

## *Original Paper*

# Study on the Emotional Expression and Playing Skills of Mozart's Piano Trio in B Flat Major

Zi Li<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Piano, Conservatory of Music, St. Paul University, Manila, Philippines

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### ***Abstract***

*This paper focuses on the study of the emotional expression and playing skills of Mozart's piano trio in B flat Major (K.502), aiming to deeply analyze the artistic connotation and performance practice of this classical music masterpiece. Mozart played a role in establishing the "template" in the piano trio music genre. In his creation, the three instruments in the piano trio were truly independent and unique, and the theme of the three voices began to resonate and depend on each other, one after another. He also established the three-movement pattern of piano trio writing and the musical structure of the first and last movements. Through the detailed analysis of the emotional level and performance skills of the work, it provides a more abundant understanding and deductive perspective for music scholars, performers and lovers. The purpose of this study is to systematically explore the ways of emotional expression and the subtleties of performance skills through literature review, music score analysis and field performance experiments. The research process integrates the multi-disciplinary methods of music theory, emotional psychology and performance practice. The conclusion is that Mozart's piano trio in B flat major not only shows his outstanding creative talent, but also provides a broad stage for players to show their personal emotional understanding and technical level.*

### ***Keywords***

*Mozart, Piano Trio in B flat major, Emotional expression, Playing skills*

### ***Introduction***

Piano trio, as a unique chamber music genre with a long history, has been developed and matured by many masters since its birth in the Baroque period. Among them, Mozart's piano trio in B flat Major (K.502) is undoubtedly a shining pearl in this field, and has become an important object of research for its profound emotional expression and exquisite playing skills.

Mozart, as a giant in the history of classical music, his creation involves a variety of musical genres,

and the piano trio is an important part of his music creation. K.502 This work not only shows the exquisite conception of Mozart's musical structure, but also through unique emotional expression, the three instruments - piano, violin and cello, closely linked together, and jointly deduces a moving musical picture.

In terms of emotional expression, K.502 shows Mozart's deep insight into inner emotions with its rich melodic lines and delicate harmonic treatment. The performer needs to present the emotional levels in the work one by one through precise touch keys and delicate power control, so that the audience can feel the waves in the composer's heart.

In terms of performance skills, this work puts forward extremely high requirements for players. It not only requires the performer to have solid solo skills, but also needs to achieve the perfect integration of instruments and personality display in the collaboration of the trio. The unique musical charm of K.502 is presented through the delicate balance of the voice and the tacit cooperation between the players. Therefore, the in-depth study on the emotional expression and playing skills of Mozart's piano trio in B flat major (K.502) is of great significance to the development of piano trio art.

### **1. Mozart Piano Trio Creation Background**

Mozart (1756-1791), the outstanding representative of the history of classical music, his creative career covered a variety of musical genres, among which the piano trio occupies a place. He left a total of eight piano trios, most of which are officially numbered. For example, the work KV496, composed in 1786, is the first piano trio in G major. In the same year, he also completed Piano Trio No. 2 in F Flat Major (KV498) and Piano Trio No. 3 in B flat Major (KV502). Then, in 1788, he produced the Piano Trio No. 4 in E Major (KV542), No. 5 in C Major (KV548) and No. 6 in G Major (KV564). Among these works, KV502, KV542 and KV548 are larger works in three movements, which show Mozart's unique artistic style in musical structure, emotional expression and playing technique. These works not only enrich the artistic expression of the piano trio, but also provide valuable creative inspiration and performance examples for later musicians.

Mozart's 1786 masterpiece KV502, Piano Trio No. 3 in B flat major, has a prominent place among his piano trio works and is still regularly performed in concerts today. The work was born at the height of Mozart's career, when his operas "The Theatre Manager" and "The Marriage of Figaro" were performed in Vienna and achieved great success. During this period, Mozart experienced the ups and downs of life, and his works integrated drama and melancholy feelings, which were sometimes hidden in his bright and cheerful melodies. KV502 marked the maturity of Mozart in the field of piano trio, breaking the traditional framework of accompanied clavicolor sonatas and rosettes, and cleverly integrating concerto elements. Previously, he composed numerous piano concertos, such as KV459, KV466, KV482 and KV488, whose technique brought new highlights to the piano trio: establishing the standard three-movement structure, demonstrating the virtuosity of the piano's colorful passages, and establishing the piano's central position in the trio.

For the piano trio, a unique chamber music form, its development process is continuous evolution and improvement. The performer should not only pay attention to the interpretation of the piece, but also deeply analyze the musical form structure, harmony and tone of the piece, so as to fully understand the composer's emotional expression and creation style, so as to more effectively convey the spiritual essence of the work. Through this in-depth analysis, the performer can interpret this classic more accurately.

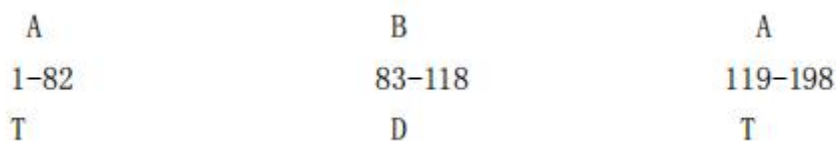
## 2. The Emotional Expression of Mozart's Piano Trio in B Flat Major

KV502, the Piano Trio No. 3 in B flat major, is a gem of Mozart's piano trio and is still frequently featured on the music stage today, becoming a highly respected chamber music classic. This work abandoned the structural instability common in previous works, followed Mozart's signature three-movement piano concerto structure, each movement follows his unique "fast-slow-fast" rhythm layout, as well as "bright-melancholy-bright" musical emotional trend and "bright-dimm-bright" color changes. These elements together constitute the unique style of Mozart's music.

In the first movement of KV502, Mozart adopted the sonata form, creating a warm and romantic atmosphere with a bright and cheerful allegro in four meter. The theme melody unfolds melodically in B flat major, and then changes in the dominant key, with the piano leading the melody and the violin singing in rotation. The melody fluctuates throughout the movement, showing the elegant charm. The second movement adopts the classical five-part cyclotron form, creating a quiet and far-reaching mood with the soft three-meter small broad plate. The main melody in E-flat major is combined with rich decorative notes, making the whole movement filled with a beautiful and holy atmosphere. As for the third movement, Mozart skillfully integrated the characteristics of rondo and sonata, presented in a cheerful and brilliant allegro to four meters, the power and tenderness co-present, the theme and the evolving development of B-flat major through the pursuit of piano and violin counterpoint, showing the exquisite musical charm.

### 2.1 The First Movement Allegro B Flat Major Sonata Form

The allegro in the first movement is a typical three-piece classical sonata form, presented in regular four-four beats. The musical form analysis diagram of this movement is as follows:



The musical composition consists of three main parts: exposition (bars 1-82, repeated once in its entirety), development (bars 83-118), and recapitulation (bars 119-198). In the early sonata form, the theme of exposition, as the core of the whole piece, highlights its importance through the repetition of the whole piece.

In the first movement, the piano leads the melody, the violin serves as the ornament, and the cello supports the harmonic texture with its simple and profound bass, which jointly creates a full and verve musical effect. The piano starts in B flat major and plays half a bar of the theme melody, the cello continues to play the tonic over the chord bass, and the violin responds to the piano with short motion-counterpoints to form tight phrases. This way of filling the gap of piano theme phrases by violin is widely used in the whole movement and becomes an important technique to promote the development of music.

In the theme, the piano part of the continuous tone is a major feature. In the process of harmonic progress, the bass part of the piano continues or repeats a harmonic bass, which not only enhances the stability of the chord, but also gives the space for harmonic change. From the 25th bar, the piano enters the fast colorful part, and the right hand high note area rapidly modulates. The violin and cello follow the piano melody to break down the chord and form a wonderful counterpoint, and the cello acts as the deep background music. In bar 36, the piano melody goes down to bar 39 and then goes up to triplet semitones, and then connects to the secondary melody in the key of F major. This chromatic connection is common in Mozart's works, which not only enhances the tendency of the chord, but also enhances the tension of the music, and plays a good transitional role in the development of the music.

The melody of the secondary part of the exposition section is transferred to the dominant key on the basis of the main part, and the overall melody style remains unchanged, ending in the key of F major. Entering the development section of bar 83, the music continues to show the tonality of the exposition section. It is performed with the gentle accompaniment of the piano and the main melody played by the violin, and the melody is soft and lyrical, contrasting with the theme melody. The cello melody also changes slightly, and briefly interacts with the violin melody in the high register supported by the piano bass octave chord, enriching the musical level.

After the piano and violin melodies answer and chase each other, the music returns to the theme melody. After the piano solo at the beginning of bar 102, the melody moved to c minor, and then to g minor in bar 111, and the composer gradually moved to the stable main key through unstable modulation, giving the music rich colors and tendencies. At bar 117, the piano's V-level chord signaled that it was about to enter the recapitulation.

## *2.2 Second Movement Small Largo in Cyclotron Form in E-flat Major*

The small platen in the second movement uses the classical five-part cyclotron form, which has a distinct dance quality, and its three-time rhythm brings out the beauty and delicacy of the melody of the slow movement. The movement is transferred to E flat major for interpretation, the piano and violin in the theme melody of the exquisite answer, so that the overlapping music in the ears of the audience many times. The newly inserted melodic passages inject inexhaustible impetus into the advancement of the music, and the whole movement slowly spreads out in the warm and beautiful melody until it welcomes the return of Allegro.

The classical pentagonal form originated in the second half of the 18th century, and differs from the

ancient cyclotron form in that the former form forms a more regular five-part structure of the ABACA, which is larger in size but less numerous than the ancient cyclotron form. In addition, a connecting section is added between the central and overlapping parts of the classical cyclotron form, and an epilogue is added at the end of the piece. In B and C, the scale of C is often larger than that of B, even reaching the climax of the music. In spite of this, the classical cyclotron form still retains a more traditional and regular character. The musical forms of the second movement are divided as follows:

A		B		A	C	A	Coda
1-20		25-36		37-56	57-84	85-100	101-111
20	4	12		20	28	16	11
T		D		T	S	T	

The use of the cyclotron form in the second movement, the Adagio, is rare, because the cyclotron form is often used in the final movement of the nature of singing and dancing, and the speed is fast. However, in this piano trio, the second movement is clever use of the classical circumflex form, so that the music unfolds in the subordinate key at the same time, showing a warm and implicit quality, less dark and melancholy. This treatment fully demonstrates Mozart's deep skills in controlling the singing adagio movement.

### 2.3 The Third Movement Allegro Minor in B Flat Major in Cyclotron Form

The Allegro in the third movement uses a rather unique form of the classical period, the cyclotron form. This is a new type of independent form structure which combines the characteristics of sonata form and cyclotron form. Although there are different names in the music form textbooks at home and abroad, some are called the sonata form, but from the perspective of noun interpretation and analysis of musical examples, they are all "the form based on the principle of playing".

The foundation of playing the cyclotron form is the cyclotron form, not the sonata form. The basic principles of cyclotron form include: the overlapping parts should appear more than three times, and the inserts between the two overlapping parts should have different contrast; Multiple occurrences of the overlapping part must be reproduced on the original tone; The intersections should follow the principle of long-distance growth, that is, the contrast between intersections and overlapping parts should be gradually expanded according to the needs of musical development.

A				B			A			Coda
MT	Re	ST	Re	MT	Re	Epi	MT	Re	ST	
1	19	33	67	80	100	108	145	163	177	214
16+2	14	34	14	20	8	38	16+2	14	37	28
T		D		T		S	T			

There is a common feature in tonality of both the vocal cyclotron form and the cyclotron sonata form: the main part and the secondary part of the exposition part do not appear in the same key, but the secondary part of the recapitulation part needs to be consistent with the main key. To distinguish the

two forms, the following two principles can be followed: on the one hand, the intonation of the exposition part of the cyclotron sonata form should be open, that is, the intonation of the end of the secondary part of the exposition part is not on the original key, but an open ending; On the other hand, the singing cyclotron form should retain the minimum characteristics of the cyclotron form, that is, the interposition should follow the principle of long distance growth.

### **3. Mozart's Piano Trio in B Flat Major Playing Techniques**

#### *3.1 The Timbre of Piano and String Instruments*

Mozart's piano music is famous for its pure and bright timbre, which resembles his childlike attitude towards life. His musical phrases are delicate and natural, and even if they are not significant in contrast, they contain rich timbre changes and intensity levels. Mozart excelled at conveying the fullest emotions with simple notes and pure timbre. In his light melody, we can feel a deep inner tension. In the interpretation of his works, we need to pay special attention to the playing strength and touching skills of each tone, a little neglect, it may lose the unique charm of Mozart's music.

When playing Mozart's piano repertoire, it is necessary to skillfully integrate arm and finger movements. Some passages may require the strength of the sinking arm to play a solid and rich sound, but more often, it is through the different ways of touching the keys to show a variety of timbre effects. In order to achieve the rich variety of timbre in Mozart's music, the player needs to constantly adjust the position of the finger keys: the fingertip keys create a clear and thin sound, while the fleshy part of the finger abdomen produces a soft and full sound. In addition, to perform different levels of force, the height of the finger touch key needs to change accordingly: high touch key brings a loud sound, while low touch key is more gentle. When playing Mozart's light and pure timbre, the touch points need to be very clear. At the same time, his music emphasizes playing skills that are both flexible and can maintain the continuity of palm power, so that when playing scales and arpeggios, you can feel the virtual-real transformation of timbre and the coherent flow of music.

In Mozart's music, the technique of linking takes two forms: one is to link notes together to form short sentences; The other is to use short lines to connect a small number of smooth sounds. In melodies connected by long lines, the player should touch the keys in a smooth way, as if the fingers are gently stroking the keys. The use of this connection is said to have been inspired by the violin bow method, which, due to its long bow, required frequent changes in the bow method to achieve flexible playing in order to maintain the coherence of the music.

In the first movement, the long line is used to repeat the theme melody. For example, the thematic melodic connection in bars 23-29 and 32-33 of the exposition melody is reproduced in bars 100-104 and 107-108 of the development, and in bars 139-145 and 148-149 of the representation; Similarly, the connecting melodies in bars 54-60, 63-64, 67-68 of the exposition are reproduced in bars 170-176, 183-184 of the representation. These melodic lines remain almost the same, with only a change in tone.

Music Example 1:



In the theme reproduced in the exposition of the first movement, as shown in Example 7, the piano part of the exposition of the first movement uses long lines to divide the phrase, especially in the descending decomposition of the chords similar to the color. The left hand is based on the root note of the octave chord, while the right hand needs to play the sound group quickly. At this time, the fingertips should be close to the meat pad, smoothly attached to the keys, and with the help of the solid support of the palm, the power can be transferred smoothly in the fingertips. This way of playing can make the notes sound consistent and smooth, like flowing water. In the second movement, in order to enhance the singing of the music, the use of long consonants is more frequent. In the repetitions of the roundabout form, such as bars 1-8, 18-19, 21-23, 37-42, 45-52, 54-55, 85-95, and 101-109, the long connection is repeated several times. In addition, long articulation techniques are used extensively in bars 32-36 of B, and bars 74-76, 77, 79, and 81-84 of B.

Music Example 2:



In the first reappearance of the second movement's repetitions, long connections of single sentences are common in Mozart's piano trio in B flat major, especially in the slow movement, where they show the beauty of the short sentences but the continuous flow of the melody. When playing the phrases of the slow movement, the key touch should be more slow and straight than the allegretto. It is also necessary

to play the key slowly with the soft finger pad, and the finger tip is close to the meat pad to enhance the sense of adhesion between notes. At the same time, the arm moves naturally to ensure the smooth transfer of palm power between fingers.

In the third movement, the music is light and grainy, and the use of long lines includes bars 2-11, 15-20, 31-32, 40-48, 50-53, 56, 63-66 of the exposition, which are fully reproduced in the recapitulation. Another typical consonant in Mozart's music is a smooth tone connected by short connections, which conveys an air of urbanity. The notes connected by this small wire are usually few, more than three notes are rare, and are usually used between two notes. When playing, a slightly shorter and gentle touch should be used on the last note, and if the two notes have the same or similar value, the first note can be slightly emphasized. This kind of circular sound with small connections occurs frequently in Mozart's piano trio in B flat major.

Music Example 3:



In the second movement, as shown in bar 2 of Example 4, the chords in the piano's treble section often pass through short lines. These short connecting notes continue the first note of the next beat in the second half, forming a regular mold down and down, like a stream layer by layer, adding decorative flowers to the main melody of the violin, making the music more diversified. When playing such short connected notes, it is necessary to break the conventional rhythm concept, slightly emphasize the beginning note of the short connected note, gradually weaken the end note of the connected note, and play with the finger keys, the palm is firmly supported, the fingertip movements are divided according to the short connected note, and the volume decreases with the mold, so as to accurately show the musical effect of Mozart's short connected notes.

Music Example 4:





### 3.2 String Instrument Timbre Playing Skills

There are significant differences between string instruments and keyboard instruments in performance characteristics, and the pitch of string instruments needs to be adjusted artificially, and most of them use the main tone style, so intonation is very important for string instruments. Although Mozart's works seem simple, lack of flashy technique and complex rhythm, but the simple melody lines and regular phrases put forward higher requirements for intonation and timbre. In the piano trio, violin and cello have a lot in common, so they are collectively referred to as string instruments for a brief analysis.

The intonation training of the string is very important, both the mastery of the bowstring contact point and the positioning of the fingers on the string must be accurate. In view of the fact that the piano is the main instrument in a piano trio and is a twelve-meter instrument, the intonation is fixed in the performance of chords and intervals, and the string instrument should closely match the intonation of the piano, especially when it is used as an accompaniment. The violin and cello should not only be consistent with the intonation of the piano, but also make internal self-adjustment to clarify the role they play in the chord, whether it is the root note or the layer note. Pay attention to every detail to present the best musical effect.

Music Example 5:



In the development of the third movement, the above example shows the transition from the connecting section to the development section. The connecting section is stated in the main key through the piano's triplet scale, and then the piano suddenly switches to the subordinate key development in the bar

transition. For string instruments, this modulation is not aural, but from the third bar of the example, the music clearly enters a new tone. Since the piano plays the role of bass accompaniment after tuning, the intonation of string instruments is particularly important. When the cello and the piano enter the chord tone at the same time, it is necessary to ensure that the intonation is completely consistent, so that the violin main melody can be smoothly integrated into the new tone. If the string fails to accurately grasp the intonation during modulation, it will have a serious impact on the overall musical effect.

### *3.3 The Volume and Force of the Three Instruments Match Each other*

In Mozart's piano trio manuscripts, force marks are used only in rare cases. How to more accurately represent the dynamic changes and playing forces of Mozart's era has become a central challenge in the study of piano trio playing techniques. In particular, in Mozart's piano works, it is more common to use soft (p) and strong (f) as force marks, while contrasting force marks such as very soft (pp) or very strong (ff) are rare. Even if the p and f marks appear infrequently in the manuscript, the delicate musical quality of Mozart's works still requires a deep understanding of the context of its time and the subtle changes in its handling of forces.

Mozart lived in the era, the keyboard instrument was in the transition stage from the clavichord to the modern piano. The clavichord's hammer was wrapped in leather instead of the felt pads used in modern pianos, and the strings were relatively thin, resulting in a bright, overtone rich sound. However, due to the delicate construction of the instrument and the slender strings, its volume is relatively "soft", between the volume of the harpsichord and the modern piano, marking a stage in the transition from the dynamic style of Baroque music to the era of Beethoven. When performing Mozart's works, special attention should be paid to restoring the volume and timbre characteristics of this particular period. At the same time, whether playing the violin or the cello, Mozart's music is deeply imprinted with the unique mark of the era.

Music Example 6:



Example 6 shows the recapitulation of the exposition of the third movement, which adds decorative variations to the original material and introduces a distinct contrast melody pattern, becoming the most intensive part of the score. After the main melody of the piano solo, the violin enters the third bar, the strings and the piano accompaniment cooperate, and the harmonic texture and volume intensity form a sharp contrast with the piano solo, creating a cheerful and brilliant atmosphere. Starting from the 7th bar, the violin and the piano repeat the counterpoint melody mode four times, in each mode, after the violin plays strongly, the piano responds with weak play, until the last mode, the violin turns to weak play (p), and the cello and piano play strongly in octaves, subtly pushing the music to the climax.

When playing this piece, subtle differences in intensity and volume need to be carefully captured. Although only two kinds of strength are marked p and f, when repeating the mold, the overall musical line should be dominated, and the strength should be increased step by step to accumulate momentum for the musical climax. In Mozart's score, even if there is no explicit force mark, its melody itself contains rich force expression clues, which guides the performer to interpret the work with appropriate emotions.

#### 4. Conclusion

Mozart Piano Trio in B-flat major, K.502 This musical work is one of the best etudes for piano music learners, and it is also a very classic chamber music work. Due to the limitation of space, it is impossible to analyze more details of the emotional expression and playing technique of this musical work in more detail. In the process of practicing playing, through the change of music rhythm, I deeply appreciate the unique artistic appeal of this music work. In the future study, I will practice repeatedly to feel the emotional connotation and playing skills of this musical work from multiple angles.

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