

## Original Paper

# The Musical Meaning of the Sound of Henan Opera

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### Abstract

*Does music inherently possess meaning? How does musical meaning manifest in Henan Opera? This paper explores the musical meaning of Henan Opera, focusing on its sound and the aesthetic implications of its performance. Drawing on Mikel Dufrenne's assertion in his analysis of Johann Sebastian Bach that music holds an intrinsic meaning, this study investigates how Henan Opera similarly projects meaning through sound. Without meaningful interpretation, music risks becoming a series of chaotic sounds. Henan Opera, deeply rooted in the culture of the Henan people, has maintained its popularity for over a century despite its differences from more refined forms like Kunqu or Peking Opera. This paper establishes a research framework examining the musical meaning of Henan Opera from the perspectives of subjectivity, objectivity, and aesthetics. The study's significance lies in its contribution to music aesthetics, providing a deeper understanding of Henan Opera's essential role in cultural preservation.*

### Keywords

*musical meaning, sound, Henan Opera, characteristics*

## 1. Introduction

The research of music ontology and music "meaning" is the core problem of musicology and music philosophy. The ontological research of music is related to what music is, music aesthetics, music function, music content and form, music self-discipline and heteronomy, music and other art forms of the relationship, even involving music sociology and music education, teaching... And so on. Does music make sense? How does musical meaning exist? What is the meaning of sound in Henan Opera? Is there an inherent musical meaning? The study of music ontology or the meaning of music finally leads us to philosophy. In a larger context, we can even say that it is people's understanding of philosophy itself that fundamentally determines people's understanding of other things—including, of course, the music itself and its meaning (Alperson, 1994). The musical significance of sound should be discussed from the aesthetic point of view, no matter for drama or performance instruments or human

voice. Döbereiner argued that how to look at sound itself from the perspective of ontology—the aesthetic of sound. The basic problem of music and sound art, he advocated the dialectical materialism of sound, rather than equating sound with a quasi material thing (Döbereiner, 2014). Scholar Van Elferen also treats sound and timbre from a materialist and aesthetic perspective (Van Elferen, 2020). This paper mainly discusses the Henan opera has been innovating sound music sense, is undoubtedly for the existence of the objectivity and subjectivity of Henan opera has been innovating ontology, is not only in the study of Henan opera has been innovating the properties of the music works, but including the symbol of Henan opera has been innovating and denotative meaning, even including Henan opera has been innovating the audience's aesthetic demand, it can form Henan opera has been innovating sound music sense. Music is an ancient art, a simple fact is that since the apes have been separated until now, thousands of years since the music in various forms of expression has always been with us. Even more so today, with the development of music theory, the variety of music, the rich diversity of Musical Instruments, the diversity of music culture. Music accompanies or pervades our lives. So what does the "meaning" of music mean? This has always been the concern of music aesthetics, but also the concern of musicology as a whole. Music is an artificial art, its production is related to human needs, so its meaning is endowed by its creator and can only be fully understood by those who are familiar with it. From the point of view of acceptance, people always want to show and grasp the meaning of music when engaged in music practice or listening to music, from the epistemological point of view, it means that performers should perform attentively to meet the aesthetic requirements of the audience (Quillian, 2003). The musical meaning of the Henan Opera sound discussed here is related to "function and value" but not the same. It mainly asks what information people can get from Henan opera music after it is created according to needs. That is to say, how does the meaning of music appear when it realizes various functions, or how do people get its meaning from the music that Henan Opera is playing a certain communication function. Of course, this paper mainly discusses the significance and understanding of music when Henan Opera plays its aesthetic function. Meaning is meaning in understanding. Meaning is meaningless without understanding. Aesthetic appreciation is a profound feeling based on understanding. Therefore, the grasp of the meaning of music is an important condition for aesthetic appreciation, as well as the accompanying factors in aesthetic activities. Of course, the audience's aesthetic is also part of the musical meaning of a repertoire performer, like Beth Quillian's statement that we need to consider why we perform and what music does for us. Performances should not be for the admiration of those who come to listen, they are never satisfied (Quillian, 2003).

## **2. Maning of Musical Meaning and Its Way of Existence**

Music is highly developed in western culture. Since the 19th century, people have been debating the meaning of music. Meyer stated that both sides of the debate are called absolutist and referential. The former concludes that the meaning of music only exists above and below the work itself according to people's perception of the relationship expressed inside the music (Meyer, 2003). This meaning may be

called the absolute meaning of music. The latter holds that the meaning conveyed by music can somehow be attributed to concepts, actions, emotional states, and personality domains outside of music. This meaning can be called musical referential meaning. Meyer's view is that "neither absolute nor referential meaning are mutually exclusive: they can, and do, co-exist in the same musical work, as they do in leaven or painting. Meaning refers to a human's understanding of natural or social affairs, as well as the meanings given to various things by human beings. It is also the spiritual content transmitted and communicated by human beings in the form of symbols. The discussion of the "meaning of music" is a philosophical understanding, which involves the content of music semiotics. Semiotics is a discipline of symbols, symbol systems and their expressive meaning. Musicalsemiotics focus on seeking people's different understanding and understanding of music's meaning in culture (Davies, 1994). Some critics have particularized the meaning of "meaning" in music, arguing that it is different from the common understanding of "meaning". If the term 'meaning' has any meaning at all when applied to music, it must have the same meaning when applied to other types of experiences. Everything acquires meaning when it relates in different ways to something outside itself, and in this connection, its own nature is revealed. A rock, for example, may indicate to a geologist that a glacier retreated to a certain point at a certain time. To a farmer, it means that it interferes with the work and should be removed from the field. To a sculptor, it suggests the possibility of artistic creation. So the same thing may have different meanings because of its relationship with different things. But the meaning is not a property of things, and does not exist alone in the stimulus; Nor can meaning stand alone in the event or experience of the object to which it refers, indicates, or implies; Meaning is the product of the relationship between the stimulus and what it refers to or indicates. People can perceive the relationship, but the relationship itself does not exist in the mind of the perceiver. Mayeroncludes that meaning lies in the triad of the stimulus and the consequent consequence it refers to and the conscious observer. He thinks that in the process of human communication, meaning can be divided into designated meaning and embodied meaning. The former refers to the event or result that is different from its own type, while the latter refers to the event or result that is the same as its own type. Both meanings are reflected in music, especially the absolute meaning in music belongs to the latter (Meyer, 2003). Davies examines that the meaning of the work belongs to the sound world of music. Only when people realize the strengths and weaknesses of music in its most abstract state can the contribution of music in songs, operas, films and so on become apparent (Davies, 1994). Neff and Schoenberg examines that music is the product and tool of communication between people, and the meaning of music lies in the relationship between the participants (composer, performer) and the audience (Neff & Schoenberg, 2006). In the past, it was one-sided to focus only on the musical work itself without considering the reaction and experience of the audience to the music, and in fact, it has caused difficulties in the study of the meaning of music, for example, questions about the nature of the music, not refer significance is chaotic, is related to the two kinds of erroneous tendencies, one is the meaning just placed one party in the communication process: the other one is the meaning of all

human-generated in the process of communication as refers to the qualitative or indicate, which ignores the function of current significance. Work directly from the music of the recipient, experiences and the appreciation Angle to examine the aesthetic process of music, and in the activities of the communication process to explore the problem of emotion and meaning of music, it is important to music the participation of the audience, emphasized in the process of music aesthetics, the role of the main bodies of the viewer. Although in the history of music, both the east and the west, music is composed of three links (creation, singing and enjoying the play, in the study, the main or even completely focus on music on the work itself and the author's aesthetic intentions and put the viewer in a passive position, rarely in-depth process of music appreciation to explore the meaning of music substantive issues. In fact, due respect should be given to the status of music listeners, and art appreciation should be regarded as "participants" and "partakers" of artistic creation, in the book *Music Alone*, Kivy provides an explanation of some of the how we might achieve pleasure from the experience of musical structures (Kivy, 2002). So I think we should put the audience in its rightful place, through to the appreciation of the audience in the process of perception, attention, imagination, expectation, memory, and emotional reactions such as psychological process, as well as to appreciate the personal and the contents of the music works to explore the problems of the filling and rich, to study music emotion and meaning of the question. The following discussion is based on the musical significance of the sound of Henan Opera.

### **3. The Characteristics of the Musical Meaning of Henan Opera**

Henan opera has been innovating, formerly known as Henan bangzi (hereinafter referred to as yu bang) (Zhang, 2010). In the process of development of Henan opera has been innovating art for its melodious singing flavor, unique, rich forms, such as plate structure shows comprehensive aesthetic implication, with its strong local characteristics and local flavor, easy understanding the verbal expression, and profound drama ideas, constantly by the broad masses of audience's hands, and then out of Henan, go abroad, Go out into the world.

#### **3.1 Symbolic Meaning**

Name is a symbol, in the life of an individual who is a symbol for social, character throughout the human life field, it is on people's ideology, psychological feelings, activities of specification plays a huge role, points to the significance, works as a music or a melody or a musical instrument has a certain function, It becomes a symbol in a specific sense, a specific symbol (Ridley, 2007). Symbols also have the function of visualization, connection, or imitation. People associate the characteristics of a musical symbol with another way of object expression, so as to achieve the pointing function of indirectly expressing an image. The symbol of music also contains the function of expression and communication, which can only function within the scope of a group consensus and agreement. Without such specific conditions, communication and expression would be impossible. The same patriotic song, in front of people who have the same experience, will have a strong resonance. The

singing music of Henan Opera develops with the development of vocal music and the two complement each other and depend on each other. In the process of its development, it has inherited the traditional Chinese singing skills and theories and has been nourished by the language, tone, and local customs of the Henan people for a long time, forming its own unique style and lasting appeal. Henan opera, the typical representative of Henan folk music, formerly known as "Henan Bangzi", has a history of more than 200 years since the Reign of Emperor Qianjia. Because early performers sang in their natural voice, they used the falsetto to raise the end of the song or Acura, or Henan Acura, when they started or ended the song (Duan. 2016). The singing music of Henan opera has strong local color, and its characteristics are kind and simple, enthusiastic and unrestrained, strong and straightforward, which permeates the local conditions and customs of Henan province and the simple folk customs of the central Plains people. Therefore, Henan opera is a bridge to construct Henan folk art and culture and plays an irreplaceable role in the development of central Plains folk music art. The Yellow River civilization with The Heluo culture as its core is good at absorbing and integrating the essence of civilization from different regions, forming a stable, mainstay, and indestructible cultural status of the Yellow River civilization, and thus developing into a leading Chinese civilization.

### *3.2 Denotation Meaning*

This meaning is beyond the meaning of music itself, and the extension of Henan Opera music is reflected in the following two aspects. One is the influence of "the political tendency of the play". Most of its dramas are loyalty and adultery dramas, crime dramas, and martial arts dramas. Such as Bao Gong opera, Yang Jia General opera, three Kingdoms opera, and so on. The characters are the active defenders and protectors of the state or dynastic regime. It embodies the national thought of unity in Heluo culture. Second, is the influence of "thought, morality, and concept". The emergence of the hundred schools of thought, represented by Confucianism, has profoundly expounded China's political concepts, ideological concepts, aesthetic concepts, and moral concepts. These concepts are fully reflected in the singing music culture of Henan opera. The musical structure and style characteristics of the singing music of Henan Opera are closely related to the cultural soil of Henan, which will not disappear now, nor will it disappear in the future. The singing music of Henan opera is inextricably linked with the Henan dialect, which is exactly where the charm of local sound and rhyme lies (Li, 2020; Dunner, 2016). With the continuous development of The Times, people's values, life interests, aesthetic quality, behavior mode, and thinking state will inevitably move forward. Survival of the fittest, survival of the fittest, is the inevitable development of history. Henan opera singing music to maintain fresh vitality and strong competitiveness, the combination of culture and economy is the current inheritance and development of the urgent matter. First of all, the cultural industry, as a product of the integration and integration of economy and culture, has become an emerging industry with the most vitality and development potential. It is an important measure for Henan to build a strong cultural province to develop Henan opera singing music as a breakthrough of the cultural industry. Secondly, the integration of Henan opera singing music cultural resources, widely absorb idle social capital into

the Henan opera cultural industry, gradually improve the multi-channel diversified financing mechanism, and encourage social capital to set up a variety of legitimate Henan opera cultural enterprises and Henan opera performance groups. In short, the singing music culture of Henan Opera has a long history, which reflects its characteristics in singing music style from its cultural background and music structure. The three are in the same line and related to each other. In today's era of rapid thinking, rich emotion, and innovative artistic pursuit, the style, and characteristics of singing music of Henan Opera can better adapt to people's aesthetic taste and colorful life and have more detailed and vivid artistic expression and appeal (Chang, 2011; Ji, 2008; Wang, 2006; Li, 2020). Henan opera singing music has created a brilliant past, it will also have a more brilliant future. It is determined by different personal experiences, different natural environments, different social structures, and cultural traditions. The connotations and denotation of music give untold meaning to people.

#### **4. Look at the Musical Significance of Henan Opera from the Aesthetic Perspective**

As a philosophical proposition, beauty is the general meaning of metaphysics, while as a specific aesthetic judgment, it is appropriate for people, places, times and situations. According to Pythagoras's theory of the fifth phase, vibrating strings sound harmonious when the lengths of strings under the same tension form a simple integer ratio. It establishes the inner connection between east and west and beauty. Kamp argues that both formal and emotive aspects are equally important in determining the artistic worth of music. Although the formalist would have us believe that the aesthetic worth of instrumental music is found solely in its form, excluding the expressive characteristics of music from our aesthetic judgment of it is erroneous. And he contends that formal as well as expressive traits are subjectively determined components of our aesthetic experience, and that it is these features, exhibited in our experience, that are the subjects of our aesthetic judgments (Kamp, 2008). For Henan opera has been innovating from the voice from the combination of vertical and horizontal, color contrast and unity, the sound structure of macro and micro aspects to reflect the meaning of beauty, to practice "is between the parts and the inherent harmony" between each part and the overall principle, however, for a beautiful sentence is broken by people because of the ground because of the affection when appropriate. Music is inherently aesthetic, and any society that creates it is already concerned, however primitive, with something that has no purpose other than itself.

#### **5. Conclusion**

To the music significance of this problem has lasted for a long time, many experts from different angles and various analyses of the meaning of the music are supposed to study this problem can be a variety of methods, most of the literature from the perspective of semiotics leads to point to the nature of the music, and the objective and subjective aesthetic linked with the meaning of the music, Some scholars put the meaning of music into the music works to consider this problem, and believe that the appearance of music is a metaphysical meaning. This paper mainly discusses the musical significance

of the sound of Henan Opera. There is no very rich research literature on the musical significance of Henan Opera in China. Therefore, the discussion will continue.

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