcends traditional boundaries, pursuing innovative sound effects and unique musical expression techniques.

When performing Baroque polyphonic piano music, it is essential to focus on clear lines, steady rhythms, and even dynamics control, embodying the solemnity and elegance of the Baroque period. For instance, the renowned pianist Schiff's performance of Bach's "The Well-Tempered Cl" is highly regarded for his expertise in performing Baroque works and his efforts to "reconstruct" Bach's works on the modern piano. However, some piano choose to interpret Baroque works based on their own understanding. The Canadian pianist Gould, for example, often hummed along while playing Bach's works and had high standards for recording environments. His albums of Bach's works are still beloved by many music enthusiasts. On the other hand, when performing Chopin's works, focus should be on the lyrical quality of the melody, the richness of the harmony, and the subtlety of the emotional treatment, all while showcasing tenderness and poetry of Romanticism. For example, pianist Arthur Rubinstein's performance of Chopin's "Scherzo in B-flat minor" vivid expresses Chopin's revolutionary views and patriotic sentiments.

Classical works tend to express rationality, strictly adhering to traditional forms in composition. Renowned pianist Fu Cong, while performing Mozart's Piano Sonata in A Major," conveyed his inner joy and tranquility to the audience through delicate breath control, subtle rhythmic changes, and careful refinement of timbre. This allowed the audience to feel the pure joy in the music. Fu Cong's playing style is known for its focus on uncovering the inner emotions of the, characterized by its subtlety, restraint, and richly nuanced expression.

The "Appassionato" sonata, created between 1804 and 1806 is a representative masterpiece of Beethoven's middle period of sonata composition. This period marks Beethoven's mature phase of creation and is a pinnacle classic in the of piano music. This piece has been played by countless pianists in concerts. It is one of the greatest piano works, characterized by its grand scale and powerful. It embodies a high level of passionate enthusiasm and intense emotional content. It is

Beethoven's profound and passionate outcry in the face of his deafness, reflecting spirit of struggle against fate. To this day, Beethoven's thirty-two piano sonatas are loved by listeners and pianists around the world. The Austrian pianist Schnabel emphasized Beethoven's rigorous and rational classical style; while another contemporary performer, Backhaus, interpreted the sonata with the most intense and sincere emotions. Note of his performance of Beethoven's later piano sonatas comes from the depths of his heart, played with simple methods, slow and heavy, yet with great tension. The emotional range is astonishing, sometimes bitter and cool, sometimes calm and peaceful, and at its climax, the piano erupts with overwhelming power, moving touching the heart. The Russian pianist Richter is a master of creativity. His treatment of the work is always unique and not bound by previous conventions. His has a broad, song-like quality and a certain contemplative atmosphere, but it is idealized, with a rather subjective tempo, often slowed down, so that Beethoven's rough and straightforward nature is often transformed into poetic recitation. Sometimes he would play the allegro as a dazzling presto, which is indeed moving, it can't help but cause controversy. The pianist Arrau is a thinker among pianists. His Beethoven sonatas have a rare height, as if each has been carefully crafted and studied. It is these different styles of creation and performance that make piano performance art shine like a diamond, producing different aesthetic values. This is undoubtedly a spiritual enjoyment and solace for the audience.

2 Performance Techniques

2.1 The Fusion of Technique and Emotion

Playing techniques are tools and means of emotional expression. Without solid techniques, the conveyance of emotions is limited. On the other hand, emotion the soul and driving force of technique. Without the infusion of emotion, the display of technique can appear hollow and mechanical. In excellent piano performances, technique and emotion intertwined and complement each other. Most pianists spend a considerable amount of time practicing and contemplating to achieve the composer's intentions and express the inner logic and meaning of work. For instance, the French-Hungarian pianist Cziffra, when performing Liszt's "Hungarian Rhapsody," his superb technique for the perfect execution of rapid note runs and complex chord changes, while his intense national emotion infuses these techniques with life and passion. This allows the audience to moved by both the technical brilliance and the profound emotional depth, and he himself became renowned for his expertise in performing Liszt's works.

2.2 The Unity of Understanding and Interpretation

A profound understanding of music is the foundation for accurate interpretation of a piece. Only with a clear comprehension of the structure, style, and emotional content of piece can one provide an appropriate interpretation. Moreover, a unique interpretation can further deepen the understanding of the piece, allowing the performer to gain a more profound insight into work.

2.3 Practice Methods and Techniques

For pianists, the correct practice methods and memory techniques are crucial to performing a piece well. Each piece from different periods has its own difficulties and characteristics. For the performer, the amount of time spent practicing each day is relatively fixed. If the practice time is too short, the expected goals cannot be achieved; if practice time is too long, it may exceed physiological limits and damage bodily functions, such as the fingers and shoulders.

Engaging in prolonged practice sessions is typically centered around the inherent characteristics of the piece. This involves analyzing the elements contained within the score, such as, dynamic markings, distinctive motifs, and the timbre of the phrases, to guide practice and analysis. Blind and superficial practice can lead to inefficiency, failure meet expected goals, and even boredom with the piece being practiced. Below are examples of excerpts from classic piano works that will be analyzed.



Example: 2-1 "Beethoven Piano Sonata Op. 53, No. 1"

From the musical example above, each four measures form a complete musical sentence, with each measure sharing the same musical motif. However, they the composer's yearning for light and his unyielding struggle against fate. This is manifested in the heroic cries and outbursts in the music. During, one can focus on this main feature. In these measures, certain characteristic elements can be observed: ornaments, rhythm (12/8 time), dynamics (), and slur lines. Practitioners should start by practicing the ornament parts, slowing down the speed and then gradually accelerating; during practice, one should use their hearing to check if the played notes are even and accurate. Next is rhythm practice; 12/8 time can be considered as a combination of 6/8 6/8, which helps to ensure the logic and accuracy between each measure. Lastly, attention should be paid to slur lines and dynamics; one start practicing with a "f" dynamic, but musicality must be maintained. Additionally, while practicing, players should pay attention to the strength of their fingers, pressure of their fingertips on the keys, and maintain tension so that the audience can feel the extremely tense and compact atmosphere. This way, one can truly experience Be's struggle, inspiration, and the welcoming of a new mission in the face of relentless challenges!

From the perspective of the modern piano itself, the piano is more like a "percussion instrument". Since its inception, the piano has undergone continuous by countless pianists and composers, and has gradually matured. By the 19th century, the piano finally stood out among all instruments and ascended the throne of the king of instruments. The outstanding Soviet pianist and educator Henry Neuhaus pointed out: "The mastery of sound is the most primary technical issue pianists need to address, because sound is the material of music itself. Making the sound pleasant and melodious can greatly enhance the music. In piano performance and, whether you play scales, arpeggios, exercises, or pieces, the quality of the sound requires special attention."

Austrian composer: Franz Schubert (January 31, 1797 - November 19, 1828), was a representative figure of early Romantic music and is also regarded as the last master of Classical music. In his brief life of 31 years, Schubert composed more than 600 vocal art works, earning him the title of "King of Art Songs". He also wrote 18 operas, Musical theater, and incidental music, 10 symphonies, 19 string quartets, 22 piano sonatas, 4 violin son, and many other works, further solidifying his reputation as

the "King of Art Songs".

"D899 Op.90no.2" is one of Schubert's impromptus, characterized by its strong melodic and lyrical nature. In the score, each four measures form a musical phrase, followed by a continuation of these four measures. The challenge lies in the transition between single and chords, ensuring that the main melody remains uninterrupted. When practicing single notes, the player needs to rely on their auditory support, paying special attention to the highest of the chord; the left hand should appropriately emphasize the bass line while maintaining the integrity of the different voices.

2 (28)

Schubert's Werke.

Vier Impromptus

für das Pianoforte componirt

von

FRANZ SCHUBERT.

Op. 90.

Serie 11. N^o 2.

Allegro molto moderato. I.

Example: 2-2 "Schubert Impromptu D.899 Op.90"

pianists demand keen hearing from themselves, being highly critical of the sounds they produce. They listen to the strength, duration, quality of each sound strike with their fingers, and the transitions between sounds, while simultaneously basing their performance on the emotions expressed in the piece. This is done with the aim of musical images and expressing the ideological sentiments of the work.

Renowned Chinese pianist and piano educator Mr. Dan Zhao yi proposed the concept of "sound awareness". "Sound awareness should first include the of sound in the mind, which is the imagination of sound in the mind. This imagination comes from the player's auditory direct perception of the piano's timbre their understanding and performance of the music. This is a relatively long process. However, if guided by rationality, it allows the player to practice with conscious goals which is certainly more meaningful and effective than blindly."

Additionally, the pedals of the piano are the soul of piano pieces, requiring coordination between the performer's feet and ears. Using the pedals is a technique and a science. As renowned American pianist and educator Joseph Banowetz stated in his book "The Pianist's Guide to Pedaling": "Appropriate pedaling is the mark of an artistically talented and highly understanding pianist." Similarly, the coordination between the left and right hands is extremely important in performance. Most piano pieces require the use of pedals to enhance the resonance of the sound and enrich the artistic expression of the music. Therefore, in the process of, the performer must not only be skillful in using the pedals but also actively engage their inner hearing. This is an important aspect of piano performance that cannot be and is an integral part of artistic piano performance.

3 Memory and Stage Practice

This part is the most crucial part of piano performance and an essential link that cannot be avoided in music performance majors. Whether it is exams, competitions or performances, performers need to play from memory. For piano performers, it is necessary to memorize and test their practice results on stage. However, this is the most anxious issue for many piano performers, whether they are professional pianists or piano performers, they need to overcome and face it. Memory serves stage practice, the two cannot be separated. From the perspective of human anatomy, the brain will forget without scientific and regular memory.

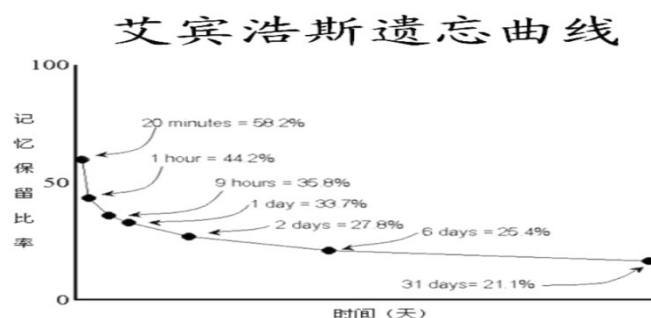


Figure: 3-1 Esshoubin Curve

Therefore, performers need to use scientific methods for memory practice and combine it with stage practice. First, let's discuss it from the perspective of memory.

For piano pieces from different periods, the techniques of memorization are also different. For instance, when playing some modern piano pieces, such as Bartok, one first needs to memorize some of the harmonies in the piece and use their ears to distinguish the accuracy of the harmonies. Additionally, "auditory memory" should be used to assist in practice; during the practice process, this step should be emphasized and gradually become a habit. This process can not deepen the memory but also check for any errors in harmony or notes during the performance. Furthermore, after finishing the practice, one can choose some free time to carefully the score and try to recall the melody memorized during the performance. They can also simulate playing on the keyboard in their mind, deepening their familiarity with the and forming muscle memory. This is known as "position memory" and "action memory". Additionally, when first encountering the piece, one can listen to recordings of piece daily, which can aid in memorization practice known as "score pattern memory". This is also a good method of memorization. Every pianist has their unique techniques for memorization.

In the process of memorization, one can appropriately simulate stage effects, placing oneself in the imagined stage to feel the atmosphere of performance, or use electronic for recording and then check against the score after practice.

In stage practice, every performer cannot ignore an inescapable issue — tension. Of course, tension is a normal physiological phenomenon of humans, an problem, and sometimes even minor issues can lead to tension. For instance, fragmentary memory errors, muscle tension, external environmental disturbances, etc., all of which be overcome through practice and scientific methods.

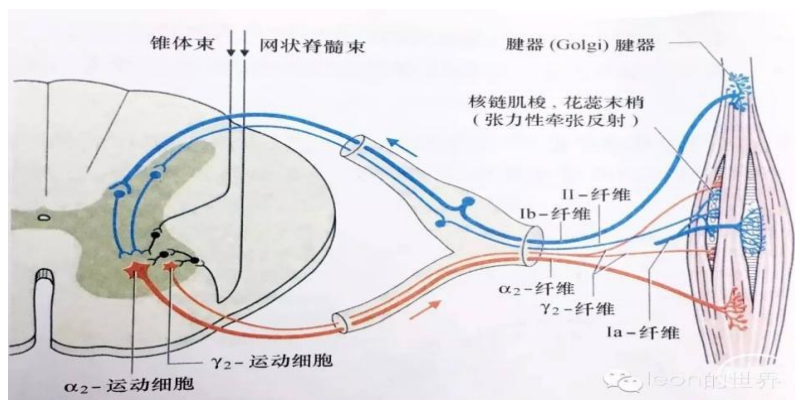
3.1 Fragmentary Memory Error

This type of problem can be addressed by deepening memory and simulating stage performance. In the final stage of memorization, fragmentary writing can be, ensuring the performer is thoroughly familiar with every note of each measure. Additionally, it is crucial to

maintain high concentration during practice, avoiding thoughts unrelated to the practice. This can help reduce excessive tension during actual stage performances.

3.2 Muscle Tension

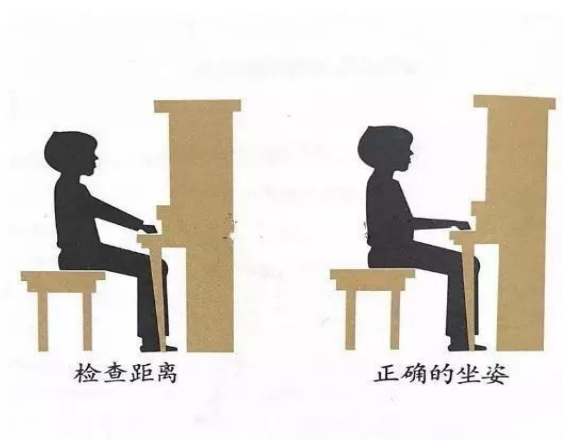
Piano performance can also be simply regarded as a sports event. This is because during the performance, not only the brain and hands are working, but organ in the body is involved in the performance.



Legend: Figure 3-2 represents the muscle tension conduction diagram.

If you adopt an incorrect sitting posture and hand position, it can lead to muscle tension, which in turn can cause errors in your playing.

During the performance, the correct sitting posture is equally important, which can not only improve the accuracy and sound quality of the performer but also prevent injuries to wrist, fingers, and waist. Maintaining the correct sitting posture is crucial for emotional performers, who need to continuously strengthen their practice and maintain the correct sitting in their daily practice. This allows performers to perform more easily and ensures that the body is fully coordinated during the performance.



Legend: 3-3

The above are some ways to reduce muscle tension, and similarly, adjusting breathing methods can also serve to relax and regulate. Additionally, before and after piano practice, spend 15 minutes on body warm-up or stretching exercises, and maintain a relaxed state of body muscles. During

performance, this can reduce the of muscle tension on the completeness of the performance or the failure to achieve good results in competitions, which can be effectively addressed by the methods mentioned above

3.3 External environmental interference

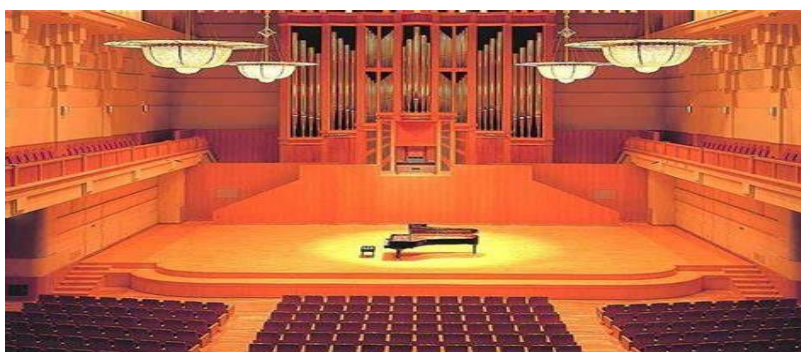
As a performer, it is essential to be familiar with the overall environment of the concert hall. The concert hall is different from the usual practice venue and the performance methods need to be adjusted according to the different halls to ensure that every audience member can hear the performer's beautiful sound. Therefore, performers need to a good job of rehearsing before the performance, try to immerse themselves in the performance, and reduce the "strangeness". On the day of the, they need to enter the backstage area early to prepare.

3.4 Dealing with Unexpected Situations on Stage

On stage, it is inevitable to encounter various emergencies, such as forgetting the score, piano malfunctions, and external disturbances. Performers need to good psychological Quality and adaptability, quickly adjust their state, and minimize the impact of emergencies on the performance. In the event of forgetting the score, the performer try to recall the structure and harmony of the music, and attempt to naturally transition to a familiar section. For piano malfunctions, such as a stuck key, performer can flexibly adjust their playing method, or pause the performance if necessary, and continue after the problem is resolved.

3.5 Coordination of stage performance and musical content

An outstanding stage performance can better present the content of the performance, enhancing the Infectiousness and appeal of the work. The performance content is the and basis of the stage performance, and the stage performance should always revolve around the connotation and emotion of the musical work. For example, the Chinese piano piece "Nu ma A mei" presents listeners with a picture of "the stars hang low over the vast fields, the water and sky are one color, like poetry, the blue waves ripple, the evening glow scatters, making people feel refreshed and reluctant to leave" the unique charm of Yunnan minority music these modern harmonies and structures bring a brand new, different sound to the listeners and performers, adding a mysterious color and cultural background unique to Yunnan minorities the entire piece. In the music, one can feel the author's nostalgia and longing for childhood and hometown, while also allowing the audience to feel the simplicity Yunnan minority folk customs and the diversity of musical colors, all presented to the audience.



Music Hall Structure Diagram 3-4

The above are solutions to the problems that exist in stage practice. Even if we are well-prepared, we can only reduce the probability making mistakes on stage. As performers, we need to first overcome our nervousness and unease about the stage. Even if we make mistakes, there is no to overly blame or regret ourselves. After the performance, performers should reflect on the mistakes made and how to improve them, which will greatly reduce the chance of making same mistakes again. Piano performance, as an important part of musical art, is fundamentally different from other disciplines in that it does not create through simple addition and combination as in mathematics or physics. The "imperfection" of musical art itself is what makes it unique. Many widely acclaimed musical works are seen as "fled" in the eyes of their composers, and some composers may even become angry and incomprehensible when looking back on their own works in later years, such the German composer Beethoven. Performers should take every opportunity to face their own problems in stage practice, and bravely face and enjoy the musical journey that the brings to the audience and themselves.

Polish philosopher and aesthete Roman Ingarden stated: "There are no [originals] in music like there are in painting." essence of a musical piece can only be captured in a multi-layered, indeterminate form, and it is only through repeated performances that it can be truly realized A musical piece is not a fixed, unchanging model, but rather a series of variants realized in each performance. Each variant includes the unique creativity of the performer making the musical piece a complex art form co-created by the performer and the composer. His theory emphasizes the uniqueness and creativity of musical performance, suggesting that the true value of a musical piece can only be realized through the performer's reinterpretation. This perspective is significant for understanding the artistry and creativity of musical performance.

4 Conclusion

The art of piano performance is a captivating and challenging field that demands a high degree of unity and coordination in terms of technique, emotion, understanding and expression from the performer. Through continuous learning, practice, and reflection, performers can gradually enhance their artistic level, bringing more splendid and moving performances to the audience. At the same time, we should also realize that the development of piano performance art is a process of continuous innovation and evolution. With the changes of the times and development of social culture, people's aesthetic needs for piano performance are also constantly changing. Therefore, performers need to maintain an open mind and a spirit of innovation, exploring new expressive techniques and artistic styles, infusing new vitality and creativity into the art of piano performance.

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