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A brief survey on the viola teaching based on the history of the viola



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A brief survey of the viola teaching based on the history of the viola

In this written thesis, the historical development of the viola and the development of the viola teaching are focused on. The purpose of the thesis is to develop the writer's professional skills as a music pedagogue.

Source literature has been used as a data collection method.

As a result of the thesis process, the writer's expertise as a viola player and a viola teacher has improved. The author has better prerequisites to share his own professional skills with his viola students than before.

Keywords:

viola history, viola playing, viola teaching.

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Lyhyt katsaus alttoviulunsoitonopetukseen alttoviulun historian pohjalta

Tässä kirjallisessa opinnäytetyössä keskitytään alttoviulun historialliseen kehitykseen ja alttoviulunsoiton opetuksen kehittämiseen. Opinnäytetyön tarkoituksena on kehittää kirjoittajan ammattitaitoa musiikkipedagogina.

Tiedonkeruumenetelmänä on käytetty lähdekirjallisuutta.

Opinnäytetyön tuloksena kirjoittajan osaaminen alttoviulun soittajana ja alttoviulunsoitonopettajana on parantunut. Kirjoittajalla on aiempaa paremmat edellytykset jakaa omaa ammattitaitoaan alttoviuluoppilaidensa kanssa.

Asiasanat:

alttoviulun historia, alttoviulunsoitto, alttoviulunsoitonopetus

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1 Introduction

This written thesis will introduce the development process of the viola art. The viola is an instrument the sound of which is deep and nuanced, unique in style, rich in expressiveness and extremely humane. However, in the historical development of the stringed instruments, the viola was not taken seriously, and many composers forgot about it. In the 18th century, the stringed instrument builders almost stopped making the viola. It was not until the early 20th century that the viola came to be truly appreciated.

Today, the viola is an important member of the string instrument family and its role in the symphony orchestra or in small string instrument ensembles cannot be replaced. The role of the viola and the viola teaching have been gradually differentiated from the role of the violin and from the violin teaching, thus becoming an independent discipline.

This written thesis is divided in two parts. The first part is a brief introduction to the history of the viola, which will be looked from two aspects: the viola itself and the development of the viola music. The second part is about the viola teaching, which will be carried out from three aspects: the viola playing skills, the viola in chamber music and the selection of the viola teaching materials.

My aim in this thesis is, that through an overview of the history of the viola and the development of the viola works creation, I as a future music pedagogue will get a deeper understanding about the viola playing and teaching. I also hope to enrich the musical and cultural knowledge of people who like the viola.

2 An overview on the history of the viola

2.1 Late Middle Ages to mid-17th century

The origins of musical instruments in medieval Europe have been long an area of great academic interest but shrouded in mystery. Because the funerary culture of the Middle Ages in Europe is different from ancient and non-Western civilizations, it is difficult to use archaeological methods to study funerary objects. The restoration of early stringed instruments is generally based on historical documents and images, such as illustrations in manuscripts and icons, buildings, especially sculptures and murals on churches and folklore materials.

Generally, historians mostly affirm the influence of Eastern musical instrument culture on the form of Western European instrumental, especially Spain, which has been under Muslim rule for a long time and France and southern Italy, which are influenced by Byzantine and Arab civilization. They are all important in accepting foreign instruments and instrumental music. Of course, after these Eastern elements entered Europe, they were quickly combined with the barbarian culture and social customs, forming a secular music tradition unique to the medieval Catholic world.

For example, a large number of statues of musical instruments and instrumentalists can be found in the carvings of Romanesque churches in the northern Iberian Peninsula from the 11th and 12th centuries. Among them, guigues and harp-cithara can be found. In Romanesque architecture in the second half of the 12th century, the number and the type of musical instruments increased several folds. Scenes with musical instruments appear in the decoration of the arches of the facade and in the girders of the building as new frames for sculptural decoration. String instruments, such as fiddle and organ instrument¹ can be found among them.

¹ Reference: Rosario Alvarez Martinez: 'Music Iconography of Romanesque Sculpture in the Light of Sculptors' Work Procedures: The Jaca Cathedral, Las Piaterias in Santiago de Compostela, and San Tsidoro de Leon, *Music in Art*, XXVII/1-2 (2002).

As far as instrumental music performance is concerned, improvisation by folk artists who are divorced from the sheet music dominates, and this situation lasted until the late 18th century.

The vieles were the most important and common stringed instruments in the Middle Ages, and they can also be regarded as the most representative alto stringed instruments in European music before the violin family came into being. The vieles are generally larger and are played on the shoulders or between the knees. The body of the instrument is oval or wasp-waisted, with a flat back, a fingerboard on the neck, and an indefinite number of strings. The vieles are often used in palace celebrations and major banquets because of a rich and powerful sound. Judging from its shape and playing posture, it is closely related to the viol instrument that became popular later.

The viol is a bowed string instrument with a fingerboard that appeared in the late 15th century. It is mainly played between the legs. The 'viola da gamba' (gamba means a leg) is also played on the shoulders and there has also been so-called viola da braccio (braccio means an arm). The viol quickly became popular in Europe after its appearance and it was loved by the nobility and upper class. It became the most important bowed-string instrument in the late Renaissance and early Baroque period. The emergence of the "Viole d'Amour" in the second half of the 17th century marked the peak of prosperity for the viol family's alto instruments. In one hundred years from the mid-17th century to the mid-18th century, numerous outstanding works were created for this instrument. In these works, the expressive power of the alto part of the stringed instrument was systematically explored for the first time and they occupied an important position in the local instrumental music culture at that time. To a certain extent, it can be said that "Viole d'Amour" is the "viola" in the Baroque period.

2.2 After the mid-17th century

The playing method of the *Viole d'Amour* is similar to that of the today's viola, but the shape is quite different. At the same time, there were numerous concertos and sonatas composed for the *Viole d'Amour* during the Baroque period. For example, Anthony Vivaldi's eight concertos contain important parts to the *Viole d'Amour*.

After the Baroque period, the alto instruments in the violin family were increasingly used in the works of many composers in the 17th and 18th centuries, such as Monteverdi, Torelli, Bach, Handel and Gluck's² orchestral and operatic works. Signs of the use of the viola can already be found then, but these parts for the viola are often interchangeable with the violin.

Since the 18th century, the viola has played an increasingly important role in purely instrumental works, first in chamber music, then in orchestral ensembles, and its parts have become increasingly stable. During the Classical period, when 'balance' and 'consonance' were pursued, the alto string instruments became indispensable for the expression of musical art. Johann Stamitz (1717–1757) published a series of *Six Sonantes a trios ou avec tout l'orchestre* in 1755. The bass role, which was originally responsible for the harmony and the rhythm background of the cello, it was gradually processed separately. A separate alto role was clearly labelled 'viola' by Stamitz. This approach heralds the splendour of the string quartet to a large extent: between the two violins and the bass instrument, there is a place for an independent voice function and timbre expression. There is no doubt that if there was not the viola, there would not be this most important genre form of classical chamber music although from the perspective of the solo technique, the performance of the viola is always more modest.

² Christoph Willibald Gluck, in his opera "Iphigénie en Tauride", skillfully uses the expressive timbre of the viola to depict the inner world of opera characters. Gluck was a musical theater writer whose use of acoustic materials was completely different from his contemporaries who focused only on hearing and velocity, which was crucial to exploring the expressive power of the viola's timbre.

The main composer who shaped the viola into the “backbone” of the string quartet and established its artistic expression was Haydn. What is interesting is that Haydn himself was not a virtuoso performing artist.

Haydn was also a viola player, which allowed him to accumulate much delicate techniques on how to address with inner voices. In *the string quartets of Haydn*, we often find that the violin and the viola alternately play a short note pattern (falling on the same note), and many deep and elegant Haydn-style melodies would be difficult to lay out without the viola. This need for the viola also appears in Haydn’s orchestral works and vocal works with orchestral accompaniment. Haydn composed a cantata in 1768 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Abbot of Zwettl’s novice term. Since Haydn could not supervise the premiere of the work in person, he wrote to the performers and explained the correct way of the performance of many details from the score. In the letter he specifically stated: ‘I hope that you will always have two players for the viola role, because the inner voice sometimes needs to be heard more clearly than the treble voices, and you will also find out that in my works, the viola rarely repeats the bass melody.’

In the late 18th century, the composer who made great contributions to the viola after Haydn was Mozart. On the one hand, Mozart was deeply influenced by this intergenerational friendship with Haydn, but on the other hand, he explored more new techniques. As far as the string quartet is concerned, Mozart highlighted the independence of the four instruments, and at the same time, he made the quartet’s voice structure more complex and refined by using harmonic counterpoint techniques. In *Mozart’s original string quintets (eg K.174)*, the rich sound brought by the combination of the two violins, the two violas and the cello created completely new effects. As the most important concerto composer of the 18th century, *Mozart’s ‘Sinfonia concertante K.364* for the violin and the viola set a shining example of the expressive viola as a solo instrument. The use of the viola as a solo instrument in this piece is unusual and surprising of a concert of that era. Especially through the competitive performance of the viola

and the violin, the different timbre characteristics of these two instruments came fully demonstrated, making them achieve an excellent balance.

2.3 Representative viola works from the Romantic period

Harold en Italie, Op. 16 is the second of Berlioz's four symphonic works. In this work, the composer gave the viola special technical and expressive value. It was composed in 1834, originally it was composed at the invitation of Paganini. However, Paganini³ refused to perform the work because the viola did not play enough role in it. The success of this work after its publication is undeniable. *Harold en Italie* is a unique work both from the perspective of the performer and the listener. Like the famous *Symphonie fantastique*, they all have literary titles and also use the writing technique of 'idée fixe'⁴. The difference between the two works is that *Harold en Italie* gives a special status to the viola.

Paganini refused to play this work. Berlioz had regarded this concerto as a review and summary of his own years, a spiritual journey. He took *Harold en Italie* as the title of his work, taken from Byron's *The Travels of Harold*. The four movements of the work respectively tell the story of Harold's experiences in Italy. A short motive played with the viola represents Harold, whose plump dramatic images, deep and introverted thoughts and background full of nature, as magnificent as the Alps and as peaceful as the Mediterranean, make this work full of favour.

Regarding the teaching and performance practice of solo works, both the viola teachers and the viola players tend to pay more attention to the viola sonatas,

³ Paganini pointed on the manuscript of "Harold en Italie" that Berlioz had brought and said to him, 'I have too many resting places. I can't just stand on the stage when the orchestra is playing.'

⁴ an idée fixe is a preoccupation of mind believed to be firmly resistant to any attempt to modify it, a fixation. The name originates from the French. Program(idée fixe) music or programmatic music is a type of instrumental art music that attempts to musically render an extramusical narrative. The narrative itself might be offered to the audience through the piece's title, or in the form of program notes, inviting imaginative correlations with the music.

concertos and other subjects. *Harold en Italie* seems to be in the awkward position of being neither a concerto for the viola and orchestra, nor just a difficult work to the viola in a symphony. It was precisely because of this special situation that Paganini was unwilling to perform this composition.

However, in this work, it is precisely because of the lack of virtuosic solo part of the viola, that it is unique, whether in terms of harmonic colour, expression and structural form, it is based on modern orchestration methods. The new model became the pinnacle of title music creation in the middle period of Romanticism and provided valuable inspiration and reference for the music creation in the later period of Romanticism.

2.4 The rise of the viola

As one of the first composers to appreciate the potential of the viola, Brahms gave the instrument chance to shine by his chamber music. By the time he was in his early twenties, Brahms had already demonstrated his confidence in the viola with *Serenade No. 2 in A major, Op.16*. The violin is completely absent from this work in favour of the viola. A similar technique is used in the first movement of the *Deutsche Requiem*. The creation of this work even started earlier, but it took Brahms more than ten years to finally complete it. However, what really maximizes the advantages of the viola is his chamber music, this not only refers to the two sextets and quintets with the two violas each, but also in the string quartet and the piano quartet, where the advantages of the viola have been strongly proved. In these works, the viola comes to life both as a melodic instrument and as an imaginative inner voice that brings the timbre and character of the work to life.

Among the most influential viola works of the 19th century, *the two sonatas, Op. 120* composed by Brahms in 1894 are of course extremely important. Both works were originally written for the clarinet, but soon after the clarinet sonata appeared, Brahms rewrote it for the viola and piano, as we can see through Brahms's correspondence with Joseph Joachim.

Brahms to Joachim (October 14, 1894): 'Please let me know if you will go to Frankfurt. I will go as well and I will invite Richard Mühlfeld⁵, or bring me the viola version of the *Clarinet Sonata*, which I very much hope that Mrs. Schumann will listen. Our comfort will not be disturbed by these two low-key works, but it will be wonderful to listen.'

Joachim replied: 'I will arrive in Frankfurt on November 9th. It would be great to write and let me know if I can look forward to meeting you, I am very happy that Muirfield inspire you to create music again.'

In fact, Brahms was worried that the effect of these two works as viola sonatas might not be satisfactory, but his worries were obviously unnecessary. Two versions of these two viola sonatas were printed during Brahms's lifetime. The publications show that they were recognized as soon as they came out with added double notes specifically for the viola and with moved the range of certain places an octave lower, there is no difference between the viola version and the clarinet version. There is a reason to think that when Brahms created the clarinet version, it was considered as a viola sonata at the same time⁶.

Among 20th century composers, Paul Hindemith did the most to elevate the status of the viola as a solo instrument. Whether as a soloist or as a member of the Amar Quartet, Hindemith is an outstanding, professional violist. So perhaps we are not surprised that he brought skills of the instrument and possibilities show up in his works. In addition to the *string trios, quartets, octets, and piano trios*, there are *seven sonatas and works for the viola and orchestra*, which provide the violists with exciting challenges in musical expression and performance skills. These works also strongly responded to the regrettable

⁵ Richard Bernhard Hermann Mühlfeld (1856~1907) was the best-known and most successful German clarinetist of his time. Brahms's two sonatas (Op.120) was originally composed for him.

⁶ Ivor Keys: 'Johannes Brahms', page 146.

perception still retained by some listeners and concert supporters: that Hindemith's works are dry and devoid of emotion. In the eyes of the viola players, his works are full of deep emotions, full of personality, colour, vitality and humour. Since Hindemith himself was a viola player, his compositions for the viola were unrivalled in both quantity and quality.

As early as 1919 Hindemith wrote *Viola and Piano Sonata Op.11*. Later, he composed several *sonatas for the solo viola* (*Op.11 No.5*, *Op.25 No.1*, *Op.31 No.4 No.5*) and *Schwanenderher* in 1935 to the viola and orchestra. Both works have enabled Hindemith to refine and use personalized musical vocabulary to create symphonies and also greatly improved the status of the viola in the orchestra. *Chamber Music No. 5* is composed for the viola and chamber music pairs. It is dedicated to exploring the virtuoso skills of the viola, which is fully reflected in the cadenzas and improvisations. *Schwanenderher* is composed for the viola and small orchestra and uses old northern German folk songs as its basic material. The work uses different themes and vocabulary and integrates the beautiful and gorgeous the viola playing skills with the appropriate orchestra texture. It is a masterpiece among the viola concertos.

Hindemith's works for the viola greatly exceeded his predecessors in both quantity and genre. These works not only promote the development of the viola art, but also fill in and enrich the viola repertoire. More importantly, the diverse writing techniques in his works have greatly developed and expanded the possibilities of the viola playing, raising the technical difficulty, timbre range and musical expression of the viola to a certain height.

After the viola entered a period of great development at the beginning of the 20th century, the viola not only received gradual attention in symphony orchestras, but also achieved further development in solo performance. In addition to Hindemith, there were also many composers who wrote classic repertoire for the viola during this period, such as William Walton, Rebecca Clarke, and Béla Bartók.

The viola playing skills were changing with each passing day. The great viola solo masters such as Lionel Tertis, Paul Hindemith and William Primrose have emerged one after another. It was no longer an 'incompetent' violinist who plays the viola or a violinist who expands his playing skills to play the viola. As a musical instrument, the viola also occupies an irreplaceable place in the history of music as a solo instrument

3 The viola teaching

3.1 The relationship between the viola and the violin

In Hector Berlioz's monumental *Instrumentations Lehre*, that it has been said that the violists were the 'waste' of the violinists, so they knew nothing about either the violin or the viola playing. To ease the controversy, Berlioz pointed out that 'of all the instruments in the orchestra, the remarkable qualities of the viola have long been underappreciated.'

Berlioz said: 'The viola and the violin are equally sensitive in sensitivity, and the viola strings flow, the resulting sound is exceptionally moving ... and its overall timbre has a profound melancholy.... It should be noted that the viola's upper register has incredible beauty in scenes expressing religious or nostalgic moods.'

Berlioz denounces the French orchestras at that time for not using the violas with proper size regulations, which resulted in the instrument not being able to produce the viola sound as powerfully as it should — just like playing on the violin with the viola strings.

What Berlioz said is certainly not groundless. Although the independence of the viola in the string instrument family can be clearly seen in the development of the viola and the viola music. The viola still cannot escape its inextricable connection with the violin in all aspects, especially in terms of performance skills and teaching. Because the viola has not been taken seriously for a long time during its development process, for it has not yet formed a complete and independent teaching system. However, on the other hand, it is precisely because of its high similarity with the violin in basic playing skills, that there are ready-made and efficient materials that can be used in the viola teaching.

3.2 Basic techniques for the left hand

The basic of the relationship between a viola player and the viola is how to hold the viola.

A. When holding the viola, you should use the viola to cater to you, instead of trying to use your neck and chin to clamp the viola. At the same time, you need to have a natural and stable stance: your feet should be shoulder-width apart. There are two support points for holding the viola.

The first support point is: the viola is placed on the collarbone of the left shoulder, the side panel of the viola is close to the neck, and the lower jaw rests on the chin rest. You must feel this fulcrum and use the three points of the collarbone, neck and chin to support the viola. This stable first fulcrum plays an indispensable fundamental role in playing the viola.

B. Another fulcrum is to place the neck of the viola at the joint between the thumb and the base of the index finger of the left hand, to support the balance of the viola and the movement of the position change. This left-hand fulcrum plays a role in supporting the head of the viola. When the right hand and the bow move downward against the viola, the two fulcrums support together to create a flexible and elastic bow-string relationship, making the pronunciation more resonant during playing. When you have both fulcrums, you can feel the viola weight on your left hand. Try to move it up and down, left and right, in all possible directions, find a position which your body feels more natural and relaxed.

3.2.1 Finger dropping and rising on the string

There is actually a centre of gravity between the four fingers of the left hand, and this point is usually centred on the second and third fingers, and the first and fourth fingers are used for balance. The main purpose of the left hand is to press the strings, effectively cutting or changing the length of the strings and producing different pitches and timbres. The correctness of the fingers

movements determines the quality of the left hand's skills. The left hand should be flexible and elastic when touching the strings:

- 1) The movements of raising and dropping the fingers should happen from the roots of the finger joints. The dropping should be fast, just like a piano hammer hitting the strings and then rebounding. The fingers movements should be elastic.
- 2) The joints of each finger need to maintain a natural bend, with the second, third and fourth fingers moving in the same direction. Pay special attention not to straighten the fourth finger.
- 3) The vertical rising and dropping of fingers requires more practice to exercise the independence of each finger and do not involve other fingers when doing just one finger movement.
- 4) Keep the fingers on the strings when pressing the strings. It is helpful to maintain the shape of the entire left hand, it has a great effect on stabilizing and simplifying the movements and it can also help to have better intonation.

3.2.2 Strength and balance between the fingers

The four fingers of the left hand do not press the strings with exactly the same force. In order to achieve a balance, the force exerted by the fingers on the fretboard should be adjusted. To achieve a balance of strength, extra attention is often required on the fourth finger. The fourth finger is the shortest and thinnest of all fingers, and it is also the farthest away from the strings. Therefore, the entire palm should be adjusted to bring the gravity centre of the hand closer to the third and fourth fingers, so that all joints of the fourth finger are curved and able to stand on the string. At the same time, you can try to make the root of the fourth finger closer to the neck of the instrument, making full use of the width of the palm to stretch horizontally, so as to adapt to the larger position on the viola.

3.2.3 Shifting

The unclear concepts of position change often cause big difficulties and obstacles to the technical development of the viola players, affecting the intonation, the quality of pronunciation and the timbre. When making the shift movement, you should first pay attention to relax the thumb, the change of position is usually led by the first finger. The entire left hand moves with the first finger and the thumb while keeping the hand shape stable. The movement of individual fingers should be avoided as much as possible during shifting. When the position is higher, the place of the thumb and the wrist are not fixed. The thumb is usually used as support and the centre of hand weight moves freely. In addition, when changing the position, you should predict the position of the coming note after the shifting, imagine and predict the target position in advance when the action occurs.

3.2.4 Vibrato

Vibrato is an important part of the viola left-hand technique. Once you master the connotation of vibrato and combine it with appropriate techniques, the music you play will be more alive and expressive.

1) Vibrato should be based on the needs of the music, sometimes soft and slow, sometimes intense and full of passion. The movements of vibrato can be large or small, but whether it is through the wrist or the arm, only when having the contact between the fingertips and the strings can be effective, which requires training the fingertips and joint flexibility. When you first learn vibrato, you can use a metronome to do regular vibrato training. You should learn to perform vibrato movements 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10 times per beat. Start with slow speed so that you actually can only hear two separate notes at the beginning. After the movements are formed, you can speed up the tempo and increase the frequency of the movements.

2) The vibrato movement is not just a single finger movement, but the overall vibrato of the left hand should also be practised. Place four fingers on the string at the same time to perform a vibrato movement dominated by movement of the arm. During doing the vibrato, lift the fourth finger, the third finger and the second finger respectively and then add them one by one. Repeat the exercise.

3) The training of vibrato should not be done too early. It should be learned after mastering the movement of changing positions. Whenever you learn a new piece of music, do not use vibrato at first. Add vibrato after your intonation is in tune and the position changes are stable.

3.3 Basic techniques for the right hand

3.3.1 Correct bow holding

To ensure a good pronunciation, natural and relaxed movements, the joints of the fingers should naturally be bent and relaxed when holding the bow. The strength of the thumb should be equal to the other four fingers. The tip of the thumb and the third joint of the middle finger is opposite, the second joint of the index finger is in contact with the bow rod. The third finger follows the middle finger and rests lightly on the bow rod and the tip of the little finger stands on the bow rod. This keeps the right hand in a relaxed state and maintains flexibility in the fingers and the wrist.

3.3.2 The bow movement

In order to let the bow clasp the strings, the bow and string contact point should be stabilized, and the bow can be slightly “u” shape when it is moving. That is, when the bow moves to the upper half of the tip, the direction of movement should be slightly lifted upward, to make the bow bite the string better. When moving the bow, the fingers should be integrated with the bow. Imagine that the bow is an extension of the fingers. The upper arm and the bow stick should be

at the same level. The wrist should be kept stable and not too low. Do not try to put pressure on the bow, but find the feeling of your entire right hand resting on the bow.

3.3.3 Articulation and power transfer

The force exerted by the right hand on the bow is not made by the player's pressure, but the transfer of weight. To make a good sound, you must find first a good bow- string contact point and find the elastic relationship between the bow rod and the strings. The contact point of the bow on the string is constantly changing, and the centre of gravity of the bow also changes accordingly. This can ensure the purity of the sound, and at the same time produce changes in the intensity of the sound and differences in timbre to meet musical needs.

After finding the relationship between the bow and the string, relax all parts of your right hand from the arm to the palm, so that the force can be transmitted smoothly and the strings can fully vibrate.

4 Chamber music and the viola teaching

4.1 The importance of chamber music to the viola

In chamber music, the string quartet is the most ideal, harmonious and classic form in chamber music. Although we cannot find the grand momentum of the symphony or the magnificent scenes of opera in the string quartet, this genre of music is based on exquisite lyricism and can create a musical atmosphere for intimate conversation between people.

Initially, this kind of music was limited to families and salons and it was a form of music for aristocrats to entertain themselves. Later, in the course of history, it gradually moved to the secular stage and developed into an important musical genre with deep and delicate emotions.

The 18th century was an important period for the development of the string quartet, and its formation was influenced mainly by next factors: First, from the Middle Ages to the Baroque period in Europe, church masses and secular cantatas were mostly four-part harmony, which was just like the four parts of the string quartet. When musicians created the string quartet, the four-part chorus naturally provided a reference for the creation of this chamber music genre. Second, in the early 18th century, chamber music was mainly based on the trio sonatas, which used two violins and a continuo bass. This genre gradually declined in the process of the development of Baroque music to classical music, and it was replaced by the string quartet consisting of the first and second violin, the viola, and the cello. It can also be said that the decline of the trio sonata made the formation of the string quartet inevitable. When classical music was formed in the first half of the 18th century, Baroque music and Classical music formed a perfect connection. It was also due to the emergence of the string quartet genre that these two different styles of music were transitioned smoothly from one style to the next one. This string quartet genre, which is good at expressing both polyphonic music and tonal music, appropriately served as a bridge between Baroque music and Classical music.

At the same time, the viola can be said to be the oldest instrument in the string quartet, but it took the longest time to become a solo instrument. When people look back on the development of the viola in chamber music, they believe that it is different from the development history of the violin and the cello. The history of the development of chamber music actually contains the development history of the viola itself as an instrument⁷. Indeed, people have made much efforts to make the viola a solo instrument, which can be seen from the content at the beginning of this thesis.

Although the viola is very popular in the symphony orchestra in terms of quantity, as an instrument with personalized characteristics, its main use, both in the past and today, is still very much in chamber music.

It is not difficult to see that chamber music is the backbone of the entire viola music. Therefore, no need to tell how important chamber music is in the teaching of the viola playing.

4.2 The role of chamber music in the viola teaching

Chamber music is a collective aesthetic activity. Chamber music is often an important course in music schools, which provides a broad space for the comprehensive development of students' comprehensive qualities and musical skills. It breaks the boundaries of the self-contained music disciplines, connects the music knowledge in theoretical courses with each other and penetrates into the actual performance process, so that music theory and practice are closely combined and promote each other, enabling students to integrate the music theory knowledge, for example music theory, harmony, solfège, music history, etc. to music performance skills. By playing numerous musical works, analysing the works, and understanding the composer's ideological connotation and style, students can feel the music image and music emotion more accurately and deeply during the performance process.

⁷ Rebecca Clarke (1886 - 1979), 'The history of the viola in quartet writing', page 1

Chamber music teaching emphasizes teamwork and collective consciousness. The process of learning a musical instrument is often relatively independent, which is reflected in the understanding about music and the improvement of playing techniques. It can also be said that in the studying of a musical instrument, more emphasis is placed on the student's personal playing abilities. There are no unimportant parts in chamber music and all parts must work together to achieve the desired effect. This requires students to cooperate with each other, respect each other, communicate fully and especially learn to listen to the voices of the other instruments. The role of the viola in chamber music is particularly important. From the perspective of timbre and sound effects, the viola acts as a "palette". From the perspective of harmony, the viola serves as a bridge of communication between the violin and the cello. Such teamwork can greatly improve students' insight and appreciation for the studying of music and can also expand the players' understanding of different musical styles through the study of many unfamiliar repertoires.

5 Suggestions of the viola teaching materials

As I mentioned in this thesis earlier although the independence of the viola in the string instrument family can be clearly seen in the development of the viola and the viola music, the viola still cannot escape its inextricable connection with the violin in many aspects, especially in terms of basic playing skills and teaching. Because the viola has not been taken importantly for a long time in its development, for it did not form a complete and independent teaching system. However, on the other hand, it is precisely because of its high similarity with the violin in basic playing skills that there are ready-made and efficient materials that can be used in the viola teaching. In addition, some violists and viola teachers have later composed and compiled textbooks specifically for the viola. Now, there are a wide range of textbooks available for viola teaching, both for beginners and for further technical improvement. Here, I will reference on Professor Shen Xidi's⁸ suggestions on textbook selection. At the same time, I write of my own learning and teaching experiences as a viola player, to give some suggestions of the viola teaching materials.

5.1 Technical exercises

Carl Flesch; Das Skalensystem

This book is created by famous violin teacher from 19th century, it is a violin scale system practice, the viola version arranged by Charlotte Karman. It includes 24 major and minor scale systems: including scale and double-stop scale exercises. The octave and tenth double-stop exercises are very helpful for the left hand's adjustment ability. Long-term practice can improve the left-hand technique comprehensively.

Henry Schradieck; School Of Violin Technics

⁸ Shen Xidi (1939~) is a famous violist and educator from China, dedicate in the viola teaching over 40 years. She made great contributions to China's viola music education.

The viola version made by Louis Pagels. Book nr 1 is for exercise of the left hand including different positions and shifting practice. Book nr 2 contains double stop exercises for the left hand. Book nr 3 includes exercises for the right hand, it contains also all special bow technique practices.

5.2 Etudes

Etudes usually have a great effect on improving the playing skills, but while paying attention to playing skills, the selection of etudes should also focus on musicality as for example in the following books do: *Federigo Fiorillo; 36 caprices for the Violin*, *Rodolphe Kreutzer; 42 Etudes for the Violin* and *Pierre Rode; 24 Caprices for the Violin*

Rodolphe Kreutzer; 42 Etudes for the Violin

This book was called the 'Bible' of violin technical training by the famous violinist Heifetz from 20th century, the arranged version is also applicable to the teaching of the viola and is very important for the establishment of the basic viola playing skills. Each of the etudes has a clear training purpose, which can help students building a basic concept of the viola playing skills.

Federigo Fiorillo; 36 caprices for the Violin

Compiled for the viola by Joseph Vieland this set of caprices can be used as a supplement to *Kreutzer 42 Etudes*, and the training of different bowing techniques for the right hand is very valuable.

Pierre Rode; 24 Caprices for Violin, compiled by Walter Blumanau for the viola.

This set of caprices consists of 24 etudes in different major and minor keys, which are technically advanced and each one is very musical.

In addition to selecting traditional violin teaching materials adapted to the viola versions, some original viola exercises are also very valuable, especially for the pronunciation of the viola playing.

Bartolomeo Campagnoli; 41 Caprices for the Viola

This set of caprices is the author's last work and a classic piece for the viola. It is of great value both in terms of artistic and technical training. It is the most suitable for the playing of the viola in terms of sound range, timbre and tonality and it is also listed as a designated piece in many international viola competitions.

Mourice Vieus; 20 Caprices for the Viola

The musical language of this set of etudes is very distinctive and has a distinct personality. It requires a very fast playing speed, so it is somewhat difficult to play.

Johannes Palaschko; 10 studies for advanced players

This is a set of exercises that are very suitable for the characteristics of the viola in terms of the playing technique and the sound range of the instrument. At the same time, it has clear requirements in terms of the musical genre and musical expression. It is a set of exercises that focuses on technical training and musical expression.

Franz Anton Hoffmeister; 12 Etudes for the Viola

This set of etudes bears the characteristics of the Viennese music style of the early 19th century, with distinct and smooth melodies and some certain elements of virtuosity.

5.3 Sonatas, Concertos, Pieces

For the viola sonatas, concertos and other music pieces, I do not want to make a detailed introduction or recommendation. First, there is a wide range of choices and my own repertoire is still limited, so I do not want to 'give advice on blind'. Second, in the viola teaching, the choice of music pieces is usually matched and supplemented according to the scales, etudes and technical training that students are practising, which is very flexible and depends largely

on the preferences and the teaching habits of different teachers. I list only a few representative works here.

Handel; 4 sonatas for the viola and the piano

These sonatas are very useful for the students who just switch the main instrument from the violin to the viola. This book is an 'introductory textbook' for mastering the bowing and pronunciation of the viola.

Schubert; Arpeggione Sonata

Although this sonata was originally composed for the cello, it surprisingly fits the pronunciation characteristics and playing techniques of the viola. It is a very singing music piece of early romantic style and it can be used as an introductory piece for learning the music of this period.

*Carl Stamitz; Viola concerto in D major and
Franz Anton Hoffmeister; Viola concerto in D major*

These are two essential pieces for the viola players. They are representative works of the classical music period and they are also widely used as designated pieces for music school examinations and professional symphony orchestra auditions.

William Walton; Viola concerto, Paul Hindemith; viola concerto and

Béla Bartók; Viola concerto

As high-quality solo works on the rise of the viola music, these works have greatly established the status of the viola as a solo instrument. They are widely performed by the viola soloists around the world today and they are surely important pieces for the advanced viola students.

There are many viola repertoires available for learning and playing the viola today, especially since the 20th century. More and more composers prefer to compose music for the viola. In general, when choosing music pieces for the viola students, the basic principles like "from easy to difficult, from early to late"

should be followed. "From easy to difficult" means that from the perspective of playing skills, when choosing repertoire for the viola students, start with the repertoires which have the lower requirement on the playing technique according to the actual level of different students. In this way, in the process of learning and playing, the viola students can pay more attention to melody direction, characters, dynamics and expression of the music, so that the students can focus on music instead of spending time to solve technical difficulties. "From early to late" means that the selection of repertoire could follow the basic development trajectory of viola music, and it is good to start with early works, such as the Baroque and Classical periods. The music from these period usually has more clear melody and regular rhythm changes compare to modern pieces. Students can easier adapt to the new piece based on the scales and etudes they have mastered. When students enter the advanced stage, teacher can be more flexible on choose suitable music for different students according to their technical levels and personality characteristics.

6 Conclusion

I started my music studies with the violin. I switched to the viola after reaching an advanced level in the violin playing. From long time, it seems to be a 'certain way' for a viola player to go through this procedure with violin study first. This create curiosity on me to figure out why people prefer to do it in viola education. So I decided to write my written thesis from the historical point of view of the viola and of the viola playing.

As I wrote my thesis, I read much literature on the viola and the history of the viola music development. In addition, I read many articles from the works composed for the viola. When I combined my existing music theoretical knowledge with the study and performance of the viola works, I gained a clearer understanding about the viola as an independent instrument. I got deeper understanding about the viola music. It has laid the foundation for my future viola teaching career. At the same time, as a future music pedagogue I also deeply feel that I still have much to learn and practice.

I hope that the readers of this thesis will have more knowledge about the viola and a deeper understanding about the viola teaching. I also hope that the viola students and pedagogues will benefit from this thesis and that it will result in the development of the viola teaching.

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Link to the Viola Concert / Viola B-level performance of Yanan Bai

https://youtu.be/iF6BwkP_g6A

Crichton hall, Turku, Finland. 19 January 2024

Viola: Yanan Bai

Piano: Esa Moilanen

Program:

Johann Stamitz, Viola concerto, I, II movements.

Paul Joun, Sonata

I moderato.

II Adagio assai e molto cantabile

III Allegro moderato

Johann Sebastian Bach, Violin Partita No.2, Sarabande

Gigue

York Bowen, Phantasy for Viola and Piano