

# **Dynamic Property and Aesthetic Appreciation of Music Duration**

Yong Lu

Hubei Engineering University, Xiaogan Hubei, 432000, China

**Key words:** Time attribute, Music duration, Dynamic property, Aesthetic appreciation.

**Abstract.** Music has time attribute. Music duration is the concrete manifestation of the time attribute of music. Objectively, music duration is classified into balance and imbalance, uniformity and nonuniformity, sufficiency and insufficiency, stability and instability, motionlessness and motion, contrast and harmony, which can lead to subjective psychological power of aesthetic subject. This paper is intended to make discussions from the aspects of length, speed, internal duration composing rule and form of music composition, in an attempt to reveal the aesthetic appreciation of music time attribution more deeply.

## **Introduction**

Music is an art of time, and its aesthetic value doesn't only rest in its special auditory attributes, but also in its unpredictability. The unpredictability is reflected in the whole process of continuation of time. You can almost get a full view at the first sight if you appreciate a scroll of calligraphy or painting, a statue or sculpture, or an artwork. If you appreciate a novel of time aesthetic attribute, you also can understand its general idea and aesthetic intention by reading the outline. If you appreciate a musical composition, however, even if the "general idea" is given in advance, you also will have different feeling at the time of appreciation, and your feeling will not completely coincide with the given general idea. Unless in motion or understood to be in a motion relation or change relation, visual objects are always outside the time scale; while tone is always subject to time, which constitutes the primordial dynamic vector of music. Thus, sounds don't have the main features of "object". They are concretized force....."① It is because music is always subject to time, its unpredictability is bound to make music with specific and lasting dynamic force and dynamic meaning.

From "physical force" to "psychological force", and then from "psychological force" to derived synesthesia, association, mood, emotion and affection of aesthetic subject, the subject discovers and enjoys the beauty of music in these psychological states. Then, dynamic analysis of duration factors of music is of significance and necessity to research and understanding of the beauty of music.

## **Definition of Music Duration**

### **Length of Musical Composition**

The length of musical composition is determined by the duration of performing (singing) musical composition. It has the relative prescription of time vector. That's to say, the duration of the same musical composition roughly remains unchanged as long as the playing speed is relatively fixed. Anyway, however, the time prescription exists. This means that music appreciators have to obtain aesthetic pleasure and value within the prescribed duration.

### **Internal Duration Organization of Musical Composition**

Firstly, musical composition is subject to various internal duration composing rules and forms. The composing rules of duration reveal the internal strong and weak characteristics of music, to lead to various meter types (or structures). Of course, there also exists ruleless meter in Chinese music. The organization form of duration is combined by sounds (or pauses) of different lengths according to unit meter, which is for showing changing rhythm patterns.

Secondly, besides the composing rule and form of duration, the playing speed of music is also a key factor of music time attribute. "The speed system of music is also derived from human's physiological status and conceptual work.....Music, as a special language via which human convey affection, undoubtedly has the same speed property." ③ One of the meaning of the playing speed to music is that it determines the length of each unit meter of musical composition. ④The second meaning is that the playing speed of music also affects the basic emotion of music. On one hand, certain music playing speed is always linked with the artistic image of musical composition: the emotions and musical images reflected by different melodies played at different speeds will not be the same; even if the melody is the same, if it is played (sung) at different speeds, the emotional effects also are totally different. On the other hand, the change in the playing speed of music can predict the dynamic nature of musical emotion: for example, *accelerando* indicates that energy gradually gathers, and emotion gradually tends to be tight, and so on, while *rallentando* is often employed at the end to indicate that the music is to be ended.

### **Dynamic Force Type of Music Duration**

The playing (singing) process of music is also a process of understanding, applying and interpreting force. The reason why the "force" of musical composition, as an auditory object, can be perceived is that its production, development and presentation all are the product of the action of force. Therefore, dynamic analysis of music becomes necessity to recognize and exploit the beauty of music. The time attribute and other attributes of music together constitute the dynamic force of music. This kind of dynamic force is not only an objective dynamic force, but also affect and form psychological force. In other words, the time attribute of music is the unity of "physical force" and "psychological force". According to the time attribute of music, the essence of beauty is contrast and harmony, which is reflected via balance and imbalance, uniformity and nonuniformity, sufficiency and insufficiency, stability and instability, and motionlessness and motion.

### **Thrust and Drag**

#### *Thrust*

#### 1. Balance and Imbalance

In respect of degree of balance, music time attribute is mainly reflected by the strong and weak regularity of unit meter alternating. Even number means symmetry and balance, while odd number means asymmetry and imbalance. Therefore, generally speaking, single meter of even number or compound meter constituted by single meters of even number is of balance; single meter of odd number or compound meter constituted by single meters of odd number are of imbalance. In respect of meter, the dynamic force of meter of balance is relative weak; while that of meter of imbalance is strong. Besides, varied usage of meter also will put the alternating of strong and weak music into dynamic change, to produce dynamic force.

Of course, the balance performance of meter is not the only reflection of dynamic force of music. That's to say, rhythm of balance under the action of other music dynamic factors also can have strong dynamic force. Besides, the fading-in sound also will make rhythm of balance that is with weak dynamic force produce strong dynamic force. However, this will never change the nature of weak dynamic force of balanced rhythm. That composer intentionally weaken this rule and create an opposite aesthetic effect is another matter.

#### 2. Uniformity and Nonuniformity

The uniformity performance of music time attribute is mainly reflected via the change and coordination of music playing speed, including direct change, gradient change and free change, etc. Gradient change has strong dynamic force, and stands for energy gradually increasing or fading out. Free change is most common in Chinese music, namely free rhythm or free meter, of which the speed is free, of great randomness, and in free forms. Thus, it is best for expressing inner emotions and feelings.

### 3. Sufficiency and Insufficiency

The sufficiency or insufficiency of music time attribute refers to the "elastic meter" we often talk about, which is also called "elastic meter value". For example, Shi Yong, in the Cultural Vision of Basic Music Theory, defined and expounded that "In music, the rhythm factor that is highly expressive is of certain elasticity rather than be absolutely accurate and equal, and the rhythm meter of elasticity is called "elastic meter". "Elastic meter" is referred to as Rubato in the west. Rubato is Italian, which originally means "deprived", and now refers in particular to one of the techniques of handling speed elasticity of musical performance. It relates to change in speed, meaning the basic speed indicated in the musical notation should be followed in the process of playing (singing) music as a whole within certain time range (phrase, musical halt, section or melody fragment), provided that the tempo of each unit can have slight change." ⑥

### 4. Stability and Instability

The stability of music time attribute refers to the stability of duration composing form. Regular rhythm usually has the feature of stability, and non-weakened and continuous isochronia note combination belongs to this type; while irregular and weakened value combination has the feature of instability, which leads to an expectation to stability and then form a strong thrust.

#### *Drag*

As to the dominant performance of music time attribute, motionlessness refers to pause (gas port), and also includes stagato, staccato, gestossen and such containing pause factor. In respect of primordial dynamic force, they are reflected via drag of music. However, forces are mutual, and thrust and drag are impartible. "Thrust tends to be the product of overcoming drag, and there is no thrust without any drag." ⑧ The meaning of drag to thrust is: "on one hand, drag will provide a necessary pivot point for thrust.....On the other hand, thrust can be put under proper control by making full use of drag, to ensure the full play of thrust in the right direction." ⑨ Pause and gas port don't only relates to time pause of music, but also have an more important meaning. Firstly, proper pause and gas port are an important pivot point of rhythm thrust. Secondly, pause and gas port don't only mean pausing the previous part of music, but also mean accumulation of energy for continuing the subsequent part. Thirdly, more importantly, it is the temporary cessation formed by pause and gas port that makes music be coherent, of which the implied meaning is "contrast".

It's important to note that "contrast" is not equal to "opposition", which only may lead to "reconciliation". Both opposition and reconciliation are for unity, which are in different perspectives of dealing with affairs. Opposition emphasizes contradiction between two sides, focuses on locality and object, and makes the two sides reach unity through fighting; the sides have their own "standpoint"; reconciliation emphasizes the balance between two sides, focuses on the entirety, and makes the two sides reach a dynamic unity through contrast and infusion.

## **Dynamic and Non-dynamic**

### *Dynamic*

The dynamic property, in respect of music time attribute, is classified into: congenital dynamic force and acquired dynamic force.

Congenital dynamic force refers to duration composing rule and form in which dynamic force exists without man-emphasized or man-made dynamic force. This type of dynamic force is objective, and is independent from man's will. In respect of music time attribute, it can be classified into dynamic rhythm and congenital dynamic rhythm.

#### 1. Congenital Dynamic Force

##### I. Dynamic Rhythm

Dynamic rhythm refers to that strong and weak tempos alternate, but the frequency of occurrence

varies, such as  $\frac{3}{4}$ ,  $\frac{3}{8}$ ,  $\frac{6}{8}$ ,  $\frac{5}{8}$ ,  $\frac{7}{8}$ . Such tempos are asymmetric in respect of strength, and the

congenital dynamic force is relatively strong. For example, the Pamir, How Beautiful My Hometown

Is was created to consist of  $\frac{7}{8}$  unbalanced tempos, and it has congenital dynamic force.

### II. Congenital Dynamic Rhythm

Weakened rhythm, dotted rhythm and syncopation rhythm all are congenital dynamic rhythm.

### III. Acquired Dynamic Rhythm

Acquired dynamic rhythm means organizing non-dynamic rhythms artificially to make music be dynamic. For example, B, C, D and E type rhythms all are non-dynamic rhythm, which can be made dynamic in some way, as below:

$\frac{2}{4} \times - | \times \times | \times \times \times \times | \times \times \times \times \times \times \times \times | \dots\dots$

### (2) Non-dynamic

Just as its name implies, non-dynamic property refers to an objective state of being static, balanced, non-dynamic or of weak dynamic force of music in respect of time attribute, which is reflected via non-dynamic tempo and non-dynamic rhythm.

Contrary to dynamic tempo, non-dynamic tempo refers to that strong and weak tempos alternate

with the same frequency of occurrence, such as  $\frac{2}{4}$ ,  $\frac{4}{4}$ ,  $\frac{4}{2}$ , etc. In such tempos, the strength is symmetric, and the congenital dynamic force is weak. Non-dynamic rhythm refers to rhythm other than weakened rhythm, dotted rhythm and syncopation rhythm, namely rhythm of which the internal organization is symmetrical and with weak dynamic force.

Besides, there are some rhythms (such as  $\times \times \times$ ,  $\times \times \times$ ) of which the front and rear durations are equal, but the weights of internal compositions are different. Such rhythms also have certain dynamic force, which can be called "micro-dynamic rhythm".

## Beauty of Dynamic Force of Music Duration

The "beauty" here is relative to the general character and uniqueness. We tend to concern two points: universality and particularity if we intend to discover the beauty of a culture or a thing.

Universality reflects the general characters of things, in spite of that the things have different attributes or belong to different categories, is an objective inevitability, and a precondition for helping people get rid of strange sense and feel close and natural. Universality is the basis for "beauty" developing in things. Particularity indicates the uniqueness of things, with which things distinguish from others. It is the reflection of individuation, and the precondition for arousing people's attention and interest. People always discover "beauty" in the process of paying attention and becoming interested.

Music time attribute doesn't only follow the universal rules of art, but also has its own unique beauty. On one hand, music is a dynamic process. On the other hand, music must complete its process of presenting dynamic force within the prescribed time vector in the internal time organizing process.

All artistic works are created with the lapse of time. However, regardless the characteristics of beauty of art in respect of time attribute, music has its own uniqueness. To reflect the value of musical composition, three processes must be gone through, i.e. creation, performance and appreciation, and the participants in the three processes are usually different (of course, there is the case that the creator, performer and appreciator are the same people, such as Chinese Guqin music). This is largely different from other artistic forms in respect of the reflection of artistic beauty. This is because music is a pure auditory art, and appreciators can have a full view only by listening to it completely. Besides, the internal organization of musical composition refers to time organization of sounds, and tempo, rhythm and playing speed play an important role in music. Time attribute is one of the most stable attributes of music. Therefore, the beauty of music depends on the time attribute of music to a large extent, and the dynamic properties demonstrated in the process of duration organization are the reflection of its beauty.

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