

# *The Cultivation of Music Perception and Understanding in Cello Performance*

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**Keywords:** Cello playing, music perception, understandability

**Abstract:** In the music world, cello is highly appreciated with its deep and warm tone. However, to perfectly show the charm of the cello, except for the practice of techniques, the more important part is the player's conception and understanding of the music. This thesis would deeply discuss how to train the music perception and understandability in cello playing, which aims to guide the player to reach higher state of art. Music perception and understandability is the bridge between the player and musical work. For cello player, both are crucial. As a stringed instrument, the playing techniques of the cello are complicated, which requires the player to have the acute conception of intonation, rhythm, and strength. Meanwhile, understanding the subject, emotion, and connotation of the musical work could make the playing more expressive and infectious.

## **1. Introduction**

In the vast world of music, the cello has become an indispensable part of chamber music and symphony with its deep and warm tone. However, to play cello perfectly, only techniques are far from enough. Music perception and understandability are just like the soul of the musical work, which give the music life and depth. This thesis aims to discuss the training of music perception and understandability intensively to provide useful enlightenment for music lovers. In my opinion, the training of music perception and understandability is not only the key to improve the cello playing but also the gold key to the door of music art. Music perception is the susceptibility and expression to the music, which could make us catch nuances of every musical note and feel the flow and change of the music. Understandability of the music is the comprehension ability of inner meanings and emotions of the music, which makes us deeply excavate the connotation of the music and give the playing a richer expression. To train this perception and understandability, we need to begin from many parts. Firstly, a large amount of auditory training is essential. We shall always listen to various types and styles of music and improve our musicality and music perceptiveness. Secondly, the learning of theoretical knowledge is also the key. We could better understand the composition of the music and inner logic through learning knowledge such as music history and musical form analysis. In addition, both emotional experience and expression are important. We should learn to integrate our emotions into the playing and make the music become our outlet of emotions. Taking Bach's unaccompanied cello suite for example, this work is full of complicated contraposition and deep emotions, to play it perfectly, we not only need to hold excellent techniques but also understand the

time background that Bach was in intensively and emotions that he wanted to express. We could gradually feel the meaning behind every musical note through fine analysis and repeated practice so as to convey Bach's emotions and thinking in playing. In general, the training of music perception and understandability is the core element in cello playing. We could improve our music perception and understandability through continuous learning, practice, and reflection, which make our playing more expressive and infectious. Let's make great efforts together to feel the music with the heart and deduce the life with emotions<sup>[1]</sup>.

## **2. Significance of training of music perception and understandability**

### **2.1 Promotion of perception of the music**

Perception of the music refers to the perception of the basic elements of the music, such as pitches, sound intensities, tones, rhythm, and musical forms. In cello playing, training in the perception of the music is crucial; it could help the player to better understand and express the connotation of the music. The player could perceive the changes in pitches, richness in tones and rhythm in rhythms through practice so as to promote susceptibility and expression to the music<sup>[2]</sup>.

### **2.2 Enhancement of understandability of the music**

Understandability of the music refers to the ability to hold the subject, emotion, style and mode of the musical work. In cello playing, understanding the musical work is crucial; it could help the player better hold the connotation and expression of the work. The player could express the emotion and subject of the work more correctly through intensive analysis of the structure, melody, harmony and musical form, which makes the audience better appreciate the charm of the music.

### **2.3 Training of aesthetic conception of the music**

Aesthetic conception of the music refers to the ability of cognition and evaluation of the musical beauty. In cello playing, training in the correct aesthetic conception of the music is crucial; it could help the player to better appreciate and understand the musical work. The player could gradually form the aesthetic conception of the music of his own through continuous practice and reflection so as to feel and express the charm of the music more intensively.

### **2.4 Promotion of expression and creativity of the music**

The expression and creativity of the music refers to the ability to express emotions and create new music through the music. In cello playing, the expression and creativity are crucial, which could help the player to better show the connotation and charm of the music. The player could hold the inner rules and techniques of expression of the music gradually and express and create the music more freely through continuous practice<sup>[3]</sup>.

### **2.5 Promotion of communication and exchange of music emotions**

Music is a kind of emotional language which could express emotions such as pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy through the voices. In cello playing, the expression and exchange of emotions are crucial, it could help the player to better express the emotional connotations of the music, the player could integrate his own emotions into it through deeply feeling the emotions and subject of the work so as to express the emotional connotations of the music more really and evoke sympathy from the audience<sup>[4]</sup>.

### **3. Problems confronted in training of music perception and training of understanding in cello playing**

#### **3.1 Lack of musicality recognition**

Musicality recognition is the basis for cello playing, including perceptions in pitches, tones, and sound intensities. If the musicality recognition of the player is insufficient, then it would influence correct holding of musical notes and influence the effect of playing. In addition, musical knowledge is the foundation for understanding and playing music. If the player has insufficient holding of musical knowledge, it may produce deviation to the musical work and influence the effect of playing <sup>[5]</sup>.

#### **3.2 Lack of emotional expression**

Music is not only the combination of sounds but also transfer of emotions. If the player could not express the emotions in the tracks correctly, then the playing may be inane. Lack of emotional expression may be relevant to factors such as cultural background and life experience. Meanwhile, techniques and musicality are complementary in cello playing. The technique is the basis for the expression of musicality, while musicality is the final purpose of the technique. If the player feels difficult to combine the two, then the performance may be rigid and vain in soul.

#### **3.3 Limited understanding of the background of music works**

Understanding the background of music works (such as the life background and time background of composers) is helpful for players to understand the music work more intensively so as to better express its connotations. However, if the player has limited understanding of the background of the music work, it may limit his music perception and depth of understanding. Meanwhile, sense of rhythm and rhythm perception is an important part of music perception. If the sense of rhythm and rhythm perception of the player is poor, then it would influence the overall holding of the music work and then influence the effect of playing <sup>[6]</sup>.

#### **3.4 Limited memory of music**

Music memory is one of the important abilities in cello playing, which relates to the player's ability to play the tracks fluently and correctly. If the player has limited memory of music, then it would influence his self-confidence and expression in playing. The training of music perception and understanding in cello playing faces many problems. To enhance the effect of playing, the player needs to practice and promote aimed at the above problems. Meanwhile, it also pay attention to the combination of theory and practice, discovering and summarizing experience continuously to achieve better performance in playing.

### **4. Strategies for developing musical perception and comprehension in cello performance**

Music perception and understanding are the core elements in cello playing, which plays a crucial role in the expression and art culture of the player. This thesis believes that we should begin from the following to train music perception and understanding: learning music theory, training the sense of rhythm, understanding music emotion, and developing the analytical ability of musical works.

#### 4.1 Learning of music theory

Learning of music theory is helpful for the player to better understand the inner logic and structure of the music so as to express the emotion and artistic conception of the music more correctly during playing. For instance, understanding of the principles of harmonics could help the player better hold coordination and cooperation of counterpoint and promote holding of associative perception of the music. In addition, good listening skills could make the player distinguish the sound properties such as pitches, tones, and sound intensities, which is helpful in catching details of the music while playing and then promoting susceptibility and expression to the music. For instance, it could better simulate different kinds of sound effects and enrich the sense of layers through listening to the tones of different musical instruments <sup>[7]</sup>.

#### 4.2 Training of sense of rhythm

Rhythm is the skeleton of the music; good sense of rhythm could make the player better hold the rhythm and rhyme of the music. It could make the player express the sense of rhythm more naturally during playing through practicing various kinds of rhythms of music works. For instance, in the playing of jazz, correct holding of syncopations could enhance the Improvisation and expression. In training the sense of rhythm, the relationship between techniques and understanding music is complementary; technique is the basis for playing, while understanding music is the key in giving life and emotion to playing. To balance the relation between the two, we could begin from the following. Firstly, techniques serve the understanding of music. Practice and promotion of techniques shall always aim at better expressing the music and understanding its connotation. The technique is the way rather than the purpose. Excessive pursuit of technique while ignorance of understanding of music would make the playing lack the soul and infectivity. Secondly, the skills in promotion of understanding of music. Understanding of music could help us better hold the emotion and artistic conception during playing. This intensive understanding could motivate our creativity to make us apply the techniques more freely and expressively. Thirdly, unity of techniques and understanding of music. The key in balance or techniques and understanding of music is the organic combination of the two. We should pay attention to training our sense of music during practice to continuously promote our playing through deep analysis of the connotations and styles of music works combined with the practice of techniques. In addition, pay attention to the training of comprehensive ability, we also need to pay attention to train our comprehensive ability except techniques and understanding of music such as listening, sense of rhythm and memory. The promotion of these abilities is helpful for us to express the emotion and artistic conception more comprehensively in playing. At last, practice shall combine with reflection, we could better balance the relationship between techniques and understanding of music through continuous practice and reflection. We shall always pay attention to our application of techniques and emotional expressions during playing and carry out continuous adjustments and improvements to achieve better effect of playing.

#### 4.3 Understanding of music emotion

Understanding of music is the expression of emotion; intensive understanding of the emotional connotation of music is helpful for the player to truly transfer the emotion of music. It could understand emotional expression intensively through analysis of musical elements such as melody, harmony and rhythm so as to give the music more emotions and expressions. For instance, in the playing of Pathétique by Beethoven, understanding its tragic emotion keynote could make the performance more deeply moving. On the other hand, understanding musicians with different styles

during different periods and their works is helpful for the player to expand the vision and better understand and deduce various kinds of music works. It could make the player absorb advantages and promote the art culture and playing through study on writing styles and techniques of different composers. For instance, understanding music styles during the Baroque period could help the player deduce its representative works better.

#### 4.4 Analytical ability of musical works

Analysis of factors such as structure, melody, harmony and rhythm of musical works is helpful for the player to fully understand the structure and technique of expression more comprehensively. It could make the player deals with the relationship between details and entirety more freely and promote expression and infectivity of works during deduction through training of analytical ability of works. For instance, the analysis of the etude from Chopin could help the player to hold technical key points and emotional expression. Meanwhile, aesthetic judgement has played an important role in the perception and understanding of the cellist. It could promote the aesthetic level through admiring different types and styles of music works, reading music criticisms and analyses, as well as considering and discussing aesthetic issues so as to better perceive and understand the wonders of the music. Meanwhile, emphasis on training of art culture and cultural deposit is also helpful to intensify the understanding of connotation and artistic conception of the music. For instance, understanding of aesthetic conceptions during classic and romantic periods is helpful to deduce their representative works better <sup>[8]</sup>.

#### 5. Conclusion

Training of music apperceive and perception is a long-term and systematic procedure. It could better understand and interpret musical works through continuous training in music appreciation and promotion of musicianship, which could bring a deeper and more infectious music experience to the audience. During the procedure, we need to learn, practice and reflect continuously to achieve continuous promotion of personal art culture and playing.

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