

# Research Methods of the Musical Aesthetics Verbalization in the Context of Russian-Language Social Networks

Demchuk Max  
Chelyabinsk State University  
Russia  
demchukmax74@gmail.com

## ABSTRACT

The article identifies and discusses methods, relevant to the research design necessary to determine how musical aesthetics is verbalized in modern communication on the example of Russian-speaking social networks. The author believes that it is within the framework of a mixed type study that one can determine the features of the music interaction, its verbal description and consciousness at the time of certain musical structures perception. The article discusses the possibility of an appropriate research constructing.

## CCS CONCEPTS

• **Human-centred computing** → **Collaborative and social computing**; Social networks • **Applied computing** → Arts and humanities; Sound and music computing

## KEYWORDS

Aesthetics, mass media, social networks, methods, music, cognitive aesthetics, transmediality

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The media aesthetic approach to the study of modern communication enables the person's physical condition affected by an emotional impact analysis, as well as the imaginative perception of the world and the way one represents the affective tone to reality. A scientific study of the musical aesthetics verbalization will provide an opportunity to answer a number of unresolved issues related to the figurative impact of musical phrases upon certain ethnic and social groups. Also it will explain sudden popularity of some musicians within certain cultural fields. It will also make it possible to develop recommendations on the music communication management on the national level, which is increasingly engaged in social interaction. It is necessary to find out what qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods can be relevant to the task of searching upon the interaction features of music itself, its verbalization and the state of a perceiving mind.

## 2 Theoretical and methodological basis

### 2.1 Aesthetics

Plato, as one of the originator of the term aesthetics, believed that aesthetics meant not a material thing, but an idea, something absolute. One strives for beauty. One should strive from immediate material aesthetics to aesthetics of ideas. Aesthetics is not only a sensual, but also a spiritual phenomenon. Aristotle stated that aesthetics does not make sense without a physical object. It is not an idea that is beautiful, but its objective quality. Ideas must be embodied in an object of the material world. The idea of a thing, form, becomes aesthetics only when the matter is treated by a master. So, the notes, perceiving the idea of a composer, turn into an integral work, and words into a text. But art is nothing more than a nature imitation. Plato's ideas are developed later by Plotinus. In particular, his idea of emanationism, that is, of expiration, deserves attention. According to Plotinus, aesthetic beauty descends to aesthetically pleasing objects from the Supreme Being. Everything beautiful in the world is nothing more than a manifestation of the Supreme Being, that makes up the nature of beauty. If there is something beautiful in details, then the whole thing must be as well, beyond any specific manifestations.

Kant, within the framework of the European idealistic theory of aesthetics, wrote that there is the supreme feeling, called the power of judgment, between the man's mind, reason, will and knowledge. Despite being alike with the mind, the tasks of this function are somewhat different. It does not know objects, but dissects them from the point of view of expediency, divides into two types: objectively-expedient and subjectively-expedient. Subjectively-expedient object is one that fulfils its purpose (logically beautiful), and subjectively-appropriate one that corresponds to the nature of the individual cognitive ability. According to Kant, nature is not endowed with any appropriate force, however the humanity believes so. The idea of the goal, along with other human ideas, is an effective regulator of human life activity. The beautiful, according to Kant, like everything else is vital for human, because it is considered without self-interest and any practical need. An aesthetically beautiful creates harmony in a soul and brings order to thinking and intuition. Beautiful is a subjective and formal expediency without a goal.

The views on aesthetics in the twentieth century are most fully and vividly represented in the studies of John Dewey and Theodor Adorno. John Dewey, as one of the founders of pragmatic aesthetics, has formulated the law of continuity, which is based on the principle of infinite links

lying between the subject and the object. Aesthetic experience is the essence of the ordinary experience of perception. According to Dewey, the boundaries between the aesthetic and the non-aesthetic practically do not exist. The meaning of this approach is that any activity between the subject and the object possesses artistic value, within the framework of which harmony is established. And it is accompanied by aesthetic pleasure. Aesthetics is a harmonious organization of experience. In this regard, a work of art can be indistinguishable from the objects of everyday life. The theory of John Dewey is the foundation of modern art.

Theodor Adorno's main thesis is the understanding of syncretic art, that harmoniously combines different types of material (it means not only something tangible, but also, for example, sound and word). The work of art, despite its artificial origin, is the same, creates its nature, since the variety of forms refers to the nature of the subject. At the same time, art (in its striving to catch aesthetic pleasure and harmony) is not an imitation of nature, but of its beauty, which affects people. It eludes human understanding in connection with its imperfection. Works of art are goods, but at the same time they are an opposition to the productive base of society, criticizing it through their existence.

## **2.2 A musical work as a channel for transmitting information**

According to Niklas Luhmann, mass media are all mass products produced not for a specific individual or group of people, but for an undefined addressee. Marshall McLuhan considered all objects of culture, "artifacts", as a means of communication. On the basis of these two theories, it can be argued that music, along with traditional means of communication, is one of the channels for transmitting information. Information in this case is emotional, not material. There is a large number of points of view about whether music is a language. Art critics and linguists believe that music and verbal language are fundamentally different, but semiotics states the opposite.

## **2.3 Features of musical aesthetics**

Aesthetic musical principles largely depend on the perception context, the listener memory, one's linguistic and general cultural competence. Why certain harmony, music systems, intervals cause certain associations, is still not clear. Virtually there is no study upon the aesthet Lyudmila ics of the musical language. In practice, a number of both universal and private audit hooks are undertaken by the professor of musical theory John Kovacs. However, the results are presented in the form of a typological chart that explains the construction from the theoretical point of view, but does not explain how they affect the mentality, which aesthetic element makes a song memorable. Musicologists Mark Aranovski and Lyudmila Shaymukhametova made great strides in the study and systematization of musical structures. They have managed to delve into the musical semantics and discover several musical and speech phrases, in the structure of which there are intertextual connections and connotations. But intramusical figures of meaning and

semantic formulas are still poorly understood as terms. Probably, because of a stable stereotype about the absolute subjectivization of music. Musical semiotics is considered almost pseudoscience. However, one can distinguish a curious theory associated with musical aesthetics.

The theory of affects has been developed during the Baroque era by a whole galaxy of composers and musicologists known at the time. Among them are Johann Kwantz, Maren Mersenne and Athanasius Kircher. According to them the goal of a composer creativity is to make up excitement. For each group of effects there is a certain style, genre. Further technical study of the theory has not been undertaken. And it remains only an esoteric idea of a magical sympathy that arises between the listener and the musician.

Contrary to the popular phrase of Henry Longfellow, music is not the universal language of humanity. The study carried out by scientists from McGill University in 2015, has shown that there is no sound omnitude. The African tribes' emotional reaction to the best music sample is completely unpredictable. The question arises, are there unified figurative-emotional (aesthetic) attitudes among individuals within a single, individually taken, national field? It would be reasonable to assume that the verbalization of musical aesthetics (the description of their impressions from the perception of music) among the inhabitants of the African continent will take place in a different way than among people belonging to other ethnic groups and groups with a different cultural background. The relevance of possible methods, devoted to the musical aesthetics verbalization, depends on the phenomenon directly. Within the Russian information space, the opportunity to answer this question lies in understanding why certain appraisal judgments, epithets, metaphors, comparisons, figurative expressions are used more often than others in the texts of musical reviews, general reviews, interviews with certain genre musical forms.

## **2.4 Verbalization of musical aesthetics**

The study of the verbal interpretation of musical structures has become widespread in the middle of the last century in the Soviet Union. Many musicologists and psychologists have tried to prove not only the possibility, but also the legitimacy of music verbalization. The well-known psychologist Boris Teplov believes that each note is a graphic designation of a certain word. A composer offers a listener not only sound images, but their emotional-conceptual designation, which means that the musical notation can be rewritten in words. The difficulty lies only in the fact that the content of a musical work is not like a sound fabric, but is more like interplay of emotions. But, according to Teplov, any emotions are difficult to express in words. They are amenable to adequate universal verbalization.

Musicologist Galina Pankevich expresses this point of view, arguing that the musical techniques, which make up music, are significant not only as a material for creating images, but also in the sense in which the word is meaningful as a concept. Much attention is paid to the fact that all understanding is connected with a word, because it is the result of human thinking.

Doctor of Arts Vyacheslav Medushevsky argues that the basis of musical structures content verbalization process is the understanding of the rhythm-intonation-temporal modeling features of emotions in music, performed by a listener. This mechanism works only if a listener provides sufficient experience of comparing the musical means of expressiveness, united in rhythm-intonation complexes, with the components of emotions. The grammar of musical expression of emotions is formed by a system of one's intuitive ideas about personal emotions structure and dynamics. During the process of a musical work perception, one reflexes, verbally denotes, structures the direction and character of the emotions movement in consciousness. And on this basis one comes to a whole understanding of the emotional-figurative content of music.

However, it's important to understand that social functions and form of the music has changed a bit. It's been reflected on people's perception of the music. The observed universalization of market relations in art leads to attempts of equalization of art on average level. Value relativism establishes itself in the sociocultural musical environment. There is no objective differentiation on "aesthetic" or "non-aesthetic" kind of music. In previous time music has been executing some socially significant functions (it was religious ceremony attribute, some form of protest, etc.), but in current state people appeals to music in search for self-identify. It is used to create a picture of the world. In this regard differentiation of the music by some criteria occur exclusively in the head of one exact person. This happens because of influence of society.

### 3 RESEARCH METHODS

#### 3.1 Intertextuality and transmediality

As a part of the discussion of the method for future research, it is important to understand that the material of the research is not literary texts in the structure of which, one can find ephrasis, or even the transfer of meaning between the two media, and journalistic ones that aim not at accurate musical work verbalizing, even with a small author's interpretation, but only at discussing it. For this reason, it is necessary to clearly understand that the core, from which it is worth starting, should be the metalanguage and metatextual mechanism of music perception. Discourse for the music reflection is the space of visual-verbal images. It is important to determine the metalanguage degree of adequacy. In this regard, about the terms, such as intermedialis and transmediality, one can speak with a big caveat. Anastasia Kuzmina understands intermediality as a creation of a single integrated media product through media translation. But the mass media text is not artistic. Ksenia Fedorova writes that transmediality always implies the transfer of one media art to another and their clear distinction with complementarity. This is a set of techniques for creating new methods in art. This is a set of techniques for creating new methods in art. Marina Zagidullina supposes that intermediality can be considered even as a «cyborg-like» hybridisation (machinery of the body). But then, can we consider the mass media text as an art? Music brings up to date its meanings into a word, but no verbal description can be an ideal sign for a musical text. And the artistic interpretation of a musical work into mass media

provides no connection, since such a text does not fulfill mass media tasks. Otherwise, any text can be considered mass media. Transmediality, as a form of transferring one type of art to another (media format into media format), assumes not only different forms, but also a fairly clear transfer of meaning. If to discuss the synthesis of arts, then one should complement the other, making up cooperation. But talking about music journalism in this case is far-fetched. It is necessary to search for methods relevant to the task, on the basis of the metalanguage. To what extent can the content of auditory experience be translated into the language of visual experience? Visual-verbal images of music perception in modern communication, using the example of Russian-speaking social networks, are the core of the research that predetermines the application of relevant methods.

#### 3.2 The relevance of disparate empirical data of cognitive studies for the Russian cultural field

There is a large number of scattered empirical data of cognitive research conducted in different countries and devoted to the musical aesthetics perception. No doubt, they need to be brought into a balanced system and used as complete material. However, as it has already been said (see reference 12), the difference in the level of figurative perception of music does not appear even at the most superficial levels, which means that many studies may not be relevant to the Russian cultural field. It is suffice to mention the basics of musical literacy. The term "major" is a light tone, and the "minor" is dark. In Russia, each mode is connected with its own emotion. And in Great Britain, for example, major stands for "big" and minor for "small", which is explained by the fact that the main part is the major third, and the minor at the base of the minor. Another indicative example can be the stylistic directions of chart-toppers of different countries. In the USA, the first five places of musical charts, over the past forty years, are much more often occupied by vigorous, major (in the Russian sense of the word) music tracks, rather than all kinds of ballads, that are so popular in Europe. The difference in the associative series is obvious. For this reason, as a supplement to the main research, it is proposed to look for original concepts, on the basis of which the image aesthetic features are set. The features take roots back to the Middle Ages. The musical language acquired complete independence in the Age of Enlightenment, as music has been freed from performing the applied functions and separated from the word and movement. However, it is considered that the music development stages, had performed by this time, were already fixed with associative emotional series. And it is tightly connected with the intonational nature of the theme, various types of musical movement, and the steps auditory spectrum.

#### 3.3 Research design

It is necessary to find an answer to the question, what research methods can be relevant to the task of searching for features of the interaction between music itself, music

description and the state of the perceiving mentality. It is necessary to offer an consistent research design.

A study of a mixed type is proposed. It combines elements of both qualitative and quantitative approach, as well as relevant methodological principles. A transformational design will be used due to a long duration of the study, a large amount of scattered data that either can already exist or be obtained during the study.

It is important to understand what has already been discovered in the area to avoid repeated, meaningless research, as well as to collect the initial theoretical basis. This can be done by two methods. The first is the research of the appropriate literature. The second is systematization of already performed researches. It is important to make a balanced system on the basis of numerous cognitive research results, deleting the irrelevant ones.

Due to absence of Russian-language sites (which not translating English-language texts) which writes about music in Russian information field (there are some premises of its emergence in the near future, but we cannot count on it) we choose groups (public pages) in social network VK as the base platform of our research.

We offer to pick materials from the network of music groups *E:\music\*. At first, this is a network of groups with a concrete separation by genre. This is a unique phenomenon with a clearly segmented audience, which is very convenient. At second, posts in this groups contain *E:\music\'s* own texts. Another important thing is small amount of «boring» («empty») texts, in which we are not interested. Their posts are trying to describe the music through some images. Of course, there is no sense in looking through them all (there are more than 50 groups in total). So we are going to pick the largest and most popular of them: *E:\music\*, *E:\music\ambient*, *E:\music\folk*, *E:\music\blues*, *E:\music\post*, *E:\music\triphop*, *E:\music\dark ambient*, *E:\music\jazz*, *E:\music\darkjazz*, *E:\music\neoclassical*.

By using an app that allows to choose some amount of most popular posts (like 40, for example) from the last two month since the start of research in each of ten groups we would be able to get the initial research material.

Then it is necessary to understand why exactly these posts caused the greatest interest among the audience, as well as at the expense of which components in its structure. This can be determined by conducting a content analysis of the expanded type. It is suggested to consider not one specific indicator, but at least three: frequency of the selected words, the content emotional coloring and the structure of a text. The frequency of the selected words analysis determines the most commonly used lexical elements in popular text about music in social networks. To do this, we look for similar evaluations and artistic techniques for different genres, musical directions and styles. It is possible to determine the prevalent emotional coloring of a text in each genre and stylistic segment due to the analysis of the content emotional colouring. Structural analysis of the text will provide an opportunity to reveal the presence / absence of poetics in texts, aimed at the verbal aesthetics analyses of texts. This is very unlikely that a random detection of transmediality elements may occur.

A mixed approach, based on the three methods, outlined above, will allow to minimize contradictions in results and to cross-check the information, obtained from different sources. The data triangulation will be the key to obtain reliable results. Further, a hypothesis on the basis of the obtained information is formed. The hypothesis will be confirmed or refuted further on due to the systematized and structured data, obtained through the mentioned above methods. It is important to understand that with each new method, the theoretical base will also increase. At least the cultural codes will inevitably enter the already existing "aesthetics-media-social networks-music-verbalization of music" theoretical block. In terms of obtaining accurate results, there should be an established degree of correlation between the ethnic aesthetic constants and the value-tradition basis of the national mentality.

Later we want to test the consistency of our hypothesis. This can be achieved experiment, which includes a survey, a focus group and interviewing. The survey should be quantitative, for greater clarity, we need 15 respondents with different social status, careers, education, and nationality. Respondents will be making their own playlists. Every participant will pick up a song for every proposed emotion.

Due to allegedly low level of musical culture of inhabitants of the city\country, (we assume there will be a small number of genres in result) it will be necessary to conduct another survey. Every participant will listen to songs of different genres (stereotypical, associated with concrete emotion in our society and ones that are more complicated). They will be calling their emotions, images, associations.

After that, we are going to run in-depth interview with every experiment participants. The purpose of an interview is the explanation of collected results by the respondents. Memory trigger, social influence, etc. At this stage, we are planning to focus on composition structure. Melody, rhythm, words: which has more influence, what associations it causes?

Later we planning to interpret collected data. For this purpose we are going to cross-check results of content-analysis of *E:\music\* posts' «verbal component» and the results of the experiment.

## 4. RESULTS

An adequate research design is created since the methods, relevant to the research task, are selected. The advantages of using certain methods are indicated. An adequate algorithm for their use has been derived. To get practical, grounded results, one can only combine several different methods in the research structure, aimed not only at complementarity, but also at leveling the problematic "spots" that may arise in the study.

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