

Explore the Aesthetic and Educational Significance in Ancient Greek Music

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Abstract. The aesthetic significance in the musical thought of ancient Greece was transformed through later philosophical thoughts and became an important source of Western aesthetics. The social and cultural background of this period also provided conditions for its unique musical aesthetics and gave rise to the initial form of music education. This article will focus on the musical characteristics of the ancient Greek period. By using the methods of literature review and musical example analysis, it will conduct a multi-angle analysis of the musical aesthetics in this stage and its influence on later educational thoughts. Through the study of ancient Greek musical thoughts, it will analyze the musical aesthetics within and the educational significance of ancient Greek musical thoughts, aiming to enhance musical aesthetics and improve modern music teaching. By exploring the musical aesthetics of ancient Greece and reviewing representative ancient Greek music, it is helpful to enhance musical aesthetics and musical literacy. Exploring its educational significance can critically analyze the deficiencies existing in current music education and put forward suggestions. Further promoting the development of modern music has a positive effect on modern music education.

Keywords: Ancient Greek music, Music aesthetics, Music education

1. Introduction

In ancient Greece, music was a part of people's lives. Its unique democratic city-state system and the social background of free trade provided conditions for the development of ancient Greek music. After the birth of ancient Greek music, the philosophical thoughts of the Pythagorean school combined with music to form a unique musical aesthetics. In addition, the concept of music education was also proposed during this period. Philosophers believed that music could be used as one of the means to educate people, affirmed its educational function and enhanced its entertainment function, which provided ideas for music education in later generations. At present, most of the research in China focuses on the musical thoughts of ancient Greece. By analyzing ancient Greek mythology and the social and cultural background of ancient Greece, it leads to the connection with ancient Greek music, and mentions some forms of expression of ancient Greek music, such as epics, lyric poems, odes, etc., as well as Musical Instruments, tragedies, notation and modes. The vast majority of research focuses on the musical thoughts of the Pythagorean school - harmonics and ethics, starting discussions from the ideas of philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle. However,

most of the existing studies remain at the level of historical descriptions, with less exploration of the educational thoughts of ancient Greek music, and a lack of in-depth exploration of the modern transformation paths and empirical effects of its educational concepts. This article not only explores the aesthetics of ancient Greek music, but also further investigates the significance of ancient Greek music education and its influence on music education in later generations.

2. The three dimensions of ancient Greek music: origin, social practice and aesthetic spirit

2.1. The origin of ancient Greek music

The origin of ancient Greek music can be traced back to ancient Greek mythology. The goddess muse in ancient Greek mythology is the root of music [1]. There are three MUSES, named Aeide, Mereta and Mnemo, who respectively govern singing, contemplation and memory. The Muse governs the fields of art and science and is still widely discussed to this day. In ancient Greek mythology, Apollo created the famous musical instrument of the ancient Greek period - the lyre. Since then, ancient Greek music has been endowed with an air of mystery. In the famous ancient Greek myth of Orpheus, music is a powerful force that can touch the gods, tame wild beasts, and even transcend life and death. Ancient Greek mythology evolved from some people with outstanding heroic deeds in reality, all of which have a basis in reality [2]. In addition, ancient Greece was surrounded by the sea on three sides, with beautiful scenery. It implemented a democratic city-state system and free trade was very prosperous. The musical works of this period recorded the living conditions of the people at that time. Therefore, the frequent musical activities in ancient Greece during this period were inseparable from the geographical location and the social system of the country at that time [3]. At that time, ancient Greece implemented a democratic city-state system. However, within each city-state, people's beliefs varied, and they incorporated their own images into gods. As a result, ancient Greek mythology formed a polytheistic system [2]

2.2. The interaction between ancient Greek musical practice and social culture

Ancient Greek music has many different forms of expression, and Musical Instruments are one of them. In ancient Greece, figures were sometimes carved on Musical Instruments. These figures might be related to some fertility rituals or Dionysus (a god in Greek mythology). The most common Musical Instruments during this period included the riela, the Kisala and the Arfrois, etc. The Aphlos tube of ancient Greece often appears in paintings depicting gatherings and sports events, which shows that this instrument had an entertainment function in the society at that time [4].

Take the lyre as an example. This instrument consists of several strings wound around a turtle's shell and played by plucking the strings. The lyre symbolizes the spirit of reason and is often used in epic recitals and some religious ceremonies. And because the social system at that time was a democratic city-state system, the residents' lives were rich and colorful, and competitive games were often held, thus giving birth to competitive game music (seen in figure 1).

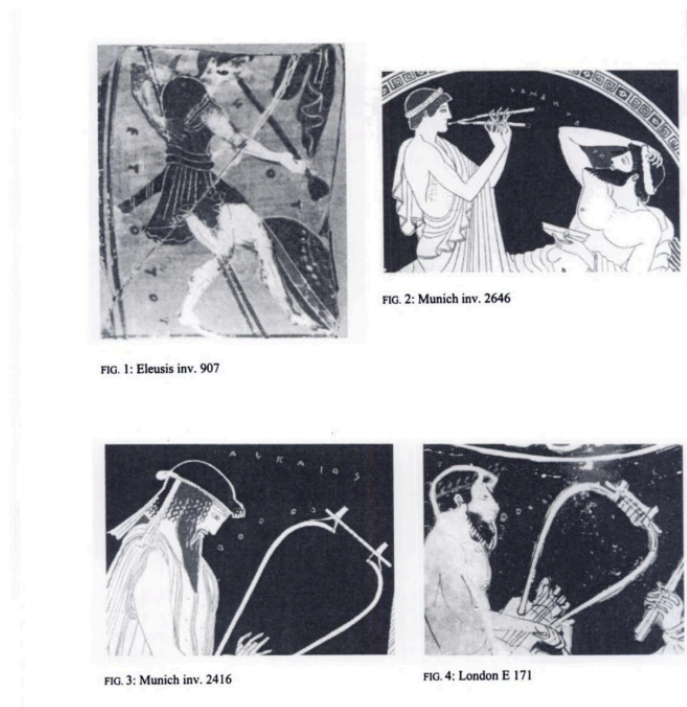


Figure 1. Documents of ancient Greek music Egert Pöhlmann [5]

In ancient Greece, music was not a single form of expression; it was often accompanied by poetry, dance, etc. Therefore, artistic expressions such as epics, odes and lyric poems were thus born. The poems of ancient Greece were all singable. For example, the Homeric epics were famous for their singing style. These choral songs are intended to tell events and express emotions, so the lyrics take the leading role, and the melody and rhythm are subordinate to the lyrics [6]. Among the products resulting from the combination of music and other arts, the most famous art form is undoubtedly ancient Greek tragedy. In the 5th century BC, it was the peak of ancient Greek tragedy. The prosperity of Athenian democratic politics and city-state culture provided favorable conditions for the flourishing of tragedy, and ancient Greek tragedy aroused certain resonances and reflections. Ancient Greek tragedies mainly explored the insignificance of human beings before the gods and emphasized the confrontation between humans and fate, such as "Oedipus the King". The themes of ancient Greek tragedies were extensive. They also involved the complexity and conflicts of human nature and reflected a certain social reality - the hidden dangers of democracy. Ancient Greek tragedies also laid the foundation for the development of later dramas and are indispensable in the history of drama. As music occupied a dominant position in activities such as sacrifices, religions and sports, it gradually became an independent form and then separated from drama and poetry. People in ancient Greece began to pay attention to the study of music theory, and the music system gradually began to develop. The ancient Greek mode was based on the four-tone scale and was arranged in octaves or double octaves. For instance, the Dorian mode was composed of two four-tone scales, E-D-C-B and A-G-F-E. Different combinations of these scales gave rise to the Phrygian and Lydian modes. The various modes commonly used in ancient Greek music were named after the place names of the regions where they were popular. Different musical styles represented the living conditions and cultural backgrounds of different people [6].

2.3. The aesthetic characteristics of ancient Greek music - the Pythagorean school

Harmony studies is an important achievement of the Pythagorean school. Harmony was the ancient Greeks' definition of beauty. Aristotle believed that music was a manifestation of harmony and could reflect the harmony between human beings and nature [7]. The golden ratio is an important theory in harmony studies. In this theory, it emphasizes the symmetry and balance of form, avoiding excessive complexity or sensory stimulation. This theory was widely applied in the field of ancient Greek art. The Parthenon in Athens was built according to the golden ratio.

Furthermore, ethics is an important component of ancient Greek musical thought, which analyzes that music has an educational function and can cultivate one's sentiments. Pythagoras believed that the laws of music were imitating the movements of celestial bodies in the universe and the laws of mathematics [8]. He also believes that music can purify the soul and stir up emotions, which also provides ideas for the development of the discipline of music therapy in later generations [1]. The Pythagorean school believed that music had an educational function, which was the initial form of music education. They thought that the city-state could be better managed through music.

Plato broke Pythagoras' limitations on music through mathematics and was able to experience music intuitively. Greater emphasis is placed on the importance of aesthetics [9]. In "The Republic", he also discussed his views on music. He believes that music should establish a harmonious order, maintain rationality, and emotions need to be suppressed by rationality [3].

Aristotle made improvements on this basis. He put forward the concept of "imitation" and believed that art is the result of human nature [7]. Fang Ziyi believes that music needs to be combined with emotions to evoke resonance. He accepts that music is diverse and that music can purify the soul. He not only acknowledged the educational nature of music but also recognized its entertainment function.

Ancient Greek mythology added a mysterious touch to ancient Greek music, attracting relevant scholars to conduct academic research and promoting the progress and development of music. It can also play a role in cultivating one's temperament, viewing and using music from a brand-new perspective. They believe that music can be used as an educational means. This view provides new ideas for music education and the uses of music in later generations.

3. The inheritance of ancient Greek music education

3.1. Ancient Greek music education thought - Plato

Plato's emphasis on preschool education was pioneering. He is regarded as the first thinker in the West to systematically propose the concept of preschool education. Plato attached particular importance to incorporating simple music education into the system of cultivating young children. In his view, if children can receive high-quality musical enlightenment at an early age, the artistic qualities of rhythm and harmony will be deeply rooted in their hearts, and through subtle influence, a stable foundation will be formed. This kind of educational influence will enable children to display a gentle and refined temperament during their growth, which is conducive to shaping a good personality and cultivating an optimistic and fearless spiritual character. After early childhood education, teenagers have to receive general education from the age of seven to seventeen. Plato demanded that education during this period should include music that refines the soul. Then, the so-called music education means that in education and teaching, almost all subjects except physical education are included, such as poetry, reading, writing, arithmetic, etc., all of which fall within the scope of music education. In the ancient Greek music education system, poetry occupied a core

position. In ancient Greece, poetry recitation was not merely a form of language expression but was deeply integrated with musical performance. Since the 8th century BC, mythological stories, heroic epics, and the subsequent literary genres such as tragedies and comedies have become the core materials for music education. They are not only the carriers of artistic aesthetics, but also undertake the important functions of cultural inheritance, moral education and value shaping. Secondly, Plato proposed the concept of "rhythm", that is, the body swings along with music and sings and dances along with it. From this, it can be seen that music can promote mental health and can be combined with sports. Aristotle believed that music could not only contribute to aesthetic education but also play a role in intellectual and moral education [10]. Just like the thoughts of philosophers such as Plato, aesthetic education, moral education, intellectual education, physical education and labor education complement each other. Modern music education should cultivate well-rounded individuals [11].

3.2. Ancient Greek music education thought - Aristotle

Aristotle advocated giving priority to the development of moral education in educational theory and emphasized laying the foundation for intellectual and aesthetic education through the improvement of moral construction. In its educational stage division, the first stage of early childhood focuses on physical development, while the second stage from 7 to 14 years old emphasizes the coordinated advancement of moral and aesthetic education. He particularly pointed out that children at this stage have a very strong acceptance of music in their minds and are regarded as the golden period for implementing music education.

Regarding the curriculum system of music education, Aristotle fully agreed with the traditional educational model of Athens and divided music education into two dimensions: The narrow level covers the music theory system and performance skills training, including practical contents such as instrument operation and music theory knowledge; In a broad sense, language arts such as poetry reading, chanting and literary appreciation are included in the category of music education. This course design concept is in consensus with his teacher Plato. Both emphasize the influence of music education on personality shaping and achieve the dual goals of aesthetic cultivation and moral education through the educational form of integrating poetry and music [12]. Aristotle also proposed that the influence of music is particularly prominent during adolescence, but it is not only applicable to adolescence. A person's entire life should be accompanied by music. This is the current concept of lifelong education [10]. But precisely because of this, people's views on music vary at different stages with age and experience. Therefore, continuity should be noted in music education [11]. Aristotle not only regarded music as an ordinary educational means but also recognized its entertainment value. He believed that people should enjoy music so as to truly achieve mental relaxation [10]. In ancient Greek music, the rational spirit occupied an important position, constantly emphasizing the significance of order. However, later on, with the proposal of Aristotle's thoughts, a balance between sensibility and rationality was achieved, acknowledging the importance of emotions to music. Aristotle believed that good music could shape people's character, make them aware of what virtue is, and express emotions through music. Good music can enable the audience to feel the emotions that the performer intends to convey [13].

3.3. The influence of ancient Greek music on later music education

Looking at the music education ideas that emerged under the educational system of ancient Greece for more than 600 years, we find that it has had a profound influence on music education in later

generations. The current educational thought of music should be an extension and development of the educational thought of ancient Greece. The idea of lifelong education emphasized by Plato and Aristotle laid the foundation for the continuous practice of music education. Human beings' musical needs and understanding have distinct phased characteristics. The same musical work will present changes in emotions and cognition at different stages of life, which reveals the dynamic process of music acceptance [10]. Music, as a part of aesthetic education, can cultivate students' abilities to perceive, understand and create beauty, and also encourage them to think about the inner philosophical thoughts. It should be combined with moral education, intellectual education, physical education and labor education to cultivate all-round talents. The educational and aesthetic education functions carried by music mainly lie in school education. In contrast, when looking at an individual's conscious behavior, they tend to use music for emotional relief and stress relief. However, as an organic component of aesthetic education and a key part of human education, music education is of great significance for all-round development and personality improvement. It shoulders the responsibility of cultivating aesthetic emotions: integrating with moral education and combining education with entertainment; Complementary to intellectual education and stimulating wisdom; Grow together with sports and keep fit through beauty. Ancient Greek music education placed greater emphasis on students' practice and the improvement of their musical skills. It encouraged students to listen, observe and experience more, which helps broaden their horizons and enhance their self-awareness. This is the current direction that global music education is striving for, aiming to shift from merely imparting knowledge to students to turning them into the main body and allowing them to experience music. The current advocated quality-oriented education, which aims to cultivate individuals with all-round development in morality, intelligence, physical fitness, aesthetics and labor, originated from the educational thought of ancient Greece. Unlike the current music education in our country, in ancient Greece, music was considered a noble education. However, in our country at present, music education, as part of compulsory education, is particularly important during adolescence, which is an improvement compared to the past [14].

4. Conclusion

To sum up, the aesthetic features of ancient Greek music mainly revolve around the viewpoints of the Pythagorean school, with Plato and Aristotle as the main figures, mainly expounding the two major philosophical thoughts of harmony and ethics. Ancient Greek music laid the foundation for music education, affirmed the educational and entertainment functions of music, and pointed out the direction for modern music education. Ancient Greek music helps people cultivate their sentiments, develop morality and enhance wisdom, especially during the teenage years, with remarkable effects. The melody and rhythm of music can subtly shape a person's character. Ancient Greek musical aesthetics can also be widely applied in the aspect of aesthetic education, especially in ancient Greek tragedies. If the tragic color of ancient Greece is applied to music teaching, it can further cultivate students' abilities to perceive beauty, understand beauty and create beauty, and also cultivate students' ability to think about its inner philosophical thoughts. Teachers should encourage students in music education to experience and discover the beauty of music by themselves instead of imparting it in a one-way way. Ancient Greek music education has pointed out the general direction for modern music education, aiming to cultivate students with all-round development in morality, intelligence, physical fitness, aesthetics and labor through aesthetic education. Ancient Greek music education promoted the integration of music with other disciplines and further explored the possibility of the development of aesthetic education in music. Modern music education can also draw relevant ideas from ancient Greek music, which is conducive to shaping students' good

character and further promoting the innovation and reform of modern music education. Ancient Greek music provided a huge academic background for music education in later generations, and the related theories remain the theoretical basis of modern music to this day.

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