

# *On the Application and Training Methods of Breath in Guzheng Performance*

Jia Jiangli

*Conservatory of Music of Shanxi University, Taiyuan, Shanxi, 030006, China*

**Keywords:** Guzheng, National instruments, Breath application, Training method

**Abstract:** Breath has an important influence on the expressiveness of Guzheng performance. In Guzheng performance, players should properly use the breath according to the performance characteristics, the theme style and musical form structure of the music of Guzheng, so as to improve the expressiveness of Guzheng music. This paper analyzes the application and training methods of breath in Guzheng performance, aiming to help Guzheng players pay attention to breath and use it scientifically in performance.

## 1. Introduction

Guzheng belongs to Chinese traditional plucked musical instrument, its birth and development, performance form and aesthetic characteristics contain a strong cultural connotation of Chinese folk music. Charm is one of the aesthetic characteristics of Guzheng performance, and the use of performer's breath is directly related to the charm of Guzheng music. Therefore, starting with the relationship between breath and charm, this paper discusses the application of breath in Guzheng players, and discusses the methods of daily breath training from the perspective of training.

## 2. Application of Breath in Guzheng Performance

### 2.1 Overall Application

In the performance of guzheng, from the breathing of a single phrase to the charm of the whole music, the performer is required to properly use the breath<sup>[1]</sup>. In the performance of guzheng, the breath of the performer and the division of musical phrases, the trend of melody, the level of voice part and the rhythm of rhythm complement each other. Generally speaking, playing lyrical and soft phrases (paragraphs) requires the player's calm and coherent breath; playing passionate and fast phrases (paragraphs) requires the player's short and elastic breath; playing magnificent phrases (passages) requires the player's calm breath.

### 2.2 Synergy of "Qi" and "Force"

The biggest difference between instrumental music and vocal music is that the vocal body of instrumental music is the instrument, while the vocal body of vocal music is the human vocal cord. Vocal music uses voice to sound, and breath is the basis of vocal cord sound, so it requires singers to master scientific breathing methods. Instrumental music uses musical instruments to sound.

Although it does not emphasize the player's mastery of scientific breathing methods, it emphasizes the coordination between the player's breath and body movements. The "breath" here emphasizes the coordination of "Qi" and "force" [2]. Based on the above analysis, in the performance of guzheng, the performer needs to pay attention to the coordination of breathing and body movements in order to make good use of breath. The simplest method is to adjust the order, depth and frequency of breathing according to the expression marks in the music score, as well as the signs of continuous, slow, fast, strong and weak. Then, driven by breathing, adjust the contraction state of body parts related to performance, especially the muscles of arm and palm, so as to make the muscles of these parts produce different strength, and then make the zither music produce different pitch and timbre. Players should pay attention to the fact that when adjusting body movements, they should be natural and relaxed.

### **2.3 Breath Support**

Usually, the player's Qi is directly proportional to the stability of the performance. Therefore, the performer should get enough breath as much as possible according to the needs of the phrase (paragraph). For example, when playing passionate, fast and strong phrases (paragraphs), inhale before playing and breathe after playing. In this way, a large amount of breath can be left in the body, providing support for the rapid and powerful force of arms and hands, and making the music solid and powerful. While playing lyrical, slow and stressed phrases (paragraphs), the breath is the opposite.

### **2.4 Coherence of Breath**

In the performance of guzheng, the continuity of the player's breath is reflected in the continuity of the breath when playing the whole song. In the performance of guzheng, all the actions of the player have continuity, that is, they are the movement form in the process of time flow [3]. The characteristic of time flow endows the player with the fluidity of performance action, and requires the player to achieve breath penetration when playing the whole music, so as to ensure and improve the integrity of the music. In order to achieve this goal, first, the performer is required to perform the finger movements accurately, then achieve the cooperation of the movements, force and tightness of various parts of the body, and finally enhance the overall awareness and structural awareness to analyze and grasp the music from the perspective of the whole and structure.

## **3. Training of Guzheng Playing Breath**

Because of the important influence of breath on the performance and appeal of Guzheng music, players should strengthen the training of breath application in daily training.

### **3.1 Performance Posture Training**

Smooth breath is the basic premise of breath application. In Guzheng performance, the correct posture of the player is the premise of smooth breath. Before special breath training, players should first pay attention to the correctness of playing posture. The correct playing posture is: sit on the piano bench stably, and the string surface is flush with the waist; sit up and relax your upper body; bend your legs naturally. The correct posture should be: sit steadily on the piano stool, and the string surface should be flush with the waist; sit upright and relax with your upper body; bend your legs naturally. The correct playing posture can fully open the chest and abdominal cavity and ensure the smooth flow of breath in the player's body.

### 3.2 Breathing Method Training

Strengthening the breathing method training aims to improve the ability to control the order, depth and frequency of breathing and improve the flexibility of breathing. In daily training, it is suggested that players strengthen the following breathing methods training.

(1) Basic breathing method. Including slow breathing, slow breathing and fast breathing. The simple way to practice the slow breathing and slow breathing method is to imagine your breathing action of smelling the fragrance of flowers, inhale slowly, and then exhale slowly. A simple way to practice fast breathing and fast breathing is to imitate the breathing action of “dog panting”, inhale quickly, and then exhale at a high frequency. (2) Percussion breathing. Adjust the breathing sequence and rhythm at different stages of finger touching (hitting) the string. Initial sound stage-inhalation; preparation stage of touching (striking) string-hold your breath; about to touch (strike) the string stage-start exhaling; touch (strike) chord stage-full exhalation. The speed of touching the string determines the speed of exhalation. (3) Double breathing. Deep inhalation → limit inhalation → hold for 5 seconds → deep exhalation. (4) Breathing in special cases. Inhale slowly for 3 seconds, hold your breath for 2 seconds, and exhale slowly for 6 seconds. The exhalation time is twice as long as the inhalation time, which helps to enhance the continuity of the player's breath.

Training steps: (1) prepare the correct playing posture, relax the body naturally, and experience the relaxation feeling of shoulders, arms, elbows and fingers. (2) When the player hears the first sound of the phrase, he should inhale, raise his arms and wrists, and then exhale, and drop his arms and wrists. Use the basic breathing method to breathe, inhale and exhale slowly, close the abdomen, and feel the fluctuation of abdominal and lumbar muscles. (3) At the beginning of playing, the percussion breathing method is the main breathing method, which drives the movement of arms, palms and fingers through breathing, and tries to coordinate the breathing with the limb movements during playing<sup>[4]</sup>. Hold your breath, drop your hand, put the string, inhale, lift your hand, play the string, and practice in a circle. When practicing, hold your breath and lower your hand. When you put the string, you can exhale properly. (4) At the end of the sentence, use the basic breathing method, breathe slowly and breathe slowly, so that the breathing drives the tension of the muscles of the body gradually relax.

Before practice, the performer can sing the melody on the music score softly to understand the melody's cadence and intensity in advance, and then make psychological preparations for breathing adjustment<sup>[5]</sup>.

### 4. Conclusion

Breath is very important in Guzheng performance. The performer's proper use of breath can significantly improve the expressiveness and appeal of Guzheng music. It is believed that in daily training, players first carry out performance posture training, and then carry out breathing method training. In breathing method training, players should carefully understand the impact of breathing changes on muscle tension in various parts of the body, so that breathing can help the body to complete various playing movements.

### References

- [1] Huang Yaxing. Discussion on the methods of grasping the breath in zither performance[J]. Northern music, 2019,39(13):66, 69
- [2] Wang Yanyun. Study on the grasp of breath in zither performance[J]. Chinese information, 2018(10):296
- [3] Wang Xiaoxiao. How to improve the musical expression of zither performance [J]. Voice of the Yellow River,

2021(10):104-106

[4] Yang Qi. *Inheritance and development of contemporary zither playing methods* [J]. *Art review*, 2021(11):47-48

[5] Yang Hong. *Analysis on the practical application of expressiveness in Guzheng performance*[J]. *Musical instruments*, 2019(1):38-41