

## Exploring Religious Mysticism and Cultural Expression in Cello Music: A Philosophical Inquiry

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**Abstract:** As a deep expression of the human spiritual world, religious mysticism has a deep internal relationship with music art. This paper takes cello music as the research object and explores how it maps and expresses the spiritual core of religious mysticism through musical language. Based on the theoretical basis, this study analyzes the compatibility between the transcendental and sacred characteristics of religious mysticism and the artistic characteristics of the cello with a wide range and mellow timbre, and reveals the interactive relationship between the two in the transmission of emotions and the creation of artistic conception. Through textual analysis and case studies, this paper finds that the mapping of religious mysticism in cello music is mainly reflected in two dimensions: first, the relationship between the theme of the work and religious stories and imagery, such as the musical presentation of the biblical narrative in the adapted version of Bach's Matthew Passion and the acoustic interpretation of divine wisdom in Bloch's Solomon; The second is the religious expression of creative techniques, including the symbolic meaning of harmonic colors, the ritual creation of melodic lines, and the echo of rhythmic patterns to religious chants. At the level of performance practice, the study further explores the interpretive role of performance techniques such as kneading, portamento, and velocity control on religious sentiments, and combines the interpretation cases of performers with religious backgrounds such as Casals to reveal the deep resonance between faith experience and musical expression. Through an in-depth analysis of works such as Hebrew Vespers and Unaccompanied Cello Suite, this paper argues that religious mysticism not only provides a unique theme for cello music, but also expands the depth and breadth of its spiritual expression. Research shows that the mapping and expression of religious mysticism in cello music is not only the continuation of cultural traditions, but also the driving force of artistic innovation. Future research can further focus on the integration and transformation of religious music elements in cross-cultural contexts, as well as the new possibilities of modern music technology for the expression of religious mysticism.

**Keywords:** Religious Mysticism, Cello Music, Spiritual Connection, Ritual Influence, Symbolic Expression

### 1. INTRODUCTION

As an extremely important cultural phenomenon in the long history of mankind, religion has profoundly influenced all levels of human society. From spiritual beliefs to artistic creation, from morality and ethics to social

structure, the imprint of religion is everywhere. In the arts, music is particularly closely linked to religion. With its unique appeal and expressiveness, music has become an important carrier for the transmission and expression of religion (Propst, 2017). Religion provides music with rich subject matter, profound connotations, and sacred spiritual directions. The two are intertwined and together shape the splendid cultural landscape of mankind. Among the many musical genres and forms of expression, the cello occupies an important position in the music world with its deep, mellow timbre and unique expressiveness. The cello has a rich and varied timbre, which can not only express passionate emotions, but also convey delicate and gentle emotions, as well as show a solemn temperament, and this unique timbre quality makes it uniquely advantageous in expressing religious mysticism (Hwang, 2008). The study of the mapping and expression of religious mysticism in cello music is of great significance in many aspects. From the perspective of musical cultural connotation, religious mysticism injects a unique spiritual core into cello music. Many cello works are inspired by religious mysticism, and contain reflections and explorations on profound issues such as the universe, life, and the soul (Cheran, 2023). Through the study of these works, we can dig deep into the religious and cultural elements contained in them, so as to understand the cultural connotation behind the music works more comprehensively and deeply, and expand the depth and breadth of music culture research. In terms of artistic value, religious mysticism brings a unique aesthetic experience and artistic charm to cello music. The pursuit of mysticism beyond the mundane and directly to the sacred realm is presented through the melody, harmony, rhythm and other elements of cello music, so that the audience can feel a mysterious, solemn and sacred atmosphere in the process of appreciating the music, and then obtain spiritual comfort and sublimation (Bruhn, 2002). This unique artistic expression enriches the artistic language of cello music and enhances its artistic value. From the perspective of cultural inheritance and exchange, cello music, as an art form that transcends borders and cultures, carries the information of different cultures in the process of dissemination. The embodiment of religious mysticism in cello music is not only a display of the religious culture of a certain region or nation, but also promotes the exchange and integration between different cultures. Through the study of the mapping and expression of religious mysticism in cello music, we can better understand the interrelationship between music and religion in different cultural backgrounds, promote the exchange and development of multiculturalism,

and promote cultural inheritance and innovation.

### 1.1 Research Status at Home and Abroad

The relationship between religion and music has always been an important topic of academic attention, as shown in Table 1. Many scholars have conducted in-depth discussions from multiple perspectives such as music history, music aesthetics, and cultural studies. For example, in the field of music historiography, the development of religious music is meticulously organized. From the origin and development of Gregorian chants to the flourishing of religious music in the Baroque period, scholars have revealed the stylistic evolution of religious music in different historical periods through the study of historical documents and musical notation. In terms of music aesthetics, it focuses on the aesthetic value of religious music and its influence on the human spiritual world. For example, to study how music conveys religious emotions through elements such as melody, harmony, rhythm, etc., and elicits the resonance of the listener's heart. In the field of cultural studies, it focuses on the close connection between religious music and society, culture, and religious rituals, and explores its role in cultural inheritance and exchange. Some studies have analyzed the unique manifestations of religious music in different cultural contexts through the comparison of religious music in different regions, and how it has contributed to the integration and dissemination of cultures.

Table 1: (a) Related Research

Author/ Institution	Main Research Content and Views	Research Deficiencies
<b>Andrew Shenton</b>	This paper explores the mystical elements in Western religious music and analyzes the connection between organs, chants, etc. and religious ceremonies.	The research on the religious expression of string instruments (especially the cello) is lacking.
<b>Barbara Hanning</b>	It combs the development context of religious music from the Middle Ages to modern times, emphasizing the transcendent function of music in religious experiences.	There is a lack of in - depth research on the characteristic differences of specific instruments (such as the cello).
<b>Mark Kroll</b>	It analyzes the role of the cello in church music during the Baroque period, pointing out the role of its bass part in creating a sacred atmosphere.	The research focuses on historical documents, and there is little discussion on performance practice and contemporary works.

Table 1: (b) Related Research

Author/ Institution	Main Research Content and Views	Research Deficiencies
<b>The Jewish Music Research Center</b>	It studies the semiotic characteristics of Jewish mystical music (such as Hebrew Evening Prayer), revealing the corresponding relationship between religious texts and musical structures.	It has not been extended to the comparative study of other religious systems (such as Christianity and Islam).
<b>Wang Yaohua</b>	It analyzes the influence of Western religious music on the creation of modern Chinese music and mentions the emotional expressiveness of the cello in religious - themed works.	Case studies mostly focus on vocal music and symphonies, and there is insufficient attention to cello solo works.
<b>The Research Group on Religious Music of the Central Conservatory of Music</b>	It explores the aesthetic characteristics of Buddhist and Taoist music and does not involve the combination of Western religious music and Western musical instruments (such as the cello).	The cross - cultural research is not deep enough, and there is a lack of empirical analysis of specific instruments.
<b>Li Dana</b>	It systematically analyzes the Christian elements in the works of composers such as Bach and Beethoven, pointing out the narrative function of the cello in narrative religious works.	The research on the connection between mystical philosophy and musical language is relatively shallow.
<b>The String Department of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music</b>	It discusses the influence of the cultural background of performers on the style of works, but does not specifically focus on the theme of religious mysticism.	There is a lack of cross - analysis of religious culture and performance techniques.

In the study of cello music, foreign scholars have made fruitful research results on the performance techniques, musical styles, and composition characteristics of the compositions. In terms of performance techniques, from fingering, bowing to timbre control, there are detailed theoretical explanations and practical guidance. For different styles of cello works, such as classicism, romanticism, modernism, etc., scholars have deeply analyzed their musical characteristics, creative backgrounds, and stylistic grasps that should be paid attention to when performing (Bruhn, 2002). In the study of the creative characteristics of composers, through the analysis of composers' life experiences and creative thoughts, the emotions and

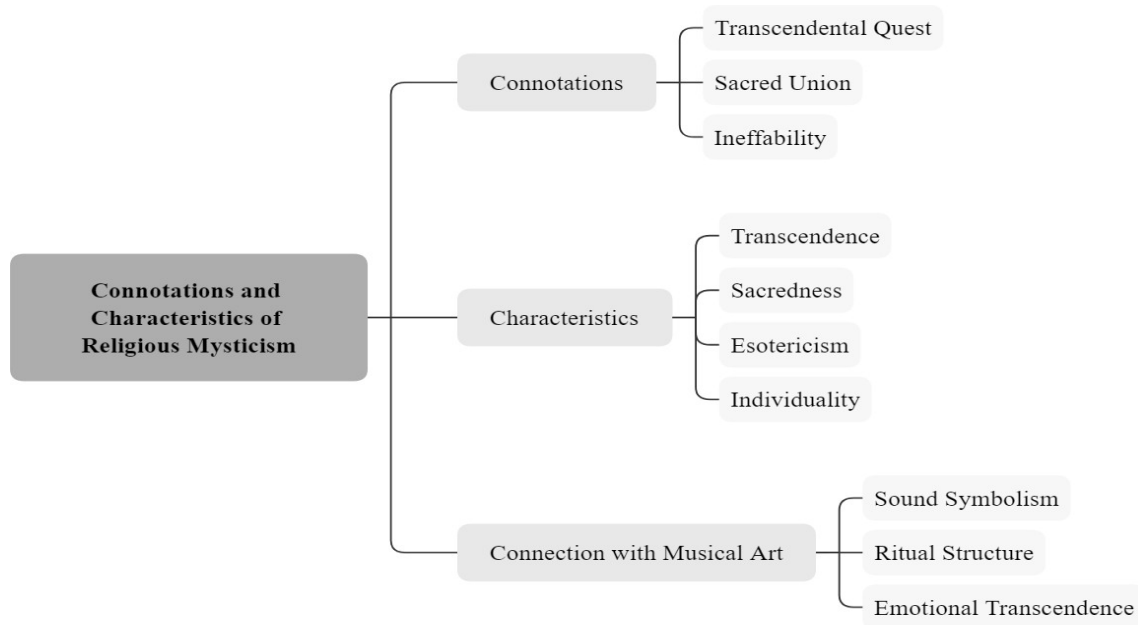
connotations expressed in their cello works are interpreted (Nakipbekova, 2024). For example, the study of the cello works of composers such as Bach and Beethoven reveals their creative styles and artistic achievements from the perspectives of musical structure and thematic development. However, there is relatively little research that combines religious mysticism with cello music. Although some studies involve the embodiment of religious elements in cello works, there is no systematic and in-depth research system on how religious mysticism is specifically mapped and expressed, and its influence on the unique artistic value of cello music. In the study of the relationship between religion and music in China, in terms of music historiography, the development process of traditional Chinese religious music, such as Buddhist music and Taoist music, has been deeply excavated. Through the study of ancient documents and folk music inheritance, this paper sorts out the historical evolution of traditional Chinese religious music, and analyzes its characteristics and development in different historical periods. In terms of music aesthetics, this paper explores the aesthetic concepts contained in traditional Chinese religious music and its internal connection with the spirit of traditional Chinese culture. In the field of cultural studies, he focuses on the role of religious music in folk beliefs and folk activities, as well as its integration with regional culture (Bagley, 2014). For example, the study of Buddhist music in different regions analyzes its manifestations and cultural significance in local folklore activities. In the field of cello music research, domestic scholars have made certain achievements in the national creation of cello works and the localization development of performance techniques. In terms of ethnic creation, many composers have integrated traditional Chinese music elements into their cello works, forming a cello music style with Chinese characteristics. Scholars have conducted an in-depth analysis of these works and discussed the characteristics and significance of ethnic creation. In terms of the localization and development of performance techniques, combined with the aesthetic characteristics and performance habits of Chinese music, the cello performance skills have been innovated and improved. For example, borrowing from the playing techniques of traditional Chinese instruments, the expressive power of the cello is enriched (Fung, 2016). However, there are also deficiencies in domestic research on the theme of the mapping and expression of religious mysticism in cello music. Most of the relevant studies are only sporadically mentioned, and there is a lack of comprehensive, systematic and in-depth exploration. The innovation of this study lies in the fact that it is the first comprehensive, systematic and

in-depth exploration of the mapping and expression of religious mysticism in cello music. Through multi-dimensional analysis, this paper not only reveals the specific embodiment of religious mysticism in cello music works, but also deeply explores its influence on the unique artistic value of cello music, opens up new perspectives for cello music research, and enriches the connotation of music culture research. At the same time, this study will further expand the breadth and depth of research and promote the development of cross-cultural music research through comparative analysis of related works in different cultural backgrounds.

## 2. THEORIES RELATED TO RELIGIOUS MYSTICISM AND CELLO MUSIC

### 2.1 The Connotation and Characteristics of Religious Mysticism

As shown in Figure 1, religious mysticism, as a special form of religious belief, contains profound spiritual connotations. At its core, it is the pursuit of direct communication and integration between the individual and the gods and supernatural powers, which goes beyond ordinary religious rituals and doctrinal understandings, and is a more inner and profound spiritual experience. In Christian mysticism, believers try to achieve direct dialogue with God through meditation, prayer, etc., and feel God's grace and revelation, so as to obtain the salvation and sublimation of the soul. In Islamic Sufi mysticism, practitioners seek unity with Allah through asceticism, meditation, and devout devotion to Allah, experiencing a divine realm beyond the mundane (Hwang, 2008). This desire for direct contact with the gods embodies the pursuit of religious mysticism for the deep exploration of the human spiritual world. Religious mysticism has a distinctly transcendent character. It transcends the scope of human daily experience and rational cognition, and involves the exploration and perception of the supernatural and surreal realm. Human rational thinking usually relies on sensory experience and logical reasoning, and the divine realm and the will of the gods pointed to by religious mysticism cannot be grasped through conventional rational methods (Propst, 2017). For example, in the mystical experience of some religions, the practitioner may feel a presence that transcends time and space, or receive a revelation that cannot be explained in words and logic. This transcendent experience breaks through the boundaries of human cognition and allows the practitioner to enter a higher spiritual realm to comprehend the ultimate truth of the universe and life.



**Figure 1:** The Connotation and Characteristics of Religious Mysticism

Sacredness is an important attribute of religious mysticism. The objects it focuses on and pursues – gods, supernatural powers, etc., are considered to be supreme sacred. This sacredness gives religious mysticism an atmosphere of solemnity and awe. In the course of religious rituals and practices, mystics are filled with reverence and reverence for the divine power, and their actions and thoughts revolve around the pursuit and proximity to the divine. In the tantric practice of Buddhism, practitioners yearn for the sacred realm of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and through specific rituals and practices, they try to obtain the blessings and wisdom of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and this pursuit of the sacred permeates their spiritual life (Cheran, 2023). Obscurity is also one of the distinguishing features of religious mysticism. Its teachings, practices, and mystical experiences are often obscure and difficult to convey. The connotation and realm of religious mysticism are often not expressed in clear and unambiguous language, and it relies more on the inner experience and perception of the practitioner. Many mystics feel the limitations of language when describing their mystical experiences, and can only use metaphors and symbols to convey the indescribable feelings. In the Kabbalistic mysticism of Judaism, its teachings and practices contain many obscure symbols and symbols, which require deep study and comprehension by the practitioner to understand the mysteries (Bruhn, 1996). This obscurity makes religious mysticism rely more on oral transmission and personal spiritual exploration in the process of transmission and inheritance, and also increases its mystical color.

## 2.2 Artistic Characteristics of Cello Music

As an expressive stringed instrument, the cello occupies a unique place in the field of music. It has a wide vocal range, from deep bass to bright highs, spanning approximately four octaves. This wide vocal range allows the cello to express a wide variety of emotions and musical situations. In the bass range, the cello sounds like an ancient bell, deep and heavy, like a whisper from the depths of the earth, which can create a solemn and solemn atmosphere. When playing music with religious themes, this deep bass can symbolize reverence for the gods and deep contemplation of the sacred realm (Propst, 2017). In the upper register, the cello's timbre becomes bright and radiant, like the first rays of sunlight through the clouds in the morning, which can express brighter emotions such as hope and joy. This wide range of sound offers a wealth of possibilities for the cello to express the emotions of religious mysticism, allowing it to reveal the complexity of religious emotions on multiple levels. The cello has a mellow and deep tone and has a unique charm. Its timbre is neither bright and sharp like the violin, nor low and muddy like the double bass, but contains warmth in the depth and delicacy in the mellowness. This unique timbre allows it to convey the deep, restrained emotion of religious mysticism. When playing a musical fragment about the salvation of the soul, the mellow tone of the cello can vividly express the desire and piety of the believer's heart for salvation, as if it is the cry of the soul in the dark, full of emotional tension. The cello's timbre also has a strong resonance, with a long aftermath that can reverberate in the air for a long time, giving people a deep, mysterious feeling, which is in line with the transcendent and eternal realm pursued by religious mysticism (Liu, 2011). When it comes to emotional expression, the cello has an extraordinary ability. It can express passionate emotions, such as when expressing praise and praise to God, through rapid bowing and powerful bow movement, the cello can play a passionate melody, showing the warm atmosphere of religious ceremonies and the enthusiasm of the faithful. The cello can also convey delicate and tender emotions, such as when depicting the plot of love and compassion in religious stories, the cello tells the gentle emotions through gentle playing, delicate timbre and soothing rhythm, so that the audience can feel the warmth and love contained in religion (López-Íñiguez & Pozo, 2016). The cello can also show a solemn temperament, and when playing music related to religious doctrines and sacred orders, it creates a solemn and sacred atmosphere through a calm rhythm and deep timbre, so that the audience feels as if they are in the sacred temple of religion and feels the



majesty and mystery of religion. When it comes to setting the mood, the cello is equally impressive. It can create a variety of atmospheres associated with religious mysticism through elements such as rhythm, melody, and harmony of music. When playing some religious music with mysterious overtones, the cello can use slow rhythms, fuzzy harmonies, and unique overtone techniques to create a mysterious, hazy atmosphere, as if to bring the listener into a religious world full of unknowns and mysteries. When expressing the solemn scenes in religious ceremonies, the cello can create a solemn and sacred atmosphere through strong rhythms, grand harmonies and full timbre, which enhances the sense of sacredness and ritual of religious ceremonies.

### 2.3 The Intrinsic Connection Between Religious Mysticism and Music

As shown in Table 2, music plays a vital role in religious ceremonies and is an important medium for religious expression and transmission. Music is an integral part of the Christian Mass service. The singing of the choir and the sound of the organ work together to create a solemn, sacred atmosphere that allows the faithful to better immerse themselves in the worship and prayer of God. The choir's chorus is melodious and harmonious, and the lyrics are often praises and interpretations of biblical doctrines, transmitting religious feelings to every believer through the form of music, inspiring deep awe and piety in their hearts. The grand sound of the organ adds to the solemnity and sacredness of the ceremony, and its rich harmonic effect is like the voice of God echoing in the church, allowing the faithful to feel the majesty and love of God.

Table 2: (a) Comparison of the Connection Between Religion and Music

Aspect	Religious Mysticism	Music	Connection
<b>Spiritual Realm</b>	Seeks to transcend the mundane and reach a higher, divine spiritual plane. For example, in Christian mysticism, believers strive for a union with God through prayer and contemplation.	Can evoke a sense of the sublime and transport listeners to a spiritual or emotional realm beyond the ordinary. Composers like Bach often infuse their works with a sense of the divine.	Both aim to connect individuals with something greater than themselves. Music can be a vehicle for expressing the spiritual yearnings central to religious mysticism.

Table 2: (b) Comparison of the Connection Between Religion and Music

Aspect	Religious Mysticism	Music	Connection
<b>Expression and Communication</b>	Expresses profound spiritual experiences and insights, often through symbolic and metaphorical language due to the ineffability of the divine. For instance, in Kabbalah, complex symbols are used to convey spiritual truths.	Communicates emotions, ideas, and stories, sometimes in an abstract or non-verbal way. It can express deep, inexpressible feelings similar to the indescribable nature of religious mystical experiences.	They share a non-literal mode of communication. Music, like religious mysticism, can communicate concepts that are difficult to put into words.
<b>Role in Ritual</b>	Central to religious rituals, enhancing the spiritual atmosphere and facilitating the connection between the worshippers and the divine. In a Catholic Mass, the chanting has a significant role in creating a sacred space.	Plays a crucial role in religious rituals, adding to the solemnity, rhythm, and emotional impact. The use of organs in a church service is a common example.	In religious rituals, music and religious mysticism work in tandem. Music supports the mystical elements of the ritual, making the experience more immersive.
<b>Inspiration for Creativity</b>	Serves as a wellspring of inspiration for religious art, literature, and music. The rich imagery and spiritual concepts in Sufi mysticism have inspired numerous poets and musicians.	Can inspire religious thought and the creation of religious-themed works. Composers may draw on religious stories or the overall sense of the sacred in religious mysticism to create new music.	They inspire each other. The creative output in one area can fuel innovation and expression in the other.
<b>Emotional Impact</b>	Evokes intense emotions such as awe, reverence, and a sense of the sacred. Mystics often describe feeling a deep sense of peace and connection during their spiritual experiences.	Has a powerful emotional impact on listeners, capable of inducing feelings of joy, sadness, or a sense of transcendence. A slow, solemn piece can create a mood similar to the reverence in religious mysticism.	Both have a profound impact on human emotions. The emotional resonance in music can mirror and enhance the emotional experiences in religious mysticism.

In Buddhist ritual activities, chanting music is also of great significance. Buddhism believes that the sound of chanting sutras purifies the mind,

removes karma, and achieves the goal of communicating with Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. The rhythm and rhyme of chanting often have a unique pattern, and the slow and steady rhythm helps the practitioner to enter a meditative state and focus on the inner practice. Different scriptures have different chanting tunes, and these tunes contain profound Buddhist cultural connotations, and the teachings and wisdom of Buddhism are transmitted to practitioners through the form of music, helping them to better understand the true meaning of Buddhism. Religious sentiments and imagery provide a rich source of inspiration for musical composition. Many composers drew inspiration from religious stories, legends, and teachings to create numerous musical compositions with religious mysticism. Handel's oratorio *The Messiah* is a classic with a strong religious influence. Based on the biblical prophecies of the coming of the Messiah and the life of Jesus Christ, this work shows God's plan of salvation and mankind's desire for salvation through music. In *Messiah*, Handel uses a grand chorus, a rousing solo, and a dramatic musical expression to express religious sentiments to the fullest. The "Hallelujah" cantata, with its majestic momentum and powerful melody, has become a classic fragment in the history of music, expressing people's praise for God and joy for salvation (Peppers, 2023). Some imagery in religious mysticism, such as heaven, hell, angels, demons, etc., is also often present in musical compositions, adding a mystical color to the music. In some musical works, through melody, harmony and rhythm changes, the beauty of heaven and the horror of hell are depicted, as well as the purity of angels and the evil of demons, making the listener feel as if they are in a religious world full of mysteries. This depiction of religious imagery through music not only enriches the expressive power of music, but also makes the connotation of religious mysticism more vividly displayed. Religious mysticism and music influence and penetrate each other. Religious mysticism provides music with profound spiritual connotations and unique cultural backgrounds, giving music a sacred and mysterious color that transcends the mundane. Music, with its unique artistic charm, conveys the emotions and thoughts of religious mysticism to a wider audience, enhancing the appeal and influence of religion. In the development of music, religious mysticism has always been an important source of inspiration and creative motivation, driving the continuous innovation and development of music (Roşca, 2014). At the same time, music has also influenced the spread and development of religion to a certain extent, and through the form of music, religion can better penetrate into the hearts of the people and attract more people to believe in and pursue the spiritual realm of religion.

### 3. THE REFLECTION OF RELIGIOUS MYSTICISM IN CELLO MUSIC

#### 3.1 The Relationship Between the Theme of the Work and Religious Stories And Imagery

In the field of cello music, many works are based on biblical stories, which have become important carriers for the expression of religious mysticism. Although the original version of Bach's Matthew Passion was not for cello, later cello adaptations reshaped the emotional expression of the work with the unique timbre of the cello. Through the descending melody simulating the pain of the Crucifixion, the tone like a heavy sigh, combined with the oppressive atmosphere created by the harmony of the minor key, and the rhythm of the funeral march, the tragic journey of the Crucifixion of Jesus is vividly displayed, and the audience deeply understands the solemnity and sacredness of religion. In addition, the cello of Handel's Messiah participates in the version, and in passages such as the "Hallelujah" chorus, the cello works with other instruments to construct a sacred musical space that conveys the praise and joy of God's redemption (Abel et al., 2011). Bloch's Solomon is a typical cello work with religious imagery. The work symbolizes the wisdom and majesty of King Solomon through the ups and downs of the melody, the solemn tone of the opening part sets the sacred tone, and the subsequent melodic changes show his wise choice. In terms of the use of harmony, harmonious and solemn harmonies create an atmosphere of sacred order, while discordant chords express earthly distractions, in contrast to religious pursuits. In terms of rhythmic arrangement, the powerful rhythm shows the demeanor of the king, and the slow rhythm guides the audience into a state of pious contemplation (Karadut, 2007). In addition, some of the works depict the peace of heaven and the horror of hell through musical elements, such as showing heaven with soft melodies and bright harmonies, and creating an atmosphere of hell with deep timbre and discordant harmonies, so that religious imagery can be concretely presented in music.

#### 3.2 Religious Mysticism Embodied in Musical Composition

Harmony plays a key role in the expression of religious emotions in cello music. In Rachmaninoff's Cello Sonata in G minor, for example, the work opens with a harmonic system in G minor, and its melancholy and deep colors are metaphors for human original sin and earthly suffering. The frequent dissonances in the harmonic progression, such as increased

intervals, decreasing intervals, and discordant chords, break the traditional harmonic stability and accurately express the believer's reverence for the majesty of God (Cheran, 2023). When expressing pious feelings, the harmony tends to be smooth and harmonious, such as the alternation of the major, subordinate, and genus chords in G minor in the lyrical melody, showing the believer's love for God. In the climax, the grand and brilliant harmony is superimposed by multiple voices, creating a solemn atmosphere of angels praising God. At the end of the piece, the main chord returns to stability, symbolizing the salvation of believers and fully demonstrating the unique charm of harmony in the expression of religious feelings (Jiji, 2007). Bach's a cappella cello suite succeeds in creating a strong sense of religious ritual in the use of melodic lines. At the beginning of the movement, the slow and steady melodic rhythm, accompanied by small span notes, is as solemn and solemn as the opening prayer of the priest, leading the believer into a state of devotion. As the melody progresses, larger interval jumps and ornamentation are used to express the believer's praise to God. In terms of rhythm control, the dotted rhythm enhances the rhythm and stability of the melody, symbolizing the firm faith of believers; The syncopated rhythm breaks the conventional stress, adds variety and tension to the melody, and simulates the mystical part of a religious ritual (Vanscheeuwijck, 2010). At the end of the movement, the melody tends to calm down and the rhythm slows down, reflecting the inner peace of believers at the end of the religious ceremony, vividly showing the important role of the melody line in creating a sense of religious ceremony. In cello works, the echo of the rhythmic rhythm and religious rhythmic patterns significantly enhances the religious atmosphere of the music. Some of the works use variations of the rhythm of the chant, such as the adagio movement of a cello concerto on a religious theme, which is based on a slow and even rhythm and long note timing, creating a calm and solemn atmosphere, which is in line with the characteristics of the chant's steady and slow rhythm and emphasizing the clear expression of the lyrics, and guiding the audience into the realm of sacred religion. At the same time, the work will use different rhythms according to the emotional changes of different parts of the religious ceremony, such as the slow and gentle 4/4 time or 6/8 time for the prayer session, and the cheerful and powerful 3/4 time or 2/4 time for the praise session. Through the change of rhythm and beat, the diverse emotions in religious ceremonies are accurately expressed, and the religious appeal of music is strengthened (Propst, 2017).

#### 4. THE EXPRESSION OF RELIGIOUS MYSTICISM IN CELLO MUSIC

##### 4.1 Interpretation of Religious Mystic Sentiments by Playing Technique

The kneading technique plays a unique role in the expression of religious sentiment in cello playing. For example, Elgar's Cello Concerto in E minor is used to express deep emotions, with slow kneading speed, amplitude and low frequency, so that the notes are calm and long, like the believer's deep contemplation of religious mysteries, showing the fear and reverence for God. When expressing grief, the frequency of kneading the strings accelerates and decreases, simulating people's inner tremors when they are grieving, reflecting the forbearance and piety in the face of suffering in religion (McCrary, 1944). In the Adagio movement, the subtle changes in the speed, amplitude and frequency of the kneading strings are integrated into the religious ideas of life and death cycle and soul redemption, profoundly conveying the deep sorrow of religious emotions and showing the delicate expressiveness of the kneading technique in the interpretation of religious emotions. Glissandos and trills can simulate the special sound effects of religious ceremonies in cello playing, enhancing the religious mysticism of the music. In religious music, portamento can mimic the chanting of priests or monks, and the glissanda from low to high expresses praise and reverence for God and creates a solemn and sacred atmosphere. The vibrato can simulate mysterious sound effects such as wind and bells, and through the control of frequency and amplitude, such as a small breeze at high frequencies and a strong wind at low frequencies, simulating the echo of bells and enhancing the mysterious atmosphere of the music (Brown, 2019). In a solo cello piece on a religious theme, portamento is paired with a trill, and in the section expressing reverence for the gods, the portamento slides up the bass to symbolize the believer's proximity to God, and the trills simulate the wind to add mystical color, vividly showing the feelings of religious mysticism. When the cello plays a religious-themed piece, the dynamics control accurately expresses the ebb and flow of religious sentiments. In the performance of Bach's works, for example, in the passages that express the emotion of awe, the use of weaker dynamics, such as the opening section of an unaccompanied cello suite, is soft and loud like the humble whispers of believers, creating an atmosphere of mystery and solemnity, highlighting the majesty of God. As the music progresses, the intensity gradually increases as the emotion turns to devotion, as in the climax of the work, where the full and powerful voice shows the believer's firm faith and sincere piety (Hwang, 2008). In the cello

adaptation of Bach's "Matthew Passion", the intensity of the crucifixion scene is varied, the intensity is weak to express grief and awe in times of pain, and the intensity is increased to show firm faith in the case of gratitude and redemption, and the key role of strength control in the expression of religious emotions is clearly presented.

#### 4.2 Relationship Between the Performer and the Religious and Cultural Background

Religious players bring a unique depth to the interpretation of cello works. Pablo Casals, for example, grew up in a highly religious family and incorporated religious beliefs into his performances of Bach's a cappella suites. The precise grasp of rhythm in the performance, following the rhythm norms of religious ceremonies, gives the music a sense of solemnity. In terms of melodic processing, the melody is full of emotional tension through delicate techniques, such as the right kneading of the strings in the lyrical melody, pouring out the pious love for God. In terms of emotional expression, he deeply understands the religious emotions of the work, and the praise section is full of passion and power, and the compassion section is full of deep care. Casals's playing style is rigorous and solemn, in line with religious seriousness, so that the audience can feel the fusion of religious power and musical charm (Propst, 2017). Performers from different cultural backgrounds have their own interpretations of cello works on the same religious theme. Taking Saint-Saëns' "The Swan" as an example, Western performers are influenced by Western musical traditions, pay attention to musical structure and technique, accurately grasp the pitch and rhythm, and emphasize melody. The undulations and variations of the swan's grace and serenity are expressed with bright and clear treble and deep and rich bass, and its emotional expression is integrated into the understanding of religious emotions in Western culture, such as the fear and praise of God, and expresses reverence for the realm of holiness and purity through enhanced strength and emotional tension (Saint-Saëns et al., 1907). Influenced by Oriental culture, Oriental performers pay attention to musical conception and emotional connotation, and use soft and mellow timbre to create a quiet and distant atmosphere, reflecting a unique understanding of natural life. His emotional expression is integrated into the pursuit of religious emotions in Oriental culture, such as the yearning for inner tranquility and detachment, and expresses the yearning for a quiet and pure realm through gentle performance and delicate emotional processing, showing the significant influence of cultural background on the interpretation of the work.

## 5. CASE ANALYSIS

### 5.1 Hebrew Vespers: A Deep Expression of Jewish Religious Feelings

The Hebrew Vespers, originally sung by Jews on the feast of Atonement, was later adapted by Bruch for cello and orchestra, and has become a classic expression of Jewish religious sentiments in the history of music. The work was composed in 1881 at the invitation of the famous Jewish cellist Haussmann while working at the Liverpool Philharmonic. Bruch gave the work a unique artistic charm by adapting the melody of an old chant he heard at the Jewish Choral Society in Berlin (Klein, 1979). From a melodic point of view, the melody of the Hebrew Vespers is full of sadness and deep emotion. The music opens with a melody slowly unfolding in the lower register, like an ancient Hebrew chant echoing in the silent night. The melodic lines have little undulations, and the connection between the notes is tight, giving people a feeling of oppression and heaviness, as if telling the long and bitter history of the Jewish people (Eisen, 1983). During the development of the melody, the descending intervals that appear from time to time further intensify this sad emotion. In one passage, the melody descends from the higher registers, and the notes are elongated, as if the Jews sighed in their suffering. Harmony also plays an important role in the Hebrew Vespers. The colors of the harmony are dull and deep, predominantly in minor keys, creating a sad, solemn atmosphere. At the beginning of the piece, the harmony is based on D minor, which itself has a melancholy, sad quality that complements the sad emotions expressed by the melody. In the progression of the harmony, frequent dissonances, such as increased intervals, decreasing intervals, and discordant chords, further enhance the tension and sadness of the music. In one section, the sudden appearance of a reduced seventh chord, its sharp acoustics like lightning piercing the night sky, vividly expresses the inner pain and struggle of the Jews (Allen, 2018). In terms of rhythm, the Hebrew Vespers adopt a slow and steady rhythm, as if the slow and solemn pace of prayer of the Jews on the feast of Atonement. The change in the strength of the rhythm is not obvious, and the smooth rhythmic pattern runs through the whole piece, and this rhythmic treatment makes the music more reinforce the solemnity and sacredness of religious ceremonies. In some key passages, the tempo will suddenly pause or slow down, as if the prayer is deep in the contemplation and meditation, enhancing the emotional tension of the music (USIC et al., 2013). Through the skillful use of musical elements such as melody, harmony and rhythm, "Hebrew Vespers" profoundly embodies the history of suffering and religious devotion of the Jewish people, and



conveys a compassionate religious color. It allows the audience to feel the suffering and struggle of the Jewish people in the long course of history, as well as their adherence to religious beliefs and their desire for salvation.

## 5.2 Bach's Unaccompanied Cello Suite: A Reflection of the Religious Spirit of the Baroque Period

Bach's Unaccompanied Cello Suite was composed in 1720, when Bach was 35. At the golden age of creation, he worked in Korten, and with the support of Prince Korten, he had a stable and peaceful living environment, which provided good creative conditions for the birth of this classic. The six-piece suite, each consisting of an overture and five dance pieces, is tonally consistent but rich in form, combining the German El Alameander, the English Gig, the French Courante, the Spanish Sarabande and the minuet, demonstrating the diversity of Baroque music (Buelow, 1993). Structurally, suites usually follow a certain pattern, with overtures often opening with grandiose momentum that sets the tone for the whole piece. In the overture to the first suite, C major is the main key, and the lower parts such as the G string are used to configure the four harmonies, giving the structure of the whole work a main harmonic color. Its rhythm is bright, and the rapid flow of notes is like a musical depiction of the grand narrative of God's creation of the world, showing a vibrant power. The Sarabande is characterized by a slow and solemn rhythm, and in the third suite, the Sarabande is melodic and lyrical, the rhythm is calm, and every note seems to contain a sincere prayer to God, reflecting a restrained and deep religious feeling. The Jig dance music is lively and energetic, such as the Jig dance music of the sixth suite, with its fast rhythm and jumping notes, as if it is a praise and chant of God, showing the joyful and peaceful atmosphere of religious ceremonies (Propst, 2017). This contrast of rhythm and emotion between the different dance pieces makes the suite both unified and varied in structure, just as religious doctrine has both reverence for God's majesty and praise for God's love, showing the rich connotation of religious spirit. In terms of musical language, Bach skillfully uses polyphonic music, so that multiple melodic lines intertwine and echo each other, forming a complex and harmonious musical texture. In the Unaccompanied Cello Suite, the use of polyphony is ubiquitous, such as in the fugue section of the fifth suite, where the theme melody is presented in different parts one after another, and the various voices imitate and interweave each other, forming a close connection (Sagall & Sagall, 2021). This polyphonic structure can be seen as a musical interpretation of God's

divine order, with different melodic lines representing all things in the world, which coexist in harmony under God's order, embodying a harmony and perfection that transcends the world. The direction of the melody is also full of meaning, often expressing the awe of God, praise and the desire for the salvation of the soul through undulating lines. In some lyrical melodies, such as the Adagio movement of the second suite, the melody gradually rises, as if the soul is approaching God, expressing a yearning for salvation; And in some of the passionate melodies, such as the Allegro movement of the fourth suite, the melody has a large undulation and strong rhythm, as if it is a praise and praise of God, full of passion. Bach's use of virtuoso technique in his Unaccompanied Cello Suite is also subtle in order to convey the religious spirit. In fingering, he used legato, skipping and other techniques to make the expression of the melody more fluent and varied. When playing some lyrical passages, the use of legato technique can make the transitions between notes more natural, as if the believer is praying sincerely, and the emotions are coherent and deep. When playing some cheerful passages, the use of jumping techniques can make the notes livelier and enhance the rhythm of the music, as if it is a joyous celebration in a religious ceremony. In terms of bowing, Bach used techniques such as long bows and short bows to control the dynamics and timbre of the music (Castleton, 2018). When expressing the fear of God, the use of the longbow can produce a smooth and deep tone, creating a solemn, solemn atmosphere; And when expressing praise to God, the use of the short bow can make the timbre brighter and livelier, and enhance the vitality and passion of the music. Bach's "Unaccompanied Cello Suite" profoundly reflects the religious culture and spiritual connotation of the Baroque period through its unique structure, exquisite musical language and superb playing skills, and shows the sacredness and solemnity of religion. It is not only a classic in the history of cello music, but also a profound musical interpretation of the religious spirit, allowing the audience to feel the charm of religious mysticism in the process of appreciating the music.

### 5.3 Beethoven's Variations on the Theme of the Magic Flute: A Fusion of Religion and Secularity

Beethoven's Variations on the Theme of the Magic Flute is based on a theme from Mozart's opera The Magic Flute. Mozart's The Magic Flute, written in 1791, is the pinnacle of his operatic writing. The opera incorporates Freemasonry ideas and tells the story of the Egyptian prince Tamino who, with the help of the Magic Flute, is put to the test and finally rescues Pamina and uncovers the conspiracy of the Queen of the Night.

Its unique musical style is a classic in the history of music, skillfully blending mystical and holy religious colors with bright and cheerful secular colors (Misch & deCourcy, 1956). In Beethoven's *Variations on the Theme of the Magic Flute*, religious overtones are uniquely embodied. Militically, the theme is derived from a duet in *The Magic Flute*, in which the steward of the palace of Sarasto, the ruler of the "Land of Light", the Moorish Monostatos, and the two slaves. The melody itself has a mysterious and solemn temperament, which Beethoven further strengthened through the decoration, variation and development of the melody in the process of variation. In a variation, the notes of the melody are elongated and the tempo becomes slower, as if the believer is praying sincerely, full of solemnity and sacredness. In terms of harmony, Beethoven used rich harmonic techniques to enhance the religious atmosphere of the music. In some variations, he uses a large number of chord transpositions and dissonant chords to create a tense and mysterious harmonic effect, as if in a religious ritual of awe and exploration of unknown divine powers (Eckelmeyer, 1986). In a certain passage, the sudden dissonance chord breaks the original harmonic stability, giving people a strong auditory impact, as if the soul is shocked and in awe when facing God. And the secular color is also very evident in this work. Melody, the theme melody itself has a certain folk music style and is full of life. In his variations, Beethoven skillfully used various performance techniques, such as legato and jumping, to make the melody more lively and vivid, showing the joy and beauty of secular life. In a certain variation, through fast beats and lively rhythms, a cheerful and lively atmosphere is created, as if people are celebrating and carnivaling in secular life. In terms of rhythm, Beethoven adopted a variety of rhythmic patterns to enhance the dynamics and vitality of the music. In some variations, syncopated rhythms and dotted rhythms are used to make the rhythm more varied and fuller of the rhythm of secular life. In a certain passage, the use of syncopated rhythms makes the rhythm of the music more compact and fuller of vitality, showing the enthusiasm and vitality of secular life (Kinderman, 1998). In Beethoven's *Variations on the Theme of the Magic Flute*, he successfully blended the religious and the secular through the clever use of musical elements such as melody, harmony, and rhythm. This fusion not only shows the richness and diversity of the music, but also gives the work more depth and connotation. It allows the audience to feel the solemnity and sacredness of religion as well as the joy and beauty of secular life in the process of appreciating the music, and profoundly expresses the theme of the integration of religion and secular life (McKee, 2007).

## 6. THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGIOUS MYSTICISM ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF CELLO MUSIC

Religious mysticism provides cello music with a rich and unique subject matter, like an artistic treasure trove that constantly nourishes the composer's inspiration. Many religious stories, legends and imagery have become the source of cello music, which has greatly expanded the range of subjects in cello works (López-Íñiguez & Pozo, 2016). Religious mysticism has had a profound impact on the formation of cello music style, giving cello music unique stylistic characteristics such as solemnity, sacredness, and mystery. In terms of the formation of solemn style, the solemnity and solemnity of religious ceremonies provide a reference for cello music. During religious ceremonies, worshippers perform solemn prayers and worship with awe, and this atmosphere is reflected in the cello music, giving the work a solemn style. Many of Bach's cello works, such as the unaccompanied cello suites, are rigorously structured, rhythmic, melodic, full of reverence and praise for God, reflecting a solemn religious style. The formation of the sacred style is closely related to the reverence and pursuit of the gods in religion. The emphasis on the sacredness and transcendence of the gods in religious mysticism gives cello music a sacred style when expressing praise and praise to the gods. In some cello concertos with religious themes, the melody is often high-pitched and passionate, and the harmony is grand and brilliant, showing the greatness and sacredness of the gods through strong musical expression, so that the listener can feel a kind of divine power. The formation of the mystical style stems from the exploration and perception of the unknown and supernatural realm in religious mysticism. The depiction of images of heaven, hell, and souls in religious mysticism is full of mystery, and these are reflected in the cello music, giving the work a mystical style. In some mystical cello works, the melody often uses vague intervals and rhythms, and the harmony uses dissonant chords, creating a mysterious, hazy atmosphere, as if transporting the listener into a religious world full of unknowns and mysteries. Religious mysticism also contributed to the diverse development of cello musical styles. Different religious and cultural backgrounds and mystic genres have brought their own distinctive styles to cello music. Cello music under the influence of Western Christian culture may pay more attention to the expression of God's praise and redemption, and the style is more solemn and sacred; Cello music under the influence of Eastern Buddhist culture may emphasize inner tranquility and detachment, and the

style is more ethereal and serene (Liu, 2011). This diverse style enriches the expressive power of cello music and satisfies the aesthetic needs of different audiences. Religious mysticism also led to the fusion of cello music with other art forms, further expanding the breadth of artistic expression. In some musical works, the cello is combined with art forms such as painting, poetry, and drama to create a comprehensive artistic atmosphere. In some religious-themed concerts, it may be accompanied by the display of paintings, so that the audience can more intuitively feel the artistic charm of religious mysticism through the mutual echo of music and painting. This cross-art fusion not only enriches the artistic expression of cello music, but also brings a new artistic experience to the audience, making cello music reach a new height in artistic expression. The spread of cello music with religious mysticism between different cultures is like a bridge, crossing national and cultural boundaries and promoting cultural exchange and integration. In today's globalized world, music, as a language without borders, can break cultural barriers and allow people from different cultural backgrounds to meet and communicate in the world of music. Many cello works with religious mysticism have been widely disseminated on the international stage and have been loved and appreciated by audiences around the world. Saint-Saëns' "The Swan" is performed and appreciated all over the world for its serene and holy musical conception. It spans different religious and cultural backgrounds, whether in the West, where Christian culture is prevalent, or in the East, where Buddhist culture is deeply influenced, and it can resonate deeply with the listener's heart (Kayali, 2008). In the process of dissemination, this work conveys the spiritual connotation of purity and beauty in religious mysticism to people from different cultural backgrounds, and promotes cultural exchange and understanding. Cello music with religious mysticism plays an important role in the exchange and inheritance of musical culture. It promotes the exchange and integration of different cultures, becomes an important carrier of religious culture and musical traditions, and also stimulates the creative inspiration of contemporary composers and promotes the innovation and development of music culture. In the future development of music, cello music with religious mysticism will continue to exert its unique charm and make greater contributions to the prosperity of music culture.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

This study comprehensively and deeply analyzes the mapping and

expression of religious mysticism in cello music, and the results are fruitful. In terms of themes, works such as Bach's Passion for Matthew on cello, based on biblical stories, vividly narrate religious stories, while works with religious imagery such as Bloch's Solomon create a strong atmosphere of mystery. In terms of music composition, harmony, melodic lines, and rhythmic beats play a key role in expressing religious feelings, creating a sense of ritual, and echoing religious rhythmic patterns, such as the works of composers such as Rachmaninov and Bach. In terms of playing techniques, kneading, portamento, vibrato and dynamics control, the delicate interpretation of religious mysticism is reflected in works such as Elgar and Bach. The performers are closely related to the religious and cultural backgrounds, and the performers with religious beliefs inject unique emotional depth into the works, and the interpretations of the works with religious themes by performers from different cultural backgrounds are different. Through case studies of works such as The Hebrew Vespers, the embodiment of religious mysticism is further explored. Religious mysticism has had a profound impact on the development of cello music, enriching the themes and styles of creation, expanding the depth and breadth of expression, promoting the exchange and inheritance of musical culture, and inspiring contemporary composers.

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