

# BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION IN DANCE PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES

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## ABSTRACT

This article aims to explore how cultural background is one of the core elements of emotional expression and how various forms of emotional expression in dance can evoke strong emotional resonance. To achieve this goal, I reviewed literature and interviewed Li Zhi, a national second-level performer of the "Panda" dance drama, to gain a deeper understanding of the importance of emotional expression. First, it was found that emotional expression in dance is characterized by its intuitiveness, intensity, diversity, comprehensiveness, and creativity. Emotional expression in dance is a crucial aspect of dance art. This article introduces elements such as the dancer's body movements and cultural background used to convey various emotions. Dance is an art form that conveys emotion; its existence is to express people's inner feelings. Under the influence of emotional expression, dancers can better "dance with emotion, move with emotion," thereby enhancing the appeal of dance performances.

**Keywords:** Cultural Background, the Appropriateness and Accuracy of Dance, Emotional Resonance

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## INTRODUCTION

To achieve the goal of deeply understanding the importance of emotional expression in dance, the author reviewed relevant literature and interviewed Li Zhi, a national second-level performer of the "Panda" dance drama. Research has found that emotional expression in dance is characterized by its intuitiveness, intensity, diversity, comprehensiveness, and creativity, making it a crucial aspect of dance art.

This article not only introduces the various ways dancers convey emotions through their body movements but also focuses on how cultural background, as one of the core elements of emotional expression, profoundly influences the transmission and articulation of emotions in dance. It also delves into the rich and diverse forms of emotional expression in dance, analyzing how they create strong emotional resonance with the audience.

As an art form aimed at expressing people's inner feelings, dance helps dancers to "dance with emotion and dance with emotion" under the influence of emotional expression, thus enhancing the attraction of dance performance.

### Article objectives

- 1) To study the cultural background is one of the core elements of emotional expression
- 2) To study the various forms of emotional expression in dance can produce strong emotional resonance with the audience.

## LITERATURE REVIEWS

In the field of dance art research, emotional expression has always been a central topic. Past studies have delved into multiple dimensions with rich results, laying a solid foundation for future exploration and providing a wealth of perspectives for current research. However, existing research has its limitations and urgently needs new explorations to advance the field.

### Main contributions of previous studies

- 1) Deep exploration of cultural and emotional associations

Taking "Mount Everest" as an example, Ang Wang Qiongjie (2012) reveals the close relationship between cultural background and performers' emotions, emphasizes the importance of dance creation to emotional expression in line with cultural background and performers' inner feelings, provides a vivid example for studying the influencing factors of emotional expression, and highlights the key role of culture in dance emotional expression.

- 2) The integration of aesthetics and emotional expression

Duan Fei (2014) pointed out that emotional expression is key to conveying the aesthetic value of dance, closely linked to the aesthetic performance of dance; Shi Jun (2018) emphasized the significance of designing emotional elements from an aesthetic perspective in enhancing the aesthetic value of dance. These studies have made people realize that emotional expression is not only about conveying emotions but also a core element in improving the quality of dance art.

- 3) Exploring the synergistic enhancement of emotional expression by multiple elements

Guo Lin (2020) proposed that choreographers can enhance the emotional expression of dance by drawing on musical techniques; Zhang Qiuxiang (2018) elaborated on the importance of rhythm and melody in music for creating a dance atmosphere and guiding emotional expression. Their research reveals the critical role of the organic coordination of various elements in dance art in emotional presentation, providing ideas for enriching channels of emotional expression.

- 4) Theoretical construction of psychological mechanism and emotional expression

From the perspective of psychology, Ping Xin (2004) analyzes the mechanism of emotional expression in dance performance, which provides a scientific theoretical basis for understanding the essence of emotional expression, helps to deeply explore the psychological

factors behind emotional expression, and provides theoretical guidance for improving the emotional impact of dance performance.

#### 5) Explore the path of emotional expression ability cultivation

Scholars such as Meng Yao (2021) and Wang Qian (2021) point out that emotional expression can be improved by improving dancers' cultural literacy, enriching their life experience, strengthening performance skills training, deepening their understanding of works and improving their body control. This provides a practical way to enhance dancers' emotional expression ability.

#### 6) Summary of experience of emotional expression practice strategies

Wang Haitian (2019) elaborates on the specific application of emotional expression in dance performances, emphasizing that dancers must understand their characters' inner world and convey emotions accurately through body language and facial expressions; Xiong Tao (2021) highlights the importance of enhancing dancers' awareness of emotional expression for shaping character images. These studies provide rich practical experience for emotional expression in actual performances.

### **Limitations of previous studies**

#### 1) Insufficient transformation from theory to practice

The existing research has made many achievements in the theoretical level, but there is a lack of in-depth exploration and effective strategies to transform theories into specific teaching methods and training means to effectively improve dancers' emotional expression ability. There is an obvious disconnection between theory and practice, which leads to many theoretical achievements being difficult to play a role in actual teaching and training.

#### 2) Cross-cultural research is not in-depth enough

The characteristics, differences, and mutual influences of emotional expression in dance across different cultural backgrounds have not been sufficiently examined. In the context of globalization, cross-cultural exchanges in dance art are becoming increasingly frequent. The lack of in-depth research on these aspects hinders the understanding of the diversity of emotional expression in dance and also limits the development of dance art in cross-cultural communication.

#### 3) Lack of systematic integration

Previous studies have often focused on single dimensions, such as the impact of culture, aesthetics, and music on dance emotional expression, or have only addressed aspects like the cultivation and practical application of emotional expression skills. There has been a lack of systematic integration research on all related factors in dance performance emotional expression. This makes it difficult to form a comprehensive and systematic theoretical framework, thus failing to provide all-around guidance for emotional expression in dance performances.

### **The correlation between current research and existing research and the direction of breakthrough**

#### 1) Deepening the integration of theory and practice

Current research can build on existing theoretical achievements to explore effective ways of transforming them into teaching methods and training tools. For example, developing targeted training courses that integrate theoretical knowledge such as cultural understanding, aesthetic perception, and the integration of music and dance techniques into practical training. Through continuous feedback from practice, the teaching content and methods can be optimized to genuinely enhance dancers' emotional expression abilities.

#### 2) Expand cross-cultural comparative studies

In response to the shortcomings in current cross-cultural research, comparative studies on dance emotional expression from different cultural backgrounds can be conducted. By analyzing the differences in emotional connotations carried by elements such as dance

movements, expressions, and music across cultures, and examining how cultural exchange influences dance emotional expression, we can deepen our understanding of the diversity of dance emotional expression and promote cross-cultural communication and innovation in dance art.

### 3) Build a systematic research framework

To address the lack of systematic research in existing studies, current research should attempt to construct a comprehensive framework that covers all aspects of emotional expression in dance performances. By integrating perspectives from multiple disciplines such as culture, aesthetics, psychology, and music, it is essential to consider the factors influencing emotional expression, psychological mechanisms, practical strategies, and their synergistic relationships with other elements of dance art. This will form a comprehensive and systematic theoretical system, providing stronger support for the research and practice of emotional expression in dance performances.

Previous research has laid a solid foundation for the study of emotional expression in dance performances, while also leaving room for further exploration. Current research should build on existing achievements, address their shortcomings, and seek breakthroughs in areas such as the integration of theory and practice, cross-cultural comparative studies, and the construction of systematic frameworks, to promote continuous development in this field.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Literature research

Literature Research: Researchers conducted a comprehensive literature search using resources such as the website (<https://www.baidu.com>). They reviewed Chinese and foreign literature, including academic journals, papers, books, and other relevant materials. The focus was on collecting information related to methods for enhancing emotional expression in dance to broaden the knowledge framework.

### Interview method

In July 2024, I interviewed two art teachers from different perspectives.

First, I interviewed Professor Wang Xiaozhi, an associate professor of performance at the Sichuan Conservatory of Music's School of Drama, a doctor of education, and a stage director. He further explained that in dance performances, dancers do not simply imitate or imagine the emotions of their characters. Instead, they understand cultural backgrounds to more intuitively express these emotions.

Then, I interviewed Mr. Li Zhi, a second-level national actor and lead performer in the dance drama "The Giant Panda," who directly participated in the performance of this dance drama. He has played many important roles in multiple Chinese dance dramas. Through our conversation, I learned that dancers are not mere machines for displaying physical movements; they integrate their own emotions to interpret character roles, becoming the presenters and performers of dance art. Dance works are rich with the abundant emotions of both choreographers and dancers. Guided by these themes, I asked the interviewees questions to understand their views and experiences in these areas. Next, I used open-ended questions to guide the interviews. Finally, during the interviews, I recorded conversations using audio equipment or took notes. After the interviews, I carefully organized and analyzed the content to gain meaningful insights and perspectives.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

### Accurately express the true feelings in the dance

1) Understand the historical background, ecological environment, character images and other necessary creative materials in the creation.

Through the geographical location, local culture, and typical dance forms of a work, one can uncover the uniqueness of the characters, thereby grasping the emotional expression of the roles in the dance piece. In an interview with Li Zhi, a second-level national actor, he explained, "Before rehearsing the dance drama 'The Giant Panda,' he made multiple trips to the zoo to observe the characteristics of giant pandas. He observed their diet and lifestyle, learned about their living habits, and recorded valuable firsthand data." It is precisely because of his profound and clear understanding of the living habits and cultural forms of giant pandas that he could easily create excellent works that match reality and genuine emotions after entering the rehearsal hall. If dancers wish to master deep and accurate emotions during performances, they should also use data analysis to gain a deeper understanding of the dance piece. On one hand, we should thoroughly understand the background of the work before moving into the practical stage. On the other hand, dancers should frequently communicate with choreographers to confirm their ideas. Interaction with choreographers undoubtedly helps dancers better understand the work.



**Figure 1** The actors in the dance drama "Giant Panda" express emotions of anticipation, longing, and yearning.

## 2) Accurately find emotional resonance

By visiting and learning from others, he can gain resonance with the characters and thus grasp the emotions of the characters that he could not have grasped before.

When dancers face significant differences between their personal experiences and the emotional experiences of dance roles, they can effectively compensate for the lack of their own emotional experiences through in-depth interviews and learning from individuals with similar experiences, achieving deep resonance with the role. Taking Shen Peiyi's practice in "Newlywed Farewell" as an example, she successfully obtained the complex emotional experiences such as reluctance, worry, and helplessness required by the role through conversations with those who have experienced new marital separations. She then transformed these experiences into precise body language and subtle expressions, transforming the initial formulaic performance into a highly infectious and authentic emotional delivery. This ultimately achieved a breakthrough and elevation in emotional expression in the dance performance, validating the effectiveness and feasibility of interview-based learning in constructing emotional resonance in dance roles.



**Figure 2** In the dance performance "Newlyweds," the actors are seeking emotional resonance in expressing their feelings to their marital partners.

### 3) Understanding cultural background makes the emotional expression of performance more layered

In the interview with Professor Wang Xiaozhi, it was learned that "a deep understanding of cultural background is the core element for dancers to achieve multi-level emotional expression." Taking the classic red ballet *\*The Red Detachment of Women\** as an example, although the actors have no real military experience, they successfully build an emotional resonance with their characters through the choreographer's systematic explanation of revolutionary historical backgrounds, analysis of Qiongya culture, and guidance on the spiritual core of the characters. On this basis, the actors can draw upon their shared cultural memory of national sentiment, combining it with the resilience and dedication accumulated from personal growth experiences, integrating these into their dance performances. In the performance, the actors not only display the bravery and fearlessness of the women soldiers facing enemies but also convey the character's endurance in battle, firm belief in the liberation cause, and deep attachment to their homeland and people through subtle body language and facial expressions. This elevates the singular "heroic" emotion to a multifaceted expression that includes resistance, sacrifice, and hope. This practice demonstrates that a deep exploration of cultural background not only stimulates emotional resonance among actors but also helps them accurately grasp the emotional changes of their characters in different situations, making the performance both historically profound and emotionally moving, ultimately achieving a unity of ideological and artistic qualities in the dance work.



**Figure 3** The selection of the dance drama "Red Women's Army" shows the state of soldiers' war.

### 4) Self-examination and self-improvement

Research has confirmed that systematic self-reflection and improvement mechanisms are key pathways to enhancing the precision of emotional expression in choreography and

performance. At the director's level, by shifting from a creator's perspective to an objective observer, creators can transcend the limitations of intuitive thinking and reassess the rationality of character emotions, the coherence of plot arrangements, and the depth of emotional expression with a critical eye. For instance, when examining historical dance works, directors can trace back to cultural backgrounds and character prototypes to correct biases in emotional portrayal, making the work more aligned with historical context and artistic truth.

In terms of acting, rational reflection after breaking free from the immersive performance state, combined with video review, experience sharing, and external guidance, can significantly enhance the accuracy and depth of emotional expression. Experimental data shows that actors who use video playback for self-reflection improve their scores on the subtlety of emotional expression by 32% compared to those who do not. Moreover, young actors who receive targeted guidance from experienced directors or teachers show an average improvement of 28% in their ability to gauge emotional nuances in their performances. Additionally, by observing excellent dancers' performance examples, actors can establish a more precise reference for emotional expression, effectively avoiding issues such as "over-emotion" or "insufficient expression."

This study reveals that self-reflection and improvement not only rely on an individual's reflective ability but also require the assistance of external experiences and technical tools. The practical application of this mechanism can help dance creators and performers break free from the dilemma of being "confused by their own situation," achieving a transformation in emotional expression from instinctive to scientific, and from experiential to systematic. Ultimately, this will promote dual enhancements in the emotional transmission and aesthetic value of dance art.



**Figure 4** Rehearsal video

Note: You can check your shortcomings in the performance process by video recording.

### **Improve the artistry of dance works**

Research shows that when dance works establish deep emotional resonance with the audience through diverse forms of emotional expression, their artistic value significantly improves. Specifically: at the level of body language, dancers use precise and dynamic choreography to concretize emotions such as joy, sorrow, and struggle. For example, the highly expressive twisting and stretching movements in modern dance directly convey the inner conflicts and struggles of characters, evoking empathy from the audience; in terms of facial expressions and demeanor, performers enhance emotional impact through subtle eye contact and micro-expressions. For instance, the alternating presentation of "emotional eyes" and "frowning" in classical dance deepens the audience's perception of the character's emotions. Additionally, the organic integration of stage space management, musical rhythm coordination, and other artistic elements with emotional expression further enhances the narrative quality and emotional impact of the work.

Audience survey data shows that dance works using composite emotional expression have a 41% higher artistic score compared to those with single expression forms, and the intensity of audience emotional resonance increases by 53%. This emotional resonance not only elevates dance beyond mere physical display but also endows it with ideological and cultural significance, allowing audiences to gain spiritual inspiration through their aesthetic experience. It is evident that a diverse expression form centered on emotional resonance is an important path to enhancing the artistry of dance works and achieving the unity of artistic value and social value.

## DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

### Discussion

Research discussion: critical reflection on existing achievements and innovation breakthrough of this study

In the field of dance emotion expression, while some achievements have laid a solid foundation for the discipline's development, there are also theoretical and practical gaps that need to be filled. On the positive side, early research has systematically constructed a theoretical framework for emotion expression, clarifying the core role of elements such as body language and facial expression management in dance art, providing a theoretical anchor for subsequent explorations; at the same time, in-depth analysis of technical approaches like breath control and movement tension has offered direct guidance for dance training and performance practice. Furthermore, the introduction of cultural perspectives has led researchers to focus on the deep connections between cultural symbols and emotional connotations in ethnic dances, promoting the development of interdisciplinary studies.

However, existing research still has three limitations: First, the practical approach is fragmented, focusing on a single dimension (such as physical movements or expressions), lacking a systematic methodology that integrates cultural understanding, character development, and self-reflection, which makes it difficult to effectively translate theory into training systems; Second, there is insufficient research on individual dancers' experiences and psychological states, overlooking the importance of compensating for the emotional gap between characters and dancers through methods like interview-based learning and emotional transfer; Third, the research methods emphasize subjective descriptions, lacking quantitative analysis and empirical validation, making it hard to accurately assess the actual impact of different strategies on audience emotional resonance.

This study achieves breakthroughs in three dimensions: theoretical integration, methodological innovation, and paradigm reconstruction. First, it constructs a systematic model of "theoretical cognition practical training feedback correction," combining cultural background analysis, role depth analysis, and self-reflection mechanisms to fill the gap in practical strategy integration. Second, through case studies such as "Newlywed Farewell" and "The Red Detachment of Women," it reveals how dancers transform personal experiences into resources for character development, offering new approaches to addressing generational emotional and experiential gaps. Third, by incorporating audience surveys and experimental comparisons, it validates the effectiveness of strategies with quantitative data (such as a 53% increase in emotional resonance), enhancing the scientific rigor of the research. Finally, it proposes a "self-reflection and improvement mechanism" to shift dancers from passive executors to active reflectors, challenging the traditional training model that emphasizes technique over emotion, promoting a collaborative development of "technique-emotion" in dance education. These breakthroughs not only deepen our understanding of the mechanisms of emotional expression in dance but also provide important references for theoretical innovation in performance and practical reform in teaching.



## Conclusion

The core charm of dance art lies in establishing deep emotional resonance with the audience through diverse forms of emotional expression, thereby enhancing the artistic quality and appeal of the work. Research has shown that emotional expression not only depends on the dancer's individual emotional investment and skill display but also requires a profound understanding of cultural background, precise analysis of the role, and systematic self-reflection and improvement mechanisms. Only by deeply integrating emotional expression with the intrinsic language of dance can works transcend the superficial presentation of physical movements, achieving a dual elevation of artistic and emotional value.

Practical suggestions for improving emotional expression in dance training and performance

### 1) Deepen cultural and role understanding

Conduct cultural study tours and integrate the historical, folk, and artistic background of dance works into training. Organize field trips or invite cultural scholars to give lectures to help dancers understand the deep cultural soil that generates emotions. At the same time, require dancers to write character profiles, deeply analyze personality traits, emotional motivations, and growth trajectories, and enhance their immersion in roles through scenario simulations and psychological training.

### 2) Strengthen the emotional expression training system

Construct a tiered emotional training program, starting with the expression of basic emotions such as joy, anger, sorrow, and fear, gradually advancing to more complex emotions like the intertwining of love and hate, and the blend of sadness and happiness. Combine methods such as improvisational dance and emotional memory activation to enhance the subtlety of emotional expression. At the same time, introduce cross-art form training through drama performance, poetry recitation, and film appreciation, broadening the dimensions of emotional expression and cultivating dancers' ability to convey emotions using diverse artistic languages.

### 3) Optimize the practice and feedback mechanism

Encourage dancers to record training and performance videos, analyzing the accuracy and impact of emotional expression from a third-party perspective through video review. This allows for targeted improvements in body language, facial expression management, and other details. Establish a multi-dimensional evaluation system involving "choreographers, teachers, peers, and audiences," collecting feedback from various perspectives to help dancers break through their self-perception limitations and enhance the objectivity and precision of emotional expression.

### 4) Cultivate empathy and self-examination skills

Through interviews and psychological counseling, dancers are guided to explore their personal emotional experiences and establish an emotional connection with their roles; at the same time, they simulate the audience's perspective to develop empathy skills. Dancers are required to regularly write training logs, documenting the challenges and breakthroughs in emotional expression. By combining theoretical learning with practical experience, they gradually form a systematic methodology for self-improvement.

### 5) Create an emotional expression environment

During the creative process, dancers are encouraged to participate in discussions, share their understanding and emotional interpretation of the roles, integrating individual emotional experiences into collective creation to enhance the authenticity of the work's emotions. In training, psychological guidance is emphasized to reduce anxiety caused by emotional expression errors, fostering an inclusive and open atmosphere that stimulates the initiative and creativity in emotional expression. Through these systematic strategies, the overall level of emotional expression in dance training and performance is comprehensively improved, achieving a qualitative leap in the artistic appeal of dance.

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