

# How to Relieve Nervous Emotions in Piano Performance

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**Abstract**—Art can be divided into different kinds. Piano art plays a very important role in it. Different art forms have unique characteristics of their own. Compared with art forms such as painting and literature, piano art has more requirements for performance. Besides, different from art of painting, literature and art, piano art has more needs for ability to play on the spot and requires performers to timely settle down problems appeared in the process of performance. Performers need to face more audiences directly. So it needs pianist to have good state of mind and timely and effectively adjust their mental state according to different situations. That is to say, no matter facing what kind of circumstance, pianists should deal with it with usual mind and prevent the emergence of poor performance because of overstress. How to relieve nervous mood in piano performance? This article discusses and analyzes reasons for pianists to have nervous mood and puts forward related solutions.

**Keywords**—*nervous emotions; pattern of manifestation; analysis on reasons; countermeasures*

## I. INTRODUCTION

As a kind of art, piano performance has a common point with art of singing, namely the unrepeatable and real-time characteristics. We cannot carry out secondary operation. Sometimes pianists even need improvisation. To reach certain artistic effect of piano performance, firstly, pianists need edification of humanistic connotations and have deep understanding on works; secondly, pianists need to have skillful playing skills. Besides, the effect of piano performance also has close relationship with emotions of performers. Pianists must have good ability to play on the spot and can deal with different situations on the spot, which require them to have a powerful heart. If pianists are easy to have excessively nervous emotions, the effect of performance on the spot will be certainly not good.

## II. ANALYSIS ON MANIFESTATION OF NERVOUS MOOD OF PIANISTS

### A. Physiological Manifestation

Pianists show certain nervous emotion, which is embodied not only in the period of on-site performance, but also before several days even one month before the performance, so it indirectly makes pianists show nervous emotions during the

performance and appear some physiological problems. Through analysis, it is found that performers show nervous emotions before performance, which start from the period when most pianists know they will perform. With the approach of performance time, pianists are easier to show excessively nervous emotions, which will accompany physiological problems. Before the performance, some pianists will be nervous, breath hard with chest distress, serious declination of sleep quality and they lose their appetite. During the formal performance, this situation will sharpen. For example, their fingers tremble continuously. They go to the bathroom ceaselessly and even want to vomit because of nausea. These physiological reactions will influence the performance level of pianists to varying degrees. The reason why they show untoward effect is that the pianists are too nervous.

### B. Psychological Manifestation

Except for appearing the above physiological manifestation, pianists will have psychological manifestation, which is mainly embodied in two aspects. On one hand, they cannot concentrate on doing things. On the other hand, they ceaselessly forget pieces of music score. Most pianists will forget music score and have blank mind because of psychological nervousness. Even some pianists cannot concentrate on the performance and always be absent-minded during the performance. These are psychological manifestation of pianists because they are nervous.

## III. ANALYZE REASONS WHY PIANISTS ARE EASY TO SHOW NERVOUS MOOD

In reality, objectively speaking, moderate nervous emotions can accelerate the performance effects of pianists to some extent and help them to perform better. But some pianists show relatively serious nervous emotions in the process of performance and even cannot control their feelings, which lead to the circumstances that problems appear in on-site performance and influence the effects. So, why pianists show nervous emotions? The reasons are as follows.

### A. Gap Exists between Performance Level and Strength of Pianists

Piano performance tests not only memory and touch of performers but also performers' ability to deal with emotions, thinking innovation and visual and hearing level, and the skills

of performers to embody their abilities, so the reasons to decide performance effect are very complicated. During the training at ordinary times, if pianists neglect the correction of performing posture, which becomes nonstandard, it will appear the phenomenon that the muscles of forearms or wrists of performers will hurt and emit heat and muscles at these two places will be in a highly nervous state. If pianists meet tracks that are difficult to play or have fast rhythm when performing and their muscles at forearms and wrists are in nervous state, they will develop bad habits and show nervous emotions. If pianists are not very familiar with performance techniques or music tracks that they are not good at, they will also show certain nervous emotions. With the approach of formal performance, the nervous emotions will become increasingly strong. At last, if pianists do not practice performance level in training at ordinary times, make enough preparations before performance and conduct deep research on style and characteristics of music tracks, they will show extremely nervous mental state because of insufficient preparations and unskillful techniques in formal performance. In addition, there are quite a few audiences on the spot, so the pianists will be more nervous and finally the performance will end in failure.

#### *B. Pianists Do Not Have Powerful Psychological Quality*

Pianists are easy to show nervous emotions during the process of performance. One of the reasons is that they do not have powerful psychological quality. A foreign physiologist once did an experiment. He took a large number of animals as experimental specimens and drew the conclusion related to psychological quality, namely types of higher nervous activity of temperament. This physiologist also found that different biology has different state in conditioned reflex. The reason why this difference appears is that the structure of nerves that produce this excitability is different from that of nerves that restrain the process of excitation. The types of higher nervous activity mentioned above are formed by excitability and structure of high nerves. The conclusion reached by this physiologist shows that human beings are different. The reason is that genes forming cells are different. Piano performance is also the same. Different pianists show different behaviors, such as the degree of perseverance, continuity of attention, ability to control emotions, speed of performance and reaction ability. It is because the composition and function of nervous system of each people are different. There are diversified factors that decide this difference, such as excitability produced by nerve cell, basic characteristics of nervous system, flexibility, balance and intensity of structure that restrains the excitability of nervous system. Therefore, different pianists have different abilities to control emotions.

#### *C. Pianists Pay Excessive Attention to the Details in the Process of Performance, Namely Primacy Effect*

When people get to know about a thing, the first impression always enjoys popular support. Even though it appears new version or new information, people prefer the first impression on the thing. This is the primacy effect mentioned by people. Some pianists excessively pursue the details and perfect in performance. Before performance, they think they will have supernormal performance. Some of them even think they will be world-renowned after the performance. This

psychological hint does not help the performance but goes against the performance. They give certain mental stress to themselves and become too nervous in the process of performance.

#### *D. Pianist Are Always Influenced by Objective Factors Such as Environment*

Most pianists practice indoors. They are familiar with the environment and use piano used by them frequently and there are no noisy environment. It makes pianist get used to this environment. The mind and body of them will be relaxed in this environment. They only need to pay attention to emotions and techniques when playing music tracks. However, in formal piano performance, the environment is changed, such as the increase of space, different piano, height of music stool, lighting on the stage and state of audiences. The changes of these factors are serious challenges for pianists on physiology and psychology. When meeting this situation, some pianists that are easy to be influence by the environment often cannot control their emotions, show negative feelings in the process of performance, such as tension, and do not know how to begin, even make mistakes because of nervous feelings.

#### *E. Influence of Objective Factors*

Except for the above reasons, some pianists are diffident in their skills and performance. They are afraid of making mistakes in the performance and they fear that audiences will doubt their abilities. These will make pianists show excessively nervous emotions and influence normal level. Facing such cases, performers shall adjust their emotions to the best state. Secondly, if pianists have unsuccessful experience in performance in the past, they will show fearful even scared emotions when they perform on the stage again and appear the phenomenon that they fear to walk on the state or have poor performance. On the other hand, some female pianists will feel dizzy and their fingers will be rigid because of the weather and their physical conditions. These reasons will directly influence psychological emotions of pianists and make them too nervous.

### IV. HOW TO ADJUST NERVOUS EMOTIONS OF PIANISTS

#### *A. Reasonably Adjust Emotions and Continuous Carry out Psychological Hint*

To adjust nervous emotions, pianists need ceaseless psychological hint. Before performance, they need to train their mental emotions ceaselessly to ensure that they can get into the performance state fast. They can close the eyes and think that they are in the place where they practice at ordinary times, familiar piano, familiar environment and familiar people, and give psychological hints slowly to make preparations for formal performance. In formal performance, pianist should keep a usual mind. Because unexpected things will appear from time to time in the process of piano performance and the reasons are diversified, pianists do not need to pay too much attention to small things appearing in the performance caused by objective and subjective reasons. No matter how professional and civilized pianists are, they cannot guarantee their performance is perfect and will not appear any problem. For example, the famous pianist Horowitz often carries out

improvisation according to his ideas because he forgets the specific music scores. For pianists, small mistakes will not influence the whole concert. They should treat it seriously, actively adjust the mind. When nervous emotions appear, they can think their advantages, successful experience or happy things, do psychological hints that they can succeed and they shall not let negative emotions to affect them even the whole process of piano performance but use strong will to overcome nervous emotions and make their emotion reach the best state in the performance.

#### *B. Continuously Enhance Strength through Training and Make Preparations on Physical Power*

To eliminate nervous emotions, pianists can continuously enhance strength through training. Meanwhile, they shall make preparations on physical power. Firstly, before formal performance, they need to spend sufficient time to have a rest and guarantee sleep quality, so that they can concentrate on the training in the next day; secondly, they not only need to train techniques but also guarantee physical power through taking exercise properly to relieve nervous emotions; thirdly, in earlier stage of formal performance, they shall not spend full time in training but spare time for recreation and rest to relax themselves and keep good mental state. In order to improve strength in performance, pianists must ceaselessly train their skills. But unceasing training does not mean playing repeatedly, but continuously train and correct parts exerting force such as fingers, wrists and arms. Through good coordination of fingers, arms and wrists, they will be bound to perform works of high level.

#### *C. Rehearse before Formal Performance*

To eliminate nervous emotions, pianists can properly rehearse before formal performance, such as play before their relatives and friends. They can also rehearse in relatively empty place with fewer people. Besides, they can rehearse in performance area in advance, which can not only exercise their own skills but also eliminate nervous emotions. In this way, performers can fully integrate in the environment. They can fully experience true feelings contained by the works through playing, then they can present better performance style for audiences and show the best side to audiences as well as eliminate nervous feelings.

#### *D. Other Methods to Reduce Negative Emotions*

In earlier stage of formal performance, pianists can go to performance area to feel environment and atmosphere on the spot in person, know accidents that may appear on the scene through personal experience and take reasonable countermeasures and treatment measures for these accidents. Before walking on the stage, performers need to slowly adjust their breadth and frequency and shall not be excessively eager to play but make sufficient preparations, which play a significant role and meaning on relieving excessively nervous emotions. Pianists can keep moderate feeling of tension when performing because it can stimulate nerves to produce certain excitability and let performers actively get into the state.

## V. CONCLUSION

This article analyzes the reasons why pianists appear nervous mood: (1) Gap between performance level and strength of pianists; (2) Pianists do not have strong psychological quality; (3) Pianists excessively pursue details in the process of performance, namely primacy effect; (4) Influence of objective factors; and puts forward corresponding countermeasures: (1) Reasonably adjust the mood and continuously carry out psychological hint; (2) Continuously enhance strengths through training and make physical preparations; (3) Rehearse before formal performance; (4) Reduce negative emotions. Besides, pianists shall unceasingly train their playing level, improve personal cultivation, learn to control emotions and do not influence the state of mind because environment changes, so that they can reach the best state of performance.

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