

# Analysis on the Improvement of Students' Musical Expressive Power in the Piano-playing Teaching in Colleges

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**Abstract:** Piano playing is a compulsory course for students majoring in music in the curriculum system of colleges. For piano music, it is a form of artistic expression that can express people's thoughts and feelings. For students majoring in music, they should be quite familiar with playing the piano. In theory, students majoring in music should have their own ideas and features when playing the piano, which is commonly known as the expressive power of music. However, in the teaching of piano playing in colleges, we teachers can see that the musical expressive power of students in playing the piano is not so satisfactory that a lot of piano teachers in colleges hope to improve the musical expressive power of students in certain ways. Therefore, this paper will elaborate on the improvement of students' musical expressive power in the piano-playing teaching of colleges on the basis of the piano-playing teaching of colleges.

**Keywords:** Music teaching in colleges, Piano playing, Musical expressive power, Improvement

## 1. Introduction

With the development of society, more and more attention has been paid to the cultivation of students' professional skills in modern higher education, as only when students have solid professional knowledge and skills, can they better adapt to the society. For students majoring in music, they should play the piano with great facility, while a large number of students fail to have so satisfactory performance when they really play the piano. In addition, with the deepening of education and teaching reform in recent years, new requirements have been put forward for the teaching of piano playing in colleges, one of which is to improve the musical expressive power of students in playing the piano. The so-called expressive power of music, in fact, belongs to the category of musical aesthetics. To be specific, it refers to what we want to express through music, and what we can not express, and what we can hear from music in addition to the music itself. As for the expressive power of music in piano playing, we can understand it in this way, that is, through the notes we play with our fingers, what can we bring to the listeners in accordance with the arrangement and combination of these notes? That is to say, can the emotional communication between the player and the listener reach the resonance of the bosom friend through the medium of music? It is also known as the ancient Chinese saying that people find those who can really appreciate them with the lofty mountains and flowing water. But in the actual teaching of piano playing in colleges, what we

see tends not to be in that way. When a lot of college students are playing the piano, in fact, they just play the notes, and there is no change in emotions, and thus it is naturally far from any expressive force of music. For such a phenomenon, it may be because students have a lack of their own understanding of music, or because teachers do not have a complete embodiment in their own design of classroom teaching. However, no matter what the reason is, it is necessary for the piano teachers in colleges to find out the corresponding countermeasures for teaching carefully, so as to be able to achieve the improvement of students' musical expressive power in playing the piano. Therefore, this paper will combine the corresponding examples of the piano-playing teaching in colleges, and elaborate on the improvement of students' musical expressive power in piano playing of colleges.

## 2. Factors Affecting the Expressive Power of Music

In the teaching of piano playing in colleges, students do not show strong musical power in playing the piano, for which there are the reasons of the students, as well as the reasons of the teachers themselves. In order to improve students' expressive power of music in piano playing, the teachers should first find out the factors that affect students' expressive power of music in piano playing, and then find out the corresponding solutions based on these factors, so as to achieve the improvement of students' expressive power of music. Next, I will talk about my

views on the following three factors that affect students' expressive power of music.

### **2.1. Less understanding of the creation background and the life of the composers**

Many piano teachers in colleges take a great part in the works of masters when teaching the piano playing courses to students, such as Chopin, Beethoven, Mozart and so on. Although it is true that the works of such masters are worth repeated reviewing, it is unable for a part of these students to have an in-depth understanding and mastery of such works. For college students, unless they have received systematic and professional training from an early age, they solely know the names of these composers, while they do not know anything about the life of the composer and the background for his creation of the work. In such a state, how can students play a work with good expressive force of music?

### **2.2. Lack of understanding and distinction of the performance style of works**

In addition to the less understanding of the creation background and the life of the composers as mentioned above, college students, in fact, are less aware of the distinction between the performance styles of the works. Some of the students even feel that there is little difference between Claude Debussy's *Clair de Lune* and Chopin's *Nocturnes*, and they sound the same. The reason why students feel this way is more that it is too old and that the students have not systematically studied before, but the teachers directly assigns a work with an entirely new style, which will make students too late to do anything about it, so that they may be at a loss. Not to mention the expressive power of music in piano playing.

### **2.3. Weak subjective initiative of the players**

The above two points are from the perspective of selection of teaching material and classroom design by teachers, while this point starts from the students themselves. For most of the students majoring in music in regular institutions of higher learning, they have not been exposed to the piano since they were very young. And it is possible that a lot of students come into contact with the piano in college. What's more, it is really too difficult for them to play such classical music with the piano. After all, a majority of young people nowadays begin to be fond of music from the interest in pop music. As a result, a great many students do not show strong subjective initiative in playing the piano. In view of this, it becomes too difficult for teachers to enable the students to have a good expressive power of music in playing the piano.

## **3. Measures to Improve the Expressive Power of Music**

There are many factors that affect students' expressive power of music in the teaching of piano playing in colleges, but teachers should still make relevant adjustments according to these factors in a timely manner so as to enhance students' expressive power of music. In case that the teachers still choose to ignore these problems and do not want to solve them, it will not only be unable to improve the students' expressive power of music, but will also gradually dissipate the students' interest in learning the piano. Therefore, based on the three factors as mentioned above, I will talk about the measures to improve the students' expressive power of music in piano playing.

### **3.1. To strengthen elementary exercises**

In view of the aspects as mentioned above, a lot of college students have been in contact with the piano since they entered college, and thus teachers need to spend some time enhancing the students' studies of the basic knowledge of piano playing when allowing them to have formal performance of the piano. For some students not majoring in piano, they are not so aware of the grouping of the keyboard and the division of the region of articulation. In addition, students are very vague about the meaning of the large number of marks and symbols in the music book in piano playing and the application of these marks and symbols in performance. Therefore, in the face of such a phenomenon, teachers can not keep themselves in talking about the problems in playing the entire piece of work, but should, based on the elementary knowledge, first allow students to pay attention to the studies of the basic theories and the theories in relation to playing, so that students will have a basic understanding and mastery of the performance of the entire piece of piano music. In this way, they can not go so far as to make any mistakes in common sense, so as to achieve the improvement of their expressive power of music in piano playing.

For example, when the teacher teaches June - Barcarolle, one piece in Tchaikovsky's work "The Four Seasons", the teaching goal of this piece of piano music is, first, to enable students to be able to have a correct understanding and grasp of the creation background, the characteristics of the style and the key-touching method in playing of Tchaikovsky's work "The Four Seasons" through the studies in class, so as to correctly reflect the warm, and sweet theme with profound sentiments. Second, in the process of teaching, teachers teach students to listen with their ears to judge whether the sounds they play have a smooth effect and whether they can create the artistic conception they want to create, so as to cultivate students' control technology of the sound and keen listening capacities, as well as to enhance their musical accomplishment. According to such a teaching goal, in the process of teaching, teachers should first enable students

to paying attention to reading the music book, making the necessary preparations and desk work for playing a piece of music well, and looking up and understanding the rhythm, speed, expression mark, playing method and other information marked in the music book to lay a solid foundation for studying this piece of work in a complete and smooth way, and thus they can play the following piano music more smoothly, resulting in better expressive power of music.

### 3.2. To enhance students' accomplishment in piano music

In view of the influencing factors as mentioned above and students' little knowledge concerning the creation background and the life of the composer and the ambiguity of the style of composition, teachers should enhance the students' accomplishment in piano music in the process of class teaching. In the teaching of piano playing, it is necessary for teachers to cultivate students' musical accomplishment in order to enhance their expressive power of music. Once the students have developed certain thinking of music, they will be able to better play their own thoughts and understanding when playing the piano music, so that their expressive power of music will be enhanced.

For example, when the teacher teaches Beethoven's "The First Movement of Piano Sonate Opus 2 No 1", the teaching goal is, first to enable students to play this piece of piano music in a correct way of touching the keys through the training in class. Second, it is to allow students to play the correct rhythm, pitch and emotions of the music through the playing exercises. Third, it is to allow students to accurately express the characteristics of the style of the music on the basis of the understanding of the characteristics of Beethoven's works, so as to learn how to better master the skills of controlling the keyboard, and to understand the style of Beethoven's music. Based on such a teaching goal, in the process of teaching, the teacher should give a brief introduction of the life of Beethoven to the students, as well as allow students to be able to know the background when Beethoven wrote "The First Movement of Piano Sonate Opus 2 No 1". On the basis of the knowledge of the background knowledge, students can listen to the teacher's performance, and then talk about the feelings after they listen to the piece of piano music. At the same time, the teacher can allow the students to talk about which category the style of this piece of piano music should be in.

### 3.3. To establish a good psychological state of playing

Finally, in the teaching of the piano playing courses in colleges, there is also an important aspect to help students establish a good psychological state of playing in

case that the teachers want to improve students' expressive power of music in terms of piano playing. For a large number of students, there are only a few opportunities to play the piano on the stage, so many of them will be in panic when playing the music. Therefore, students will fail to play the music very well. Not to mention any expressive power of music. As a result, in the process of class teaching, teachers should help students to establish interest and confidence in playing the piano, and thus assist them in setting up a good psychological state of playing.

For example, when the teacher trains the students to practice on the stage, the teacher may play the works that are about to be performed with a different speed and different intensity, in case that the students are able to perform the best effect and the most ideal state in daily exercises to the letter when they formally play the music on the stage. At the same time, it is important to strengthen the training on the memories of the works, and students may recite the music book in various ways. Even if there are some unsatisfactory flaws, it will not affect the overall performance of students to increase their confidence in the performance. Besides, it is also necessary for students to overcome the irritable mentality through low-speed practice. When students' self-confidence is gradually built up, they will develop a good psychology in performance, and then the piano music that students play will be bound to have better expressive power.

## 4. Conclusion

In a word, the teaching of piano playing in colleges is not only to enhance the students' expressive power of music, but also to enable students to be able to improve their sense of music and aesthetics through the study of piano performance courses, so as to achieve the purpose of improving the quality of teaching. Therefore, in the process of teaching, the teachers should, based on the class, adopt different teaching methods, to achieve the purpose of improving students' expressive power of music.

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