

The Teaching Techniques of Dvorak's Cello Concerto in B Minor

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Abstract

This article presented the teaching techniques of Dvorak's cello concerto in B minor. Dvorak's Cello Concerto in B Minor is one of the most frequently performed musical works in today's music stage. The work covers a variety of cello playing techniques, which is a litmus test for every performer. The piece is full of heroic temperament and homesickness, how to interpret the musical work requires the player to master the better performance skills, the work is characterized by triplet rhythmic patterns of playing skills, skipping bowing skills, chords and diatonic playing skills, the playing skills are integrated into the thought and emotion of the musical work, a better interpretation of the work's musical connotation.

Keywords: The Teaching Techniques; Dvorak's Cello Concerto; B Minor

Introduction

Antonín Leopold Dvořák (1842--1904) was an important composer in the Romantic period of Western music history, and one of the main representatives of the Czech national school of music, known as the "Three Czechs" along with Smetana and Janáček.... "Dvořák was born in Prague.

Dvořák was born in the town of Nelahozeves near Prague, and at the age of six he attended elementary school in Nelahozeves, where he began to study the violin. 1853 he moved to Zlónis to study German. In 1853 he moved to Zlonís to study German, and studied piano and organ with Antonín Liehmann, the church choir leader. He also played in his teacher's orchestra and began composing, and in 1856 Dvořák went to Česká Kamenice to study at the organ school in Prague. After graduation Dvořák tried to get a position as organist, but failed.

From the summer of 1859 he worked as a viola player in Karl Komzák's orchestra and taught himself to compose, initially focusing on string quartets, and from 1865 onwards, in addition to his work with the orchestra, Dvořák began to teach piano in the theater. 1870 saw Dvořák write his first opera, *Alfredo*, which was never staged during his lifetime, and can be seen as an attempt at operatic composition. In July 1871 he resigned from the orchestra in order to spend more time composing. Between 1871 and 1873 he published an opera, chamber music, and a hymn for chorus and orchestra, *The Legacy of the White Mountains*, which was enthusiastically praised and acknowledged. 1873 the theater had begun rehearsals of his work but had to interrupt them due to the difficulty of the repertoire. This led Dvořák to revisit his repertoire, abandoning the neo-Germanic style of composition and re-composing his work, which was premiered in 1874 with success. 1874 saw him teach at a private music school, and in February he was offered an organ position, which he held until 1877. 1884 saw Dvořák accept an invitation from the Philharmonic Society to travel to London for the first time. 1889 saw Dvořák return to Prague, where he was invited to perform his work. Dvořák returned to Prague, where he received an honorary doctorate from the University of Kars, and in October

* Received: October 24, 2023; Revised: November 29, 2023; Accepted: November 30, 2023

1890 he became a professor at the Conservatory of Music. 1892 Dvořák was invited to New York to become director of the National Academy of Music. Dvořák wrote famous works for New York: Symphony No. 9, "From the New World", Dvořák's Cello Concerto in B Minor, and the American String Quartet. Dvořák passed away on May 1, 1904, at the age of 63 years. On the fourth day of his death, a state funeral was held in his honor in Czechoslovakia.

Antonín Leopold Dvořák, one of the greatest Czech composers of the 19th century, is represented by nine symphonies, of which the Ninth Symphony is the most famous. Dvořák's compositions are imbued with a deep Czech folkloric coloring, and his themes and structures are closely related to the charms and characteristics of Czech folk music. He believed that it was his sacred duty to use music to glorify his homeland and consolidate the people's belief in a better future. Under the influence of the Czech National Independence Movement, he contributed greatly to the development of national music (Chai & Yang, 2017).

Anton Leopold Dvorak is another outstanding representative of Czech nationalist music after Smetana. Dvořák was born into a poor butcher's family in Prague (then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, now part of the Czech Republic) on the outskirts of the Vltava River, where he grew up in poverty. However, the young Dvorak was musically gifted and very motivated, learning the violin from the village musician at an early age, with a special interest in Czech folk songs and folk dances, and his performances in the church choir and at festivals in inns were often appreciated by the listeners. At the age of thirteen, because he was the eldest son and had to inherit his father's business, the young Dvorak was sent to the neighboring town as a butcher's apprentice, and in the meantime, he studied music at the same time, and learned piano, organ and piano music in the church choir. In 1857, at the age of 16, he entered the Prague Organ School, the cradle of his career as a musician. Early on, after graduating in 1859, Dvořák worked in the "Provisional Theater" (later transformed into the National Theater) in Smetana until 1871. His work in the orchestra gave Dvořák access to Smetana's early operas, including *The Brandenburgers in Hymnia* and *The Betrayed Bride*, as well as performances by Berlioz, Wagner, and Liszt, and he became acquainted with a large number of works of the Classical and Romantic schools, accumulating a great deal of knowledge.¹ In the sixties, Dvořák had already begun to try his hand at composing music on a wide variety of subjects, but he was largely unknown due to the lack of performances. In 1870 Dvořák wrote his first opera, *Alfredo*, which was never performed during his lifetime. In 1873, Dvořák began to devote himself to his work, which became increasingly national in style, and from 1874 to 1877 he was awarded a state scholarship. 1875, his work was recognized by the German composer Brahms, and the two like-minded musicians remained close friends for the rest of their lives. The two like-minded musicians maintained a deep and noble friendship throughout their lives. Brahms enthusiastically helped him to improve his compositional skills and recommended his works to publishers, which enabled him to begin to gain fame abroad. Dvorak later transformed Brahms's *Divertimento* into an orchestral piece and dedicated his *String Quartet in D minor* to him. It is believed that Brahms played the same role in Dvorak's life as Schumann did in Brahms's creative life, and in the 1870s, the first set of *Slavonic Dances* and the vocal suite *Moravian Duets* marked his entry into a period of creative maturity and his emergence as a national artist. Since then a number of his works began to receive performances one after another, and in 1878 Dvořák opened a new world of artistic activity when he gave a recital of his works in Prague, where for the first time in his life he was the conductor of the orchestra. Dvořák reached his creative maturity in the 1880s, when he performed in England on several occasions and received honors comparable to those received by Handel, Haydn and

Mendelssohn in succession. His reputation grew both at home and abroad, and he often conducted and performed his own works abroad. His Symphony No. 7 in D minor was written for the London Philharmonic Orchestra, with which he was particularly close, and his first symphony, Symphony No. 8 in G major, which was first published by a British publisher, was even entitled the "Anglo-Symphony". The University of Cambridge awarded Dvořák the honorary degree of Doctor of Music in 1891 as a mark of his highest esteem, and his meeting with Tchaikovsky in 1888 was a major event in his life, as he was invited by Tchaikovsky to perform his own compositions in Moscow and St. Petersburg, again with great success. From 1892 to 1895, when Dvořák was invited to the United States to serve as director of the New York Conservatory of Music, he composed a large number of outstanding works, including the Cello Concerto in B Minor, which is the subject of this article, as well as Symphony No. 9, "From the New World", and the operas "Narcissus" and "Amida", etc. During these years in the United States, Dvořák always had a nostalgic feeling for the past. During his years in the United States, he was always nostalgic for his homeland, which is deeply reflected in his works with his infinite love and longing for his homeland, the praise of the martyrs, and the theme of the people's struggle, Dvořák made great efforts to revitalize the national culture of his homeland. After he returned to Czechoslovakia from the United States in the spring of 1895, Dvořák devoted himself to the development of the social activities of the Czech national music. In 1901, he became the director of the Prague Conservatory of Music, contributing greatly to the training of a new generation of Czech musicians. He passed away quietly in the company of his family on May 1, 1904, and the Czech people gave Dvořák a grand state funeral in memory of this musician, who had used his musical creations to fight for the national freedom and emancipation of his country (Feng, 2015).

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Background of the Cello Concerto in B minor

In the second half of his life, Dvořák's vision was no longer confined to the Czech Republic, as his works became better known and he was often invited to perform abroad. His music is no longer filled with the intimate simplicity of his early years, but rather, based on the work of his predecessor Smetana, he has gradually incorporated a more diverse range of styles into his compositions. The Cello Concerto in B minor was Dvořák's last large-scale work during his travels in the United States, and it expresses the composer's nostalgia for his homeland and his love for his native land. The composition began in November 1894, during which time Dvořák experienced the pain of his father's death and the marriage of his former lover, and the nostalgia for his lost loved ones, the memory of his first love, and the sadness of parting in a foreign land were all written into this work. After the completion of the work, he consulted Vihan, professor of cello at the Prague Conservatory, on the bowing and fingering of the solo cello part, but the two disagreed on the colorful part. The composer did not agree with Vihan's proposal to add a large solo flourish at the end of the third movement, and he made this clear in a letter to the publisher, Shimrock. Dvořák wanted the work to go the way he wanted it to, with the finale ending in a crescendo, recalling the themes of the first and second movements, and then crescendoing again. Finally, the full orchestra concludes the work in an atmosphere of intensity. It was not until September 1895 that this great work was finally completed and premiered in London in March 1896 under the composer's rehearsal conductor (Yang, 2019).

Anton Leopold Dvorak's Cello Concerto in B minor is a work completed in 1895. The 1890s was the peak of Anton Leopold Dvořák's compositions, especially in the years when Dvořák went to New York to become the director of the National Conservatory of Music. The Cello Concerto in B minor, composed at that time and on the eve of his departure from the United States, is one of the most ambitious works of Dvořák's late period. Dvořák came to the United States from Prague, Bohemia, in 1892, and when he first set foot on the new continent of the Americas, Dvořák's homesickness for his distant homeland was far greater than his excitement, and he composed his famous Ninth (From the New World) Symphony in 1893. The symphony reflects Dvořák's strong homesickness, the confusion of having just left his homeland and stepping onto a strange continent. After 1894, he began to compose the Cello Concerto in B minor, during which Dvořák's father passed away, his former lover got married, and he was in a foreign country, the kind of lost loved ones, memories of the first love of the beloved, far away from the homeland of the homesickness, his loneliness, pain, sweetness, longing, and attachment are all written into this work. It was not until 1895 that this great work was finally completed and premiered in London in 1896 under the composer's baton. The reason why this concerto is said to be great is that on the one hand, this cello concerto is different from Dvorak's other concertos in that it is more profoundly national, more intensely dramatic, and more artistically lyrical, and on the other hand, because the composition of this concerto is the same as that of Dvorak's "Symphony No. 4," which has led many composers to call it the "Symphony Concerto." Symphonic Concerto". This grandiose symphonization of the composition combined with the national music material and heroic musical style, more expressive of Dvořák's thoughts on the independence and liberation of the Czech nation, and the deep love for the motherland (Wang, 2014).

Between November 1894 and February 1895, Dvořák completed his Cello Concerto in B minor (Op.104). This work is one of Dvořák's late masterpieces and a masterpiece of cello concertos in music history. Dvořák composed this cello concerto during his last year of residence in the United States, and like his most popular work, the "From the New World" Symphony, this concerto also combines material from Czech folk music and American Indian and Negro spirituals (Liu, 2016).

The Cello Concerto in B minor was not actually Dvořák's first cello concerto; he had written one in his early musical career, which he was not satisfied with and did not consider the cello suitable as a solo instrument against modern orchestras. His close friend, cellist Hanus Wihan, a member of the Czech Quartet at the time, suggested that he compose another cello concerto, so Dvořák began composing the Cello Concerto in B minor in November 1894, during his second trip to the United States, and completed the first draft. However, the ever-changing ideas of musical composition caused him to later make significant changes to the concerto when he returned to his home in the Czech Republic (Gao, 2015).

Dvorak came to the United States for the second time in 1894, and he composed this great cello concerto during his tenure as director of the National Conservatory of Music in New York. His inspiration came from several dimensions, firstly, the intense homesickness that arose from his departure from his beloved homeland; secondly, in March 1894, he attended the premiere of Victor Herbert's Cello Concerto No. 2, a performance that made Dvořák particularly impressed by the solo instrument. He had previously believed that the cello was not suitable as a solo instrument to compete with modern orchestras, but during the performance he not only heard the composer use three trombones, but the sound of the trombones did not affect the cello, and the solo cello clearly penetrated the trombone sound,

which caused the composer to be deeply attracted by the work, and on the next day he continued to listen to the work, and borrowed the score from Herbert He continued to listen to the work the next day and borrowed the score from Herbert for more in-depth study, and in the end he decided to compose a cello concerto of his own (Zhang, 2022).

Dvořák composed three concertos for piano, violin and cello. Harold Schonberg (1932) commented on Dvořák's three concertos as follows: "The Piano Concerto in G minor (Op. 33) is very charming but the piano part is not very expressive; the Piano Concerto in A minor (Op. 33) is very charming but the piano part is not very expressive; the Piano Concerto in A minor (Op. 33) is very beautiful, but the piano part is not very expressive; and the Piano Concerto in A minor (Op. 33) is very beautiful, but the piano part is not very expressive. The Violin Concerto in A Minor (Op. 53) is very beautiful; and the Cello Concerto in B Minor (Op. 104) can be described as "extraordinary". The Cello Concerto in B minor is a great achievement. At this time, Dvořák was in the late stage of his writing career, his artistic style was more stable and mature, and his means of musical expression was naturally more pure than that of the other two concertos.

Musical Characteristics and Mood of the Cello Concerto in B Minor

Dvořák was a great patriot and the leader of the Czech national school of music after Smetana. the Czech Republic in the second half of the 19th century was under the harsh rule of the Austro-Hungarian empire, and the violent national movement made many artists, including Dvořák, realize the importance of creating works of art with a clear national style. Although he himself was living in the United States at the time, this national sentiment did not diminish in the slightest because of the distance. In the case of the Cello Concerto in B minor, it is the use of Czech folk music. First of all, there is the melodic aspect. The melodic part of the work is most impressive in its sing-song character. This effect is due to the fact that Dvorak extracted a large amount of melodic material from Czech folk songs and applied it almost intact to the work, intending to make the melodic lines more expansive and more expressive through the vocalization of instrumental melodies. At the beginning of the second movement, Dvořák borrowed the melodic material from the song "Leave Me Alone", the melody is stretching and euphemistic, with a faint sadness, and at this time, the cello is more like a singer, telling Dvořák's memories of the past and thoughts of the motherland. Secondly, in terms of rhythm. Rhythm is the skeleton of music, which has an important influence on the expression of musical style. In Czech language, the stress of each word almost always falls on the first syllable, so it shows a change from strong to weak. In this work, Dvořák draws on this characteristic in order to better express the national style. In the cello solo fragment of the third movement, a number of bars start with a strong beat, and then move backward in the form of downward intervallic jumps, with a very clear sense of strength and weakness, giving people a distinct sense of rhythm, and this rhythmic feature summarized from the speech tones can be regarded as Dvořák's signature style. At the same time, in addition to the borrowing of language tones, the rhythm of Czech folk dance also gave Dvořák great inspiration. Located in Eastern Europe, the Czech Slavic nation has an extremely rich folk dance culture, and its rhythmic forms are also diverse. In the second movement, the cello plays alone, and as the music progresses, the rhythm and tempo become faster and faster. In the Czech folk dance, the cello is the leader of the dance, and the other instruments are the surrounding crowd, who are infected by the leader and join in the dance, and the atmosphere of the music becomes more and more joyful. It can be seen

that Dvořák, in his creation, through the reference to folk music, not only made his works show a distinctive national style, but also let his patriotic and homesickness be expressed to the fullest extent. Dvořák was a great patriot and had a deep love for Czech folk music, but this does not mean that he ignored and rejected other folk music. In his view, only the fusion of many kinds of excellent music from all over the world can make the music itself be further enriched and developed, which can be seen through his borrowing of American black music, and it is precisely because of this borrowing that the work shows a distinctive fusion characteristic. The first is the integration of rhythm. The most notable feature of black music is the preference for even and syncopated beats with pentatonic scales and downward marching melodies. In the second movement of the work, both of these rhythmic patterns are present in abundance, immediately recalling the ritualistic dances of the Negroes. At the same time, the introduction of this rhythmic pattern in this movement, which expresses the black music style, is also appropriate from the point of view of emotional expression, because this movement mainly expresses a kind of nostalgia, and the black people are a race that has suffered a lot in history. Dvorak intended to use the black style of music to create a sad atmosphere, so as to make the expression of homesickness more sincere, and this integration is very natural, without traces, showing Dvorak's superb compositional techniques. Secondly, the melodic integration. In terms of melody, Dvořák mainly borrowed and used the unique song form of the blacks, the spiritual song. 17th century, a large number of Africans were trafficked to North America, living an inhuman life of slavery, so singing became the best spiritual comfort activity after their heavy labor. With their extraordinary musical talent and religious devotion, they created a piece of soothing, heartfelt music, which later became known as spirituals. In Dvorak's view, his Czech compatriots, who were suffering from the same situation as the blacks at that time, had a special affinity for spirituals, and he asked his black students to collect a large number of spirituals for him, which he skillfully incorporated into his works. The sub-theme melody of the cello solo in the first movement is borrowed from the Negro spiritual "Deep River", which has a simple but lyrical melody, expressing the yearning for peace and a better life. The cello's low tone accentuates the simplicity of the melody, which is an appropriate use of the cello. In the main theme of the second movement, the key of E minor, which is a common key in the Negro spirituals, is deliberately used, and based on this, a number of syncopated rhythms are used, which further strengthens the melancholic color of the piece. It can be seen that Dvořák was a composer with a very broad vision, and through the borrowing and use of some special music, the work presents a fusion style, and the musical infectiousness and expressiveness of the work itself is also enriched and enhanced in the process of this fusion. A musical work consists of two parts: creation and performance, of which creation is the basis of performance. That is to say, in the process of composition, the creator should take into account all aspects of performance, so that the work can satisfy the needs of personal expression and at the same time give the performer a wide range of space for expression, and thus gain the audience's recognition of both the work and the performer. This is also a point that Dvorak fully emphasized. Dvořák was also very familiar with cello playing, so in this work, there are extremely prominent technical characteristics, truly realizing the unity of the performer and the work. For example, the use of vibrato, unlike in vocal works, in instrumental works, is made up of two tones with independent pitches that alternate with each other. The vibrato, in particular, is not marked in the score, nor is there a clear requirement for the number of finger fluctuations; rather, it relies on the performer's understanding of the work and his or her own technical skill, which is both an opportunity and a challenge for the performer. In the first

movement, Dvorak utilizes a large number of vibrato notes, lasting for seven bars, and makes clear demands for changes in intensity. The player needs to press the strings with the first finger of the left hand, and the second finger keeps making rapid and sustained repetitions of pressing and detuning in order to achieve this effect, and to reflect the variations in strength and weakness on this basis. As can be seen from the many later versions, most players have mastered the essentials of the vibrato here, fully expressing the unique musical effects of the vibrato. For example, the jump bow. This is a difficult technique in cello playing, but Dvorak used it many times in this work. In the colorful first movement, Dvořák lets the flying bow jump for as many as eight bars, which is unprecedented in cello works. This kind of performance is extremely demanding on the use of the right hand, which must constantly change strings and maintain a good even rhythm and stable speed, and the left hand must always use the thumb grip. Without solid basic skills and long hours of practice, it is difficult to produce this special musical effect. However, if this technical difficulty can be overcome, it will become a highlight of a player's performance and bring the audience both visual and auditory aesthetics. Symphonicity is one of the most important pursuits of a concerto. The composer should have a comprehensive understanding of the musical characteristics of each instrument, and then according to the rules of orchestration, blend them together perfectly, and ultimately obtain a symphonic effect. From the actual situation of this work, its symphonic performance is also very outstanding, each instrument plays a unique role, making the musical performance of the work richer and presenting a more profound connotation. For example, the use of brass instruments. The sound of brass instruments is thick and penetrating, and compared with the sound of cello, it is easy to cover the sound of cello, so in many cello concertos, it is usually rare to use brass instruments. But in this work, Dvorak has been bold and flexible use, in the first movement of the sub-part, when the cello completed the solo, by the orchestra played the sub-theme, at this time the brass group is acting as the role of the harmony part, so that the whole music color is brighter and more grandiose. In the closing section of the first movement, before the cello solo, there is a trumpet solo, which is more like a caller, inspiring the cello to hurry up and play its own sound, and when the cello sounds, the trumpet also accomplishes its mission. This kind of setup not only skillfully avoids the conflict between the two in sound, but also obtains a kind of contrast and continuous effect. The performance of the orchestra and cello echoed each other. As the orchestra and cello, there should be constant echoes, exchanges, and collisions between the two in order to show a dramatic character, and then drive the music forward. In this work, the echoes between the orchestra and cello are very appropriate, giving full play to the characteristics of the orchestra and cello, and enriching the musical expression through the dialog between the two. In the middle section of the second movement, there is a dialog between the flute, oboe and cello. The former plays an extremely lyrical melody, to which the cello responds in imitative terms. The cello responds with a mimetic language, and the cello plays even a single ornament, giving the impression of harmony. In a fragment of the third movement, the "interlocutors" are joined by a new member. The clarinet plays a four-note motive, which is first echoed by the horn and then resolved by the cello in the form of a reflection, the three blending and harmonizing (Ma, 2016).

Conclusion

The cello plays an extremely important role in the Cello Concerto in B minor, utilizing almost every possible technique, especially the solo cello, which occupies a great deal of weight in the whole piece. On the one hand, the piece requires the performer to master the cello's wide range, tonal variations, song-like playing techniques, and vibrato techniques of different amplitudes and strengths in order to reveal the author's profound inner world. This requires a high level of playing skill. On the other hand, in terms of chords, double stops, skipping bows, and continuous octave-double chromatic progressions, the piece also has extremely strict requirements for the performer. Most importantly, this concerto with symphonic characteristics is a perfect blend of solo cello and orchestra performance, especially with the perfect match of horn, lute, and woodwinds, which creates a melodic blend of various tunes, not only puts forward a higher demand on the performer's artistic cultivation and realm, but also expresses the author's ideological connotations and spiritual aspirations in depth, which is the reason why this piece has become a classical one. Cello Concerto in B minor is a representative work of Dvorak's organic fusion of his own patriotism and classical music paradigm, which is unique in the structural treatment of the entire work, emotional expression, solo technique, instrumentation, etc., and thus becomes a classic case of modern cello work study and performance.

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