

Estrategias para mejorar la técnica de estudio de los alumnos de violonchelo de la Facultad de Música de la UANL

*Strategies to Improve the Study Technique of the Students of Violonchelo of
the Faculty of Music of the UANL*

*Estratégias para melhorar a técnica de estudo de estudantes de violoncelo
da Escola de Música da UANL*

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Resumen

La técnica de estudio es un elemento básico en la práctica de la música y tiene características específicas cuando de instrumentos de cuerda se trata. En este artículo de investigación se abordan diferentes estrategias para fortalecer dicha técnica y otras más para resolver los problemas a los que se enfrentan en su práctica diaria los alumnos de la clase de violonchelo de la Facultad de Música de la Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León (UANL).

Para esta investigación se utilizó el diseño de la teoría fundamentada. Y sobre la base de este se utilizó la técnica Delphi con un panel de 20 expertos de diferentes instituciones de enseñanza superior y conservatorios nacionales y extranjeros. Como resultado se logró un estudio descriptivo y analítico para abordar las diferentes estrategias utilizadas a través de la práctica docente para la mejora de la técnica de estudio musical. Cabe añadir que, dentro del

proceso de diseño sistemático, se utilizó la codificación abierta, donde las categorías se basaron en los datos recolectados de las entrevistas.

Los resultados arrojaron que el alumno deberá saber qué aspecto de su ejecución desea mejorar antes de iniciar su secuencia de repeticiones. Asimismo, deberá encontrar un lugar apropiado para realizar esta actividad y ser constantes para obtener óptimos resultados.

Palabras clave: clase de violonchelo, ejecución instrumental, estrategias pedagógicas, técnica de estudio.

Abstract

The study technique is a basic element in music practice and has specific characteristics when it comes to string instruments. This research paper addresses different strategies that will serve to strengthen the technique and how to address the problems faced by students of the cello class at the School of Music of the Autonomous University of Nuevo Leon (AUNL) in their daily practice. For this research the design of the grounded theory was used. And based on this design, the Delphi technique was used with a panel of 20 experts from different institutions of higher education and national and foreign conservatories. As a result a descriptive and analytical study was achieved to address the different strategies used through the teaching practice to improve the technique. Within the systematic design process, open coding was used where the categories were based on the data collected from the interviews.

The results showed that the students should know what aspect of their performance they want to improve before starting their sequence of repetitions. They must also find a suitable place for their daily practice and be constant to obtain optimal results.

Keywords: study technique, pedagogical strategies, cello class, instrumental performance.

Resumo

A técnica de estudo é um elemento básico na prática da música e possui características específicas quando se trata de instrumentos de cordas. Este artigo de pesquisa aborda diferentes estratégias para fortalecer esta técnica e outras para solucionar os problemas enfrentados em sua prática diária pelos alunos da aula de violoncelo da Escola de Música da Universidade Autónoma de Nuevo León (UANL).).

Para esta investigação, o desenho da teoria fundamentada foi utilizado. E com base nisso, a técnica Delphi foi usada com um painel de 20 especialistas de diferentes instituições de ensino superior e conservatórios nacionais e estrangeiros. Como resultado, um estudo descritivo e analítico foi realizado para abordar as diferentes estratégias utilizadas por meio da prática docente para aprimorar a técnica de estudo musical. Deve-se acrescentar que, dentro do processo sistemático de design, foi utilizada a codificação aberta, onde as categorias foram baseadas nos dados coletados nas entrevistas.

Os resultados mostraram que o aluno deve saber qual aspecto de seu desempenho ele quer melhorar antes de iniciar sua sequência de repetições. Além disso, você deve encontrar um local apropriado para realizar essa atividade e ser constante para obter os melhores resultados.

Palavras-chave: aula de violoncelo, performance instrumental, estratégias pedagógicas, técnica de estudo.

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Introduction

One of the most constant questions asked by students who have decided to learn to play the cello is how to improve their study technique to optimize the results of their performances. But it is not a unilateral concern, since courses are held worldwide for cello teachers where these topics are discussed, among others: without a doubt, proof that this is not a minor issue.

In Latin America there has been an exponential growth of both students and teachers, which has meant a development at the level of performers. Particularly in Mexico, the proliferation of new professional and educational orchestras increasingly emphasizes the importance of the study technique.

"One of the most important tasks of the teacher is to teach the student to study, since it depends on this that he can correctly follow the instructions of the classes and obtain the results that are expected" (Barrón, 2009, p.121)

The path of preparation as a cello professional at the Autonomous University of Nuevo Leon (UANL) is very long, since to reach the bachelor's level, the student must have previously passed a technical level of 6 semesters and ideally another elementary level of 10 semesters. . This is: at least a total of 13 years to graduate as a Bachelor of Music with Accentuation in Violoncello at the School of Music of that university.

The cello class has a duration of one hour per week at the undergraduate level and half an hour at the elementary and technical level. Between one class and another the student must, with the instructions of his teacher, face only his study to achieve the objectives set.

At the beginning of their preparation most of the students perform their practice with greater emphasis on the amount of time than on quality, so the teacher should be channeling the learner over the years to have a more effective study and so on. achieve better results in less time. "Taking three minutes to think about your study before you start is more valuable than spending three hours repeating without meaning" (García, 2017, p.127).

Effectively, repetition is the basis of any learning. But what movement has to be repeated, in what form and how many times are some of the questions that the teacher should clarify in the classroom. "Through repetitions full of meaning and linked to a clear aspect, the comprehensive practice of behavior applied to practice with specific objectives also emerges" (Mantel, 2010, p. 239).

There are many occasions in which the student comes to present the work commissioned for a whole week with a poor result. In addition, when an erroneous study is carried out, instead of improving execution, it strengthens errors and even creates new ones. Here once again the teacher must intervene and guide the student towards an effective practice.

The student has to learn to work for himself, he can not limit himself to imitate and reproduce the teacher. At the beginning it will fall into many errors, but this is much better than the teacher giving it all done, since it atrophies his own imagination and the will in the exercise of it (Bernal, 2009, p. 66).

This is why this article is a contribution of knowledge for all cello students who intend to improve their study technique.

After consulting the existing bibliography regarding the study technique of the cello, eight open questions were prepared for a panel of experts in the field. Because, as is well known, the qualitative approach with questions open to experts through the Delphi technique allows to know in greater depth the knowledge of the expert and thus build an even more accurate theory. To do so, they had to be contacted by phone call, video call or by e-mail and to have the necessary time to carry out the interview.

In sum, this research process aims to reveal some strategies based on the opinion of experts through which performance will be improved by cello apprentices, and will contribute to perfecting their study technique.

Thus, when the teacher is missing and no one is found who solves things, the student can do it by himself, since, by following the recommendations here intended, will have more learning tools.

Otherwise, if we leave the problems at the mercy of our self-organizing system, perhaps it will devise an action plan to resolve any issue we have to address, but not always with the assurance that the best results will be obtained. This solution will be stored and memorized, and the next time we encounter a problem or in a similar situation, the same pattern will be used. If we do not take enormous care, innumerable possibilities of error can be created.

To prevent these situations, or to take corrective actions, there are procedures that can be followed. "Inhibition means the ability to prevent an undesired habitual response from occurring by deliberately creating a pause" (Meffen, 2002, p. 58).

It is common to relate the study routine with motor-type exercises, exercises of tireless repetition technique, arriving many times to industrialize them. This is very dangerous and, as is logical, only those who repeat the exercises correctly from the beginning helps them to create a correct technique (Albert, 2014, p. 79).

The study of the cello must begin with the study of ourselves, which is rare. For the action of playing the cello it is necessary to put into operation a complex of associations, of simultaneous control, which will have to develop to a high degree to become a good instrumentalist.

The mind controls and directs the entire complex, so the main premise is the understanding of what is done and how it should be done. Otherwise, all the study and practices with the instrument will not go beyond being exercises without coordination, of null or late result and, in the worst of cases, provoking vices and defects of all kinds (Parncutt y McPherson, 2002, p. 36).

From the purely physical point of view, there is a quality that consists in differentiating functions. Each limb, whether a finger, hand, forearm, back or lungs, performs its own functions and is harmonious and hierarchically interrelated with the rest. At all times there is a typical relaxation in which the extremities are separated to allow smooth functioning of the joints. No extremity tries to usurp the functions of another.

"The essential for proper functioning is that the perception of the joints in our mind coincides with that of the real joints" (Eisenberg, 1983, p.122).

Physical and mental relaxation

A large number of instrumentalists are stiffened to such an extent that, at times, they are unable to play. No balance, expression and, therefore, no progress can be achieved if the instrumentalist is stressed. Decontraction is an absolute necessity for the artist. The energy that emerges from us travels through a network of muscles, making it particularly sensitive to any contraction of that network. If the musician suffers from a global tension, his body is a prisoner of an authentic muscular shell, closed to any sensory perception. It is not a state of passivity, but a perfectly dynamic state.

"There is a physical and muscular availability that can be achieved so that any action is fluid and harmonious. For there to be energy, there must be an adequate tension between opposites "(Smith, 1996, p.77).

It is the correct opposition between the muscular masses that produces the tone attached to the distension, and allows the absence of stiffness and tension. The greatest difficulty consists, therefore, in harmoniously reconciling these two inseparable factors: tonicity and distension.

"The serious practice of a relaxation well taken in the psychological field can be of great help for those who have problems in separating the tensions, and who can not achieve through a simple awareness" (Kloppel, 2005, p.109).

Concentration is primarily the readiness to open up to oneself as well as to the outside. He who listens to himself learns to release an unsuspected energy potential. "Concentration is not only a physical reality, it is also a mental attitude. It is a domain and a control of all the aspects that intervene in the execution: musical, physical, coordination, concertation, improvisation and interpretation "(Hemsey de Gainza and Kesselman, 2003, p.87).

Bearing this in mind, and reiterating what has already been mentioned, this article aims to determine aspects to improve the technique of a cellist and analyze the methods of how to study correctly.

Methodology

For this research, the design of the grounded theory was used, which uses a qualitative systematic procedure to generate a theory that explains at a conceptual level an action, an interaction or a specific area (Hernández, Fernández and Baptista, 2010, page 492). On the basis of this design, a descriptive study was carried out to analyze the different methods and techniques of violonchelisticas used through the teaching practice for the first levels of teaching of the instrument within the superior schools and conservatories of each country. Finally, within the systematic design process, open coding was used where the categories were formed based on the data collected from the interviews. The categories have properties represented by subcategories, which are coded (Hernández, Fernández and Baptista, 2010,

page 494). The interview was semi-structured and the Delphi technique was used. All of the above was carried out according to the qualitative-inductive research approach.

The population was constituted by 20 specialists in the area of cello teaching as an instrument. To have a broader picture, the experts were chosen from different nationalities; The countries represented were Mexico, Spain, Bulgaria, Poland and Russia. The teaching experience within the musical field was between 10 and 50 years.

The techniques used for data collection were the open interview verbally and online to each of the participants. The first stage was a pilot interview, where, once all the experts' answers were received, a categorization and systematization of the answers was made. The second interview, with a total of eight questions, was again sent to the experts; received the answers the data analysis of the categories and subcategories was performed.

"Sampling was by saturation, where a selection of cases is made according to theoretical typologies in such a way that the information is not redundant" (Ruíz, 2003, p. 45).

Analysis of results

The experts expressed four conceptions about the strategies to improve the study technique of the students of the cello class of the UANL School of Music, which are analyzed here as categories and subcategories. It should be noted that the latter are listed along with the number of frequencies that were mentioned in the interviews. Each specialist could comment on more than one important aspect, so the frequencies do not always show the total number of participants.

The following variables are detailed in the table:

- What does it mean to study correctly, with the following subcategories: that the time employed generates progress (4), study conscious of each step that is given (8), study slowly attending to the rhythm, the tuning and the dynamics (5), study rested and concentrates (11), detect and correct errors (14).
- Reasons why the work should be analyzed, with the following subcategories: to work it by sections with musical sense (5), to be able to phrase (8), it is easier to memorize (11), to have a reading more attached to the text (6) and to know its structure (5).

- Usefulness of the metronome practice, with the following subcategories: help with the rhythm (7), it is useful to maintain a pulse (7), it is beneficial when starting to see the work, but it must be left in the medium term (4) , is good for a beginner (8) and causes coldness in the interpretation (6).
- Steps to follow in the daily study routine, with the following subcategories: must vary to avoid falling into the routine (4), start with scales followed by studies to finish the repertoire (12), work the difficult passages (7) , warm up with some scale and focus on the work (1) and study slowly to correct errors (6).

Tabla 1. Estrategias para mejorar la técnica de estudio de los alumnos de la clase de violonchelo de la Facultad de Música de la UANL

Categorías y subcategorías		Frecuencias
Qué significa estudiar correctamente	Que el tiempo empleado genere avances	4
	Estudiar consciente de cada paso que se da	8
	Estudiar lentamente atendiendo ritmo, afinación y dinámicas	5
	Estudiar descansado y concentrados	11
	Detectar y corregir errores	14
Motivos por los que se debe analizar la obra	Para trabajarla por secciones con sentido musical	5
	Para poder frasear	8
	Es más fácil de memorizar	11
	Para tener una lectura más apegada al texto	6
	Para conocer su estructura	5
Utilidad de la práctica con metrónomo	Ayuda con el ritmo	8
	Es útil para mantener un pulso	7
	Es beneficioso al empezar a ver la obra, pero hay que dejarlo a medio plazo	4
	Es bueno para un principiante	8
	Ocasiona frialdad en la interpretación	6
Pasos a seguir en la rutina diaria de estudio	Debe variar para no caer en la rutina	4
	Empezar con escalas seguidas de estudios para acabar con el repertorio	12
	Trabajar los pasajes difíciles	7
	Calentar con alguna escala y centrarse en la obra	1
	Estudiar lentamente para corregir errores	6

Fuente: Elaboración propia

In the first category it is observed that most experts believe that errors must be detected and corrected.

It is easy to adopt a repetitive way of studying, from start to finish, passing errors without stopping to correct them, so you need to detect and correct errors without passing them by to save time and see an improvement in execution. When we detect the error it is good to work it in context within the phrase, to connect it with the before and after in the music.

The results showed that it is important to study rested and concentrated. Studying tired can cause some injury and apart does not generate progress. Similarly, we must seek concentration so that the study time is of quality. Sometimes it happens that we are touching and thinking about something else and in this way we overlook the necessary corrections, which is why stagnation occurs.

In the second category, Reasons why the work should be analyzed, the specialists mostly agreed that it is easier to memorize. It is crucial to analyze the work to learn it by heart. The analysis, from a formal, harmonic, rhythmic and historical point of view, will be of great help to memorize the text. The division of the musical text into small units, but with musical logic, also facilitates memorization. The union of these units as if they were a puzzle is a whole that is easier to retain.

In the fourth category, Steps to follow in the daily routine of study, it was found that it is significant to start with scales followed by studies to eliminate the repertoire. The ideal routine for the study of a cellist should go through scales, as we become familiar with the tonalities independently, followed by studies, which focus on specific technical difficulties, to finish with the repertoire and with the technical background necessary to be able to concentrate on musical aspects. It is very useful not to lose sight of these three sections as they complement each other. If we leave any of them aside, some aspect of the interpretation becomes unbalanced. The most refined tuning is achieved with the practice of scales. In the same way, there are certain skills that are worked very specifically with the studies and the musical result of the phrasing, the dynamics and the expression is not achieved if it is not working the musical work in question, so, once again, they are very important these three areas of work.

As in Table 1, table 2 shows the four conceptions expressed by the experts regarding the strategies to improve the study technique of the students of the cello class of the UANL School of Music, which here they are analyzed as categories and subcategories. Here too, each specialist was able to comment on more than one important aspect, so the frequencies do not always show the total number of participants.

The variables taken into account in this case are the following:

- Preparation for the study, with the following subcategories: have a good physical and physical condition for the study (3), prepare the space where the practice takes place (5), have a suitable place for the practice (12), perform Relaxation exercises before and during practice (5) and the temperature of the place where it is practiced will oscillate between 20 and 24 degrees (8).
- Mental focus within the study, with the following subcategories: be clear about what is going to be studied (9), know how much study time is devoted to each section (3), know what you want to improve technically and musically (1), establish a time for the pauses (10) and imagine the sonority and phrasing (3).
- Elements that intervene in self-correction, with the following subcategories: rhythm (5), dynamics (8), phrasing (11), some technical element (8) and sound (6).
- Usefulness of repetition, with the following subcategories: as long as you know why it is repeated (5), know what you want to improve (11), revise at the mental level the passage to repeat (6), it is always useful and when it is concentrated (10) and must be varied (2).

Tabla 2. Estrategias para mejorar la técnica de estudio de los alumnos de la clase de violonchelo de la Facultad de Música de la UANL

Categorías y subcategorías		Frecuencias
Preparación para el estudio	Tener una buena condición corporal y física para el estudio	3
	Preparar el espacio donde tiene lugar la práctica	5
	Disponer de un lugar adecuado para la práctica	12
	Realizar ejercicios de relajación antes y durante la práctica	5
	La temperatura del lugar de la práctica oscilará entre 20 y 24 grados.	8
Enfoque mental dentro del estudio	Tener claro qué se va a estudiar	9
	Saber cuánto tiempo de estudio se dedica a cada apartado	3
	Saber qué se quiere mejorar técnica y musicalmente	1
	Establecer un tiempo para las pausas	10
	Imaginar la sonoridad y el fraseo	3
Elemento que intervienen la autocorrección	El ritmo	5
	Las dinámicas	8
	El fraseo	11
	Algún elemento técnico	8
	El sonido	6
Utilidad de la repetición	Siempre y cuando se sepa el por qué se repite	5
	Saber qué se desea mejorar	11
	Revisar a nivel mental el pasaje a repetir	6
	Es útil siempre y cuando se esté concentrado	10
	Debe ser variada	2

Fuente: Elaboración propia

In the fifth category, Preparation for the study, we observed that most experts believe that a suitable place should be available for practice. Since a suitable place for practice will give us the necessary comfort to concentrate, without distractions, at a comfortable temperature and with sufficient ventilation. It is very useful to have a comfortable chair, a lectern, the score is legible, natural light or fluorescent located on the roof and temperature between 21 and 23 degrees in winter and between 20 and 24 degrees in summer.

In the sixth category, Mental focus within the study, the specialists mostly agreed that a time has to be set for breaks. It is very important to establish breaks within our study routine. These pauses serve us both at the psychological level, for the mental effort involved, and physical, to avoid developing any type of injury.

The risk of getting tendinitis or a spinal injury is greater when we do not take periodic breaks. For a beginner it is good to rest every 20 minutes and for an advanced level it can be extended up to 50 minutes with 10 minute pauses.

In the eighth category, Utility of the repetition, it was determined that it is important to know what you want to improve. Repetition is always useful when we have in mind what we want to improve. The indiscriminate repetition, without a specific goal, will make us lose a lot of time. Replays are necessary, above all, to mold a certain version of a music construction through comparisons. We need the repetitions to fix the desired version, to go deeper into the "traces", at first only superficial in our brain, and turn them into real furrows.

Conclusions

According to the opinion of the interviewees, detecting and correcting errors is ideal, since this way they do not fall into a vicious circle of repetition without seeking a specific objective. We must also seek to be rested and focused to optimize work and achieve maximum performance. Studying repeating from beginning to end will make us lose a lot of time and many mistakes will go by without resolving. The detection and attention of these errors will allow us to optimize the time. Also, the experts considered concentration as a determining factor to be able to advance, since sometimes the fact of being practicing and thinking about other things occurs. You should also avoid practice as long as there is muscle fatigue to avoid injuries, which will further delay our progress.

The reason why you should analyze a work is because that way is easier to memorize. Dividing the work into small units with a musical sense will allow us to better understand the whole, which will help to retain the text in memory. The practice with metronome, on the other hand, will help us with the rhythm and tempo of the piece.

The steps to follow in our daily study routine should consist of the practice of scales, followed by studies to finalize the repertoire. These three areas of work are complemented in such a way that if we do not pay attention to any of them, the interpretation will end up being affected, either by an incorrect intonation or by the lack of a technical skill.

While for the preparation of the study should have a suitable place for practice. Everything that surrounds us must be pleasant so as not to be uncomfortable in practice. The light, temperature and chair should be optimized for the study. Establishing a period for breaks is good for mentally focusing on the study. It serves us both physically and psychologically. In this regard, for a beginner it is good to establish breaks every twenty minutes and for an advanced student it can be extended up to fifty minutes. Finally, repetition is useful as long as you know what you want to improve, otherwise you will lose a lot of time.

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