

THE ROLE OF MUSICAL HERMENEUTICS IN THE FORMATION OF A CULTURE OF INTERPRETATION IN PERFORMERS

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Article History: Received on 30th January 2020, Revised on 19th March 2020, Published on 27th May 2020

Abstract

Purpose of the study: The purpose of this work is to consider the possibilities of hermeneutics in developing the skill of understanding a musical text as one of the main mental abilities of musician-performers.

Methodology: The study is based on the method of hermeneutics, the method of analyzing a musical text, which is widely used in the humanities and social sciences in general and plays an essential role in art criticism. Unlike other methods, text analysis uses the point of view of the author of the text. Interpretative and content analysis are the two primary forms of textual analysis of cultural artifacts. Interpreting textual analysis seeks to go beyond the surface of the meaning and explore the hidden "message" of the author.

Main Findings: The main findings of the study are that the role of musical hermeneutics is important in the professional training of contemporary performers in connection with the need to develop their ability to understand a musical text and form a culture of interpretation.

Applications of this study: This research can be used in musicological analysis and the process of professional education of musician-performers and theorists. The novelty of the work consists in proving the effectiveness of the method of musical hermeneutics in the formation of a culture of interpretation in performers.

Novelty/Originality of this study: The method turned out to be effective for not only the theory of literature, hermeneutics, and semiotics, but also for musicology and the work of composers and performers directly working with intertexts.

Keywords: *Music, Hermeneutics, Performance, Interpretation, Musical Text, Composition, Concept.*

INTRODUCTION

The study of music as a language that generates musical texts ([Akopian, 1995](#); [Aranovskii, 1998](#); [Zbikowski, 2008](#)) has started due to a linguistic breakthrough that influenced almost all sciences (a human is studied as a text in biosemiotics, the brain as a text in neurosemiotics) and has opened up a whole range of possibilities in understanding its structure and meaning. In music, this direction is called hermeneutics – the science of understanding the meaning and explaining the figurative and semantic concepts of composition and interpretation of musical information. At the beginning of its journey (60-70s), ideas were drawn from the works of philosophers and linguists, then, after having passed a number of stages of its development, musical hermeneutics evaded direct analogies with structural linguistics and semiotics and, despite common terminology, found its own objects of study and methodology ([Galatenko, 2007](#); [Gerver, 2001](#)).

The immanent feature of musicology is the dialogue with related sciences. The role of hermeneutics in the development of the ability to understand a musical text as a basic skill of performing art is significant because it determines the formation of a culture of interpretation in a musician. This is a purposeful and phased process of educating visual thinking, sensory perception, aesthetic sense, and knowledge of the semantic depths of musical compositions. Interpretation is the expression of one's personal attitude to the musical image and meaning and introduction of one's own semantic connotations into an author's concept of composition. Performance is meaningless without interpretation.

Before playing the composition, an instrumentalist solves a problem task – they analyze a specific creative situation, applying in practice both acquired knowledge, skills, and abilities and using a heuristic, problem-searching thinking, which requires development during training ([Pereverzeva et al., 2018](#)). Essentially, performance is the interpretation of a text, the expression by a musician of their understanding of composition through the style and concept of interpretation. Musicology, along with other sciences, seeks to synthesize the knowledge accumulated by humankind by understanding the technology of discovery, which is always located at the intersection of various scientific fields. Therefore, hermeneutics enriches the methodology of musicology, thereby contributing to the formation of the professional competence of a performer.

Dealing with the very object of artistic discoveries, which include music, musicology is consolidating with other sciences, one of the highest of which is hermeneutics. Methods of material analysis also become common. One of them is the search for analogies of music in painting, architecture, theatre, and literature, which help to understand the language of the art of sounds. It has long been logical to study the musicality of verses with a detailed analysis of their

intonational structure ([Vygotzky, 1986](#)). The principles of symphonic development are considered in relation to Silver Age poetry (A. Blok, O. Mandelstam, M. Kuzmin, A. Bely, V. Khlebnikov).

The development of analytical and interpretative skills necessary to solve the professional tasks of a musician-performer today seems to be one of the urgent and complex pedagogical problems. The study by [Medushevskii \(1993\)](#) has been a significant milestone, in which the nature of music has been analyzed from the standpoint of neuropsychology and the idea of the brain as a system that combines two opposite “personalities” (right and left hemispheres) in constant dialogue. An explanation of the different meanings of musical styles is given from the perspective of the functional asymmetry of the brain, the specific influence of each of the hemispheres on the picture of the world embodied by the composer, and the corresponding choice of lexical means. The advantage of the rational-logical – as a result of the action of the left hemisphere, the predominance of the emotional-rational – as the primacy of the right one.

There is a variety of methods and approaches to study the art of interpretation: analysis of a text and means of musical expression ([Eckerson, 2012](#)), listening to music with explanation and joint discussion ([Reynolds, 2012](#)), evaluating and comparing the performances of compositions by different performers with revealing the peculiarities of the figurative and semantic interpretation of the meaning ([Kramer, 2016](#)), and, obviously, actual work on the composition during self-preparation ([Hamlin, 2015](#)). However, the development of musical hermeneutics as a science that helps to understand the meaning and explain the figurative and semantic concepts of composition ([Enescu, 2015](#)), to interpret musical information ([Pylaeva and Pylaev, 2017](#)), and to transmit the author’s conception to listeners is the most successful ([Pontara, 2015](#)). Foreign scholars widely use the method of hermeneutic analysis in relation to both old ([Benhamou, 2019](#); [Riera, 2015](#); [Yee, 2018](#)) and new music ([Adolph, 2015](#); [Bitzan, 2016](#); [Clarke, 2011](#)), including the pop genre ([Moore, 2016](#); [Ambrosch, 2017](#)). However, avant-garde music, which is usually hard to perceive and to understand, has only recently become the subject of hermeneutic analysis carried out by art historians and culturologists.

METHODOLOGY

The interaction of different directions of thought and their scientific consolidation are facilitated by a metaphor as a statement or an image given in allegorical meaning with multiple meanings. The expansion of the context of the use of this term is directly related to the development of musical hermeneutics. Any communication, including music, is not conceived without metaphorical images, the interpretation of which gives a new understanding of old truths. The performer’s knowledge of a musical composition, as well as its interpretation, is an act of communication, the transmission of meanings from the composer to the listener. The metaphor serves as one of the objects of text analysis of music as an art form.

The method of researching the role and place of hermeneutics in the training of musician-performers is to identify the relationship between metaphors and the semantic content of compositions, which is the main object of interpretation of a performer. The metaphor is investigated in the study based on hermeneutics as a statement or image that has multiple meanings. Hermeneutics is based on the method of analyzing a musical text, which is widely used in the humanities and social sciences and plays an important role in art criticism. Unlike other methods, in-text analysis, the point of view of the author of the text is used ([Gutiérrez-Pozo, 2019](#)). Interpretative and content analysis are the two main forms of text analysis of cultural artifacts. Interpreting text analysis seeks to go beyond the surface and to explore the hidden meaning of the message of the author.

The process of cognition of metaphors and the semantics of compositions revealed by them has been studied during a pedagogical experiment with the participation of students from Moscow and St. Petersburg conservatories. The hypothesis of the research is that it is the semantic ambiguity of an allegorical statement or image that allows musicians to grasp the meaning of the composition. Therefore, hermeneutics as a science of training of performers plays a crucial role, because it forms such important skills and abilities for the art of interpretation as understanding musical language and the ability to express it in their own performance.

RESULTS

An allegory in a metaphor is based on the transfer of meaning from one sphere to another. A game with generally accepted meanings, a way out of the usual context, as a result of which, a univocal interpretation becomes impossible – these are the realities of the functioning of a metaphor. With the help of a metaphor, the effect of special expressiveness is achieved in artistic, oratorical, and publicistic speech, art, and the fields of scientific knowledge. An unexpected element, being integrated into the system, sharply increases its semantic capacity. A rare, unexpected combination of semantic elements gives rise to a new metaphor. The creation of metaphors seems to be the general principle of the formation of new ideas that arise as a result of an unusual clash of meanings. The metaphor is directly involved in the creation of a new meaning.

The process of cognition of composition by a musician-performer occurs during the study of special and professionally-oriented disciplines ([Pereverzeva et al., 2018](#)), such as the history and theory of music, analysis of musical compositions, playing an instrument, etc. This is a search for meaning through understanding the musical language and means of

expression, as well as through the identification of the meaning of metaphors. The execution of the composition, in turn, is an expression of the discovered meaning, as well as the birth of new ones due to the metaphor and its interpretation.

The language of metaphors is one of the universal languages of human communication and the most important mean of art, providing the disclosure of the creative potential of not only a literary text, but also the personality of the creator, including the performer. A metaphor allows seeing the world in a new light. Metaphorically, transference contributes to the metaphorical development of the world, to which the musical performing arts belong. The most important feature of a metaphor is its ability to create an internal subtext, a supporting plan, which serves to enhance the meaning of composition, its idea, and the intention of a composer. Thus, biblical images “served as one of the most important sources of the formation of Pushkin’s poetics,” notes [Lotman \(2007\)](#).

The musical language, its expressive nature, and intertextual characteristics turned out to be the most important source of metaphors. The musical text plays with metaphors and its elements constantly change their semantic coloring, gaining additional aesthetic information, which allows diversifying the composition with additional associations, making the performer's interpretation richer, brighter, and more diverse. Familiar sounds form new content. Thus, more and more new interpretations of works of art of the past are born.

The musical language is metaphorical by definition. Its figurative and expressive essence is characterized by the transfer of literal meanings or life realities into the sphere of conventional meanings of the language of sounds. In addition, music has its own metaphorical field, which arises when the composer refers to techniques that use a “strange word” – quoting, stylization, adaptation. At the same time, the quote acquires a double meaning: preserving the old, original, and figurative – the new meaning associated with a different context. This happens in polystylism.

Thus, the Haydn-Mozart style used by M. Mussorgsky in the song “The Classicist” acquires a negative characteristic in connection with the satirical meaning of the composition – classical vocabulary gets a metaphorical coloring and the novelty is manifested in an unusual interpretation of the usual. C-dur in the context of the musical language of A. Schnittke also acquires a feature of a metaphor because it exceeds its original value and is endowed with special characteristics of meaning. The musician-performer learns all this using the methods of hermeneutic analysis of a musical text from the point of view of expressive means.

A metaphor helps to unite conflicting meanings into a single whole. There is always a certain contradiction between the material and the form in a literary text, as L. Vygotsky said, “An author deliberately selects difficult material that resists to the author’ effort to say what they want to say” ([Vygotsky, 1986, p. 211](#)). That is why metaphors are chosen for the students of conservatories to master the methods of hermeneutic analysis of the text as a solution of the contradictions between the usual meaning of a musical instrument and its new meaning due to the unusual use of this tool. The semantics of metaphors are determined based on the brainstorming principle, in the course of students’ independent reasoning and their search for different meanings of metaphors.

The semantic richness of a language directly depends on the presence of metaphors in it and, in general, on the degree of its metaphor. “To interpret a text does not mean to endow it with concrete meaning, but, on the contrary, to understand it as an embodied plurality”, notes [Barthes \(2001\)](#). This protects the material from simplifications, for example, in the case of authors using deliberately standard means. Students of the Orchestral Department of the Moscow Conservatory were given the task to determine the meaning of the “children’s” style of marches, waltzes, and polkas of D. D. Shostakovich, as well as the folklore language of V. Gavrilin. While looking for the meaning of the use of such metaphors, the musician-performers saw in this a deep subtext that determines the psychological characteristics of the material with its inherent multidimensionality and voluminous counterpoint. External simplicity was taken by students literally but was included in a metaphorical context.

The students expressed more than a dozen assumptions, analyzing the use of standard means by composers. As a result of a collective discussion, they came to the following conclusion: the style of neoclassical or neofolk music symbolizes purity, beauty, balance, and harmony of the art of the past and its introduction into the context of modern music expresses nostalgia for lost purity, beauty, balance, and harmony.

DISCUSSION

Traditional musicology in the analysis of compositions is usually limited to considering the musical text from the point of view of the history and theory of music, psychology, and philosophy ([Akopian, 1995](#); [Aranovskii, 1998](#); [Medushevskii, 1993](#); [Kramer, 2001](#), [Zbikowski, 2008](#)). However, hermeneutics has developed a method for analyzing intertextuality, first applied in the literary works of [Kristeva \(2004\)](#). The method turned out to be effective for not only the theory of literature, hermeneutics, and semiotics, but also for musicology and the work of composers and performers directly working with intertexts. The poetics of intertext (“strange word”) attracts many scientists, including Barthes ([1989](#); [2001](#)). In particular, he writes that the text is “nothing more than echoes of something that has already been read, seen, done, experienced” ([Barthes, 1989](#)). The intertext theory offers three aspects of the consideration of the problem: 1) direct borrowing, quoting, or inclusion of a statement belonging to another author; 2) borrowing an image or a hint of

the figurative system of another work; 3) borrowing ideas, worldview, or way of reflecting the world. The music borrows its meanings from other areas, combining distant objects in its field.

Various influences and borrowings, unidentified and deliberate quotes, reminiscences, stylizations, allusions, parodies – all this creates a dialogue between the once voiced and newly voiced, coloring someone else's word with a new meaning. A halo of the implied is tuned over a sounding one and infinity of literary text arises. According to the theory of R. Barthes, the text consists of a huge number of cultural codes that are used unconsciously by the author ([Barthes, 1989](#)). Based on this feature of the infinity of the text, postmodernism is growing with its many variations and transcriptions of well-known subjects, which hermeneutics studies.

Intertextuality in music is a common pattern; only the degree of its awareness has been changing. For example, in the finale of Schubert's A-dur piano sonata (1828), a vivid allusion to Beethoven's "Moonlight" sonata is used. The similarity of Schubert and Beethoven intonations in itself is not a surprise, especially when speaking about the intonations of a heroic or heroic-tragic nature. Students of the Moscow Conservatory who studied Schubert's sonata from the point of view of hermeneutic analysis immediately noticed this. However, while not possessing the entire methodology of hermeneutics, students did not realize the wider intertextuality of the Schubert language: "Moonlight" became a sign of romanticism, often used in 20th-century music.

In this regard, students of the performing department were given the task to carefully follow the movement to intonations that evoke associations with the "Moonlight" in the finale of the A-dur sonata and formulate conclusions. Students found that this movement is gradual. First, triplets appear (first episode of the rondo form), then the key of cis-moll and familiar intonations with a characteristic textured pattern and roll call of registers (second episode). Due to hermeneutic analysis, the logic of this process became obvious to the students: the long-term accumulation and gradual cultivation of various elements associated with "Moonlight" (texture, key, intonation) and the equally long departure from them with a return to the original material. A similar concept characterizes modern polystylistic compositions, in which an additional cultural layer is built up around an art object – a reference not only to it but also to its other embodiments.

Therefore, hermeneutics as science uses the method of analysis of a musical text, which is widely used in art criticism. The results of its application in the study of compositions, including metaphors and intertextuality, are demonstrated in this work. Moreover, this method was used in the course of the history of music at the performing faculty of the Moscow and St. Petersburg Conservatoires and was proved to be effective in the formation of a culture of interpretation of musician-performers. In previous studies, the role of hermeneutics in the formation of text understanding skills and a culture of music interpretation of future musicians had not been studied in detail and the possibilities of the hermeneutical analysis method had not been applied in pedagogical practice. In the course of the experiment, the potential of the hermeneutic method in the development of visual thinking, sensory perception, and the skill of cognition of the semantic depths of musical compositions by analyzing the text was confirmed.

One of the problem tasks assigned to the students of the conservatories was a text analysis of a number of polystylistic compositions of the Russian avant-garde artists A. Schnittke and E. Denisov and the identification of all semantic layers of the compositions ([Verishko, 2004](#)). The results of the students' studies were not only specific quotes, allusions, and embodied concepts of compositions, but also the systematization of techniques for creating intertextual meanings.

Variation cycles of E. Denisov on the themes of Haydn, Bach, Handel, Schubert, and Mozart, as students found at the classes on the history of music, refer not only to the original source but also to the composer who already worked with them. Participants of the experiment called this polystylistic method "commentary transcription". For example, in variations on the Bach chorale, Denisov referred to Berg's violin concerto, in which this theme was used, and the text of the Handel cycle contains an allusion to the style of Brahms, who also used the famous theme.

A. Schnittke in the Piano Sonata No. 2 included elements used by A. Honegger in his prelude – arioso and fughetta with various modifications of the BACH monogram. This monogram is found in Schnittke's compositions a lot, for example, in the Violin Sonatas No. 1 and No. 2. In the Piano Sonata No. 2, there are only references to the use of the BACH monogram. The second part of the sonata is a sarabande, which resembles D. Shostakovich's C-dur prelude from the cycle of 24 preludes and fugues, which in turn is also an allusion to Bach's prelude. The students, having discovered these intertextual connections, called the technique "double allusion", which is created through texture, intonation, or genre analogies.

Another discovery of the students at the lessons on the history of music, made during text analysis, was that in the Piano Sonata No. 2 Schnittke does not use the usual dialogue, rather, philosophically comprehends his "echoes", the Bach paradigm as a whole. Its value in the composition is as significant as the original source – this is one of the ideas of the composition.

The performing interpretation is based on the evaluation of composition and its own attitude to it, which is formed in the process of rational and spiritual cognition of the author's message. The discovery by an artist of new dimensions of artistic material forms the intertextual connections that have existed in culture for centuries. However, to discover these connections, making both the executable composition and its interpreter, a part of world culture helps hermeneutics as a

science of cognition and interpretation of musical compositions as copyright texts. The musical language is metaphorical, due to which, a new reality is born in the life of old ideas. As A. Gutiérrez-Pozo points out when speaking of the literary essay genre, "hermeneutic nature of essay philosophy allows for pluralist thought and can be summed up by the concept of wandering meaning" (Kramer, 2001).

CONCLUSION

A sharp change in the perception of life associated with the reassessment of spiritual values contributes to a new sense of space, time, and ideas. Art becomes a sociocultural reality, losing its boundaries associated with the conventionality of the depiction of life. The space of life overloaded with information does not leave a place in it for the personality and its self-expression. Its only form remains creativity, which determines the individualization and pluralism of thinking and the realization of the creative potential of a person. Performing music allows realizing the creative potential of a musician at the maximum level because the interpretation of the composition is the creation of its new meaning, encrypted in a musical text.

Creativity is essentially the embodiment of an idea, requiring organizing principles to preserve the general semantic contours of the idea as an extra-textual reality. Preserving in the memory of a musical text, these organizing principles can be deciphered using hermeneutic methods, which allows to more accurately reconstruct the semantic dimension of the composition. That is why the role of musical hermeneutics in the training of modern performers, one of the main skills of which was and remains the understanding of a musical text, as the basis of a culture of interpretation, is significant.

LIMITATION AND STUDY FORWARD

The application of the methods of musical hermeneutics in the process of training musicians-performers, the development of their educational and concert repertoire, the formation of professional interpretative skills and abilities, and the development of interpretative thinking is just beginning. The prospects for further studies of the role of hermeneutics in the development of a culture of interpretation of musicians are associated with wider testing of the application of hermeneutics in practical pedagogical activities, experimental pedagogical research, including the development of diagnostic tools, assessing the level of development of interpretative thinking in musicians before and after the implementation of the hermeneutical approach its development.

AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION

Dina Vladimirovna Kharicheva structured the experimental design, conducted literature review and wrote a major portion of the paper. Elena Anatolyevna Meleshkina formulated the problem and hypothesis and wrote a major portion of the paper. Lyudmila Voldemarovna Bigler collected the data and wrote a major portion of the paper. Sergei Nikolaevich Baidalinov organized and conducted the statistical analysis. Anna Valeryevna Zhilina interpreted the results and wrote a major portion of the paper.

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