

# Aesthetic Construction of Music Auditory Cognition

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**Abstract:** *Aesthetic consciousness plays an unignorable role in the aesthetic relation constituted by auditory subject and acoustic object. Aesthetic consciousness as important component of psychology of hearing is contained in the sound construction from beginning to end. By analyzing the existence of aesthetic consciousness and its active role, the acquisition of aesthetic cognition and the cultivation of aesthetic cognition, this article reveals that the aesthetic construction of music auditory cognition is the infinite power to promote the development and perfection of hearing.*

**Keywords:** *Aesthetic consciousness, Acquisition, Cultivation*

## 1. Introduction

Occurrence and development of art lies in the pursuit of aesthetic pleasure. Three links in the practice of the art of music -- creation, performance and appreciation, are all home to "aesthetics". The music as art of audition determines that the auditory aesthetics appeal to necessity of acoustic form on account of the particularity of its own materials.

Auditory cognitive ability of music develops and improves in long-term practical activity. From simple pitch, perception of rhythm to complex melody, varied harmony and free application of abundant timbre, the auditory cognition has gone through a series of qualitative changes of "memory-representation- internalization of external hearing - formation of inner audition". In that process, at seemingly basic equal performance operation technology level, why is someone's audition is accurate and delicate? Why is someone opposite? What is the power on earth leading to progress of musical audition and being meticulous and acute?

## 2. Dynamic Role of Aesthetic Consciousness

In the music aesthetic process, the subject's mastery of work's trend and structure, affection resting on works, and experience of deep meaning are based on the perception of acoustic form. "The acoustic form of music is not only perceived by human auditory receptors with matter motion of sound waves as external form, but also exists as a kind of externalized form of musical psychological emotion image."<sup>[1]</sup> So to speak, acoustic form is deemed the carrier of emotional image and aesthetic embodiment of integrating "aesthetic perception", rather than pure aggregation of musical trend and fragmented sound phenomena after stripping of emotion. In *Four Lectures on Aesthetics*, Mr. Li Zehou ever pointed out that: "the broadest aesthetic perception is aesthetic consciousness or aesthetic psychology."<sup>[2]</sup> Aesthetic psychology is the unity of many various psychological factors, including attention, perception, association, imagination, emotion, understanding, etc., while the aesthetic consciousness of music is just the complex constituted by internal psychological factors, including feeling, perception, association, imagination, thinking, judgment, will, mood, etc. As you see, the aesthetic consciousness is treated as important component of music psychology of hearing, and its development can't be ignored in the aesthetic relations constituted by the auditory subject and the acoustic form.

As the broadest aesthetic perception, the aesthetic consciousness covers all aspects of beauty of music. From the macro perspective, the ideal, concept, interest and attitude hidden in aesthetic consciousness would indirectly act on the cognition of subject and affect the subject's style tendency to creation and performance as well as the attention orientation of different acoustic forms. From the microscopic perspective, the aesthetic consciousness permeates in the performance of every musical note. Taking pitch as an example, Evaluation criteria of pitch by human ear definitely not only depends on vibration frequency, etc. The establishment of pitch concept is inseparable from the combined action of timbre and sound volume. We know that the subtle change of timbre or sound volume would affect the accuracy of pitch, and the intonation would further affect the timbre. The adjustment and control of timbre, sound

volume and intonation is just the external manifestation that subject goes through mental activities including feeling, perception, association, imagination, consideration, judgment, etc. and is the direct result that aesthetic consciousness plays a role.

The auditory thinking is applied and plays an integrated role and the auditory “perception” would rise to “cognition” on account of the aesthetic consciousness. There isn't pure auditory cognition or aesthetic consciousness. They occur and act on the internal operation of psychology of hearing at the same time. “Aesthetic activity isn't equal to cognitive activity, but aesthetic activity can't do without cognitive activity, and cognitive activity treats aesthetic activity as one of its foundations.”<sup>[3]</sup> Of course, certain degree of aesthetic activity would exist in the cognitive activity. Cognition and aesthetics are a pair of unity, and are indivisible due to “you have me and I have you”. On the one hand, basic auditory cognitive ability is the premise and foundation of aesthetics, and its level determines the aesthetic level; On the other hand, aesthetics makes auditory cognitive object-- acoustic form obtain the activation mechanism of vitality.

In the sound construction activity, dynamic role of aesthetic consciousness results in active psychology of hearing. The initiative of aesthetic consciousness is deemed the leading factor of auditory cognition and the sufficient and effective motivation of promoting comprehensive development of musical audition. Auditory cognition of acoustic form is “aesthetic cognition”. Like skills, acquisition of music auditory aesthetic cognition is directly from the construction process of acoustic form.

The formation and deepening of aesthetic feeling is related to both the image of the object and the essential power of the subject. Only when the object image that can cause aesthetic feeling is unified with the essential power of the subject, the subject can deepen step by step in the aesthetic activity and enter the profound aesthetic artistic conception. Here, the sound form is undoubtedly an object image that can cause beauty, while the "essential power of the subject" is on the one hand an innate aesthetic instinct, but more importantly, in the field of music, it is the power of auditory perception - memory - imagination - thinking, which is the result of acquired learning. Only by paying attention to the cultivation of aesthetic perception, the "essential power" will continue to improve, and the creation of sound form can enter a profound aesthetic mood.

### 3. Acquisition of Auditory Aesthetic Cognition

Sound construction belongs to creative activity to objectify the aesthetic consciousness of subject. Acoustic organizing ability is gradually acquired in the repeated training of acoustic operation, and subject must rely on the external auditory stimulus resulting from action operation to perceive sound. The operation of instrument or human voice becomes the premise to collaborate auditory perception and aesthetic consciousness.

Taking stringed instrument as an example, stringed instrument is relatively complex in operation. Such instrument has no obvious pitch position, and the force and speed of bow and string friction would directly affect the timbre and intonation. In the technique learning of fingering and bowing, beginners recognize the pitch and control the bow pressure and bow speed via repeated correction of “instrumental pronunciation- external auditory judgment- pronunciation adjustment- feedback of external hearing”. As a result, the auditory “judgment-feedback” originates from aesthetic consciousness, rather than audition.

The aesthetic consciousness of music is deemed as a kind of subjective ability and essential power of human, and human subjective factors play decisive role, they are not imaginary, and the aesthetic standard is crucial to the generation of aesthetic perception. In the sound construction process, the aesthetic standard, as human subjective factor, is used to balance scale of acoustic object. Actual aesthetic standard of beginners is mainly affected by music appreciation activity, isn't mature, is restricted by technology level, and shall rely on guidance of teacher. Under the guidance of aesthetic standard, auditory “judgment-feedback” effect can proceed, and the essence of “judgment-feedback” presents various psychological factors activities of aesthetic consciousness. Under the domination of aesthetic consciousness, the pitch relations and timbre becomes accurate from inaccurate, and becomes mellow from dry. When auditory perception is highly consistent with aesthetic consciousness, the auditory “judgment-feedback” process would be highly summarized. High summarization of many psychological factors of aesthetic consciousness is essential to its own development.

So do various other musical instruments, and percussion instrument is no exception. For example, although piano has fixed pitch position, but the same pitch would generate great timbre difference at different states of touch key. From the perspective of hammered string, when the string sound's initial

vibration process is relatively long, and attenuation process is relatively short, the sound head would be mellow and timbre would be soft; When the string sound's initial vibration process is relatively short, and attenuation process is relatively long, the pronunciation would be powerful and sonorous upon strong performance, and the pronunciation is clear and elastic upon weak performance. It is easy to see that different key touch methods would bring various aesthetic effects, and the aesthetic cognition to different timbres is also acquired in the auditory “judgment-feedback”.

To be specific, when subject joins certain operation in person, the aesthetic consciousness occurs, which is the first development stage of aesthetic consciousness. Repeated “judgment-feedback” causes the aesthetic consciousness internalizes in the psychology of hearing structure, rather than rely on external acoustic stimulus. Prediction and imagination of aesthetic effect of acoustic form based on auditory presentation is the second development stage of aesthetic consciousness. Perception to beauty of meaning is the third development stage of aesthetic consciousness. The beauty of meaning of work surpasses the beauty of acoustic form and is the supreme realm pursued by music aesthetic practice. Such superlative aesthetic ability of “pleasing will and god” is completely the product of spiritual realm, but it is the aesthetic activity established on the basis of acoustic form after all. Facts prove that a pair of “untuned ears” can't perceive the sense of sublimity in grand movement at all events.

Three acquisition stages of acoustic aesthetic cognition aren't isolated. On the contract, they are interpenetrative and complement each other. The sound construction activity with aesthetic consciousness objectification is essential to acquiring the auditory aesthetic cognition. The construction of psychology of hearing is invigorated only by intensifying the cultivation of aesthetic consciousness.

#### 4. Cultivation of Auditory Aesthetic Cognition

Acquisition process of acoustic aesthetic cognition reveals its own cultivability. When aesthetic consciousness permeates into the performance of every musical note, how do we cultivate it? Musical elements present common side, but fleeting acoustic form causes the music owns various personalities more. So to speak, the ideal training paradigm is endless. Every professional music educator has respective training strategy. Finding problem in concrete phenomenon of practice and implementing correct training concept in professional music teaching is the feasible approach to promote the comprehensive development of musical audition.

The occurrence and development of auditory aesthetic cognition affirms the promoting effect of auditory progress by aesthetic consciousness, therefore, meticulous depiction of acoustic form and implementation of “aesthetic cognition” concept throughout teaching shall come first. However, in instrumental music learning, many teachers often overlook that, and only focus on the technical training of machine relying on vision. They would demonstrate for students, teach students the training method, offer students prompts at the part of music needing presentation, such as light tone, stress, strong stress, mute, etc., and attribute the poor performance of students to musical aptitude. Such teaching method leads to the following consequences: eyes and fingers replace ears; music score and musical instrument replace audition. In the aesthetic relations that sound appeals to audition, the audition of aesthetic subject presents strong initiative, but such teaching method causes the audition becomes passive attachment, and musical aptitude can't be stimulated and revealed.

We know only when audition gives play to maximum initiative, the musical expression would tend to be perfect. Teacher shall consciously cultivate students' ability in proactive “aesthetics” because the process of “aesthetics” is the process of feeling, judgment, comparison, selection and imagination. Only starting from the perspective of “aesthetics”, students' auditory cognitive ability can be developed to the greatest extent.

Many professional teachers often complain students are poor in audition, just because those students don't cultivate the habit of proactive “aesthetics” in daily professional training. On the contrary, they establish their cognition of musical note on the basis of finger motion. As time passes, the lagging hearing level would severely impede the development of performance or singing level.

When mentioning the importance of inner audition, one piano teacher ever based on deep experience pointed out that: what's the secret to guide performance with hearing? When tone sounds good, melody is correct and intensity is controlled correctly, I know students' internal hearing plays a role. In fact, music only changes a little. When these or those timbres disappear, the specific internal hearing is probably lacked. When a fierce section comes, the hearing problems may be equal to technology problems. If the sound is very good, the technology is inevitably correct. Therefore, the sound effect shall be emphasized

all the time, then come to technology. The author thinks that from another perspective such simple statement describes that audition and aesthetics are integrated, only when the "aesthetics" consciousness is injected into "audition" or the progress of "audition" is promoted in "aesthetics", the interaction of "auditory aesthetics" and "aesthetic audition" can manifest the auditory cognition ability internalized in the auditory presentation.

Experience certifies that students' audition quality could be roughly divided into the following three conditions: good specialty and audition; general specialty and audition; poor specialty and audition. If student is suitable for the major learning, the condition of poor specialty and good audition or poor audition and good specialty is rare. Visibly, the creation level of beauty of acoustic form is closely related to the development of audition, and abundant auditory aesthetic ability can promote the auditory progress, and good audition would react upon the creation of beauty.

It is worth emphasizing that while technology is growing, the growth of aesthetic consciousness is a phenomenon that is often overlooked. Technology and aesthetics are not completely separate opposites, and it is wrong to think that we should learn technology first and then pursue beauty. Aesthetics is not a "halo" attached to technology, it permeates all aspects of sound cognition. The relationship among technology, hearing and aesthetics is inseparable. Simply speaking, music operational technology is the carrier to realize the sound form, the operation of the sound form is the most direct way to cultivate the auditory cognition, and the auditory judgment of the sound stimulus is the external manifestation of aesthetic psychological activities. The more delicate the aesthetic judgment of hearing, the more comprehensive the breadth and depth of hearing, the more refined the technical requirements, and the performance of music will be perfect.

## 5. Conclusion

Music is different from other arts. Painting, sculpture, architecture all have visible and perceptible physical form. However, music is not like this and its "physical" form is a flowing sound. It is difficult to grasp the perceptual image of sound form, and in the face of its fleeting, "perception" has become an important starting point of the whole cognitive activity. The coordination of melody formed by horizontal progression, the harmony formed by vertical combination, the polyphony formed in vertical and horizontal relationship, as well as the various rhythm forms symbiotic with the pitch, and different vocal tones and other elements can not be separated from the perception of the whole sound. "Perception" is sensory-perception, of which perception emphasizes "the reflection of the overall properties of the objective things that directly act on the senses at present". But "sensing" is only the initial state of mental activity, only a certain force participates in it, the perception of the whole sound can realize its original meaning.

To sum up, the "force" involved is the aesthetic consciousness, which makes "listening" an active and positive reconstruction process in the listener's mind. The quality of music hearing lies in the completeness of the construction of auditory psychology, which is inseparable from the aesthetic consciousness throughout. The perceptual set formed by the sound form to a certain mental mode generated by the repeated stimulation of the auditory analyser is manifested as the auditory subject perceiving the sound by relying on the external auditory stimulus triggered by the action operation. Such operation becomes the premise for the occurrence and development of aesthetic consciousness and the coordination of auditory perception and aesthetic consciousness.

Aesthetic consciousness plays an unignorable role in the aesthetic relation constituted by auditory subject and acoustic object. High-quality auditory thinking quality is closely related to the construction of aesthetic consciousness certainly. Aesthetic consciousness as important component of psychology of hearing is contained in the sound construction from beginning to end. The existence of auditory aesthetic cognition reminds us that: the cultivation of its acquisition process shall be concerned because the aesthetic construction of auditory cognition is the infinite power to promote the development and improvement of musical audition.

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