



# AN ANALYSIS OF THE ESSENCE OF CHINESE OPERA AND VOCAL MUSIC FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF HERMENEUTICS AND RECEPTION AESTHETICS

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**Abstract:** The development of Chinese opera art, in modern times, has greatly changed with the times. Explaining the essence of Chinese opera and vocal music art from the Western modern hermeneutics and reception aesthetics theory is conducive to sorting out the development context and characteristics of Chinese opera in different times. At the same time, providing a systematic analysis method for modern opera and vocal music aesthetics promotes the aesthetic development of the art and contributes to the form innovation and technical refinement of domestic opera and vocal music art. The research starts with the theoretical analysis of hermeneutics and reception aesthetics and verifies and explores the development history of Chinese opera. The analysis of the artistic essence of opera and vocal music will be summarized mainly from the perspective of the object of the opera text and the subject of the aesthetic audience. The purpose of this research is to explain the essential characteristics of opera and vocal music art from the relationship between the subject and the object. Besides, it aims to examine the relationship between the understanding behavior of the masses and the creators and performers' summary behavior for opera and vocal music art.


**Keywords:** Hermeneutics. Reception aesthetics. Chinese opera. Vocal music art. Subject-object relationship.

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**Resumen:** El desarrollo del arte de la ópera china en la época moderna ha cambiado mucho con el tiempo. Explicar la esencia del arte de la ópera china y la música vocal desde la teoría de la hermenéutica y la estética de la recepción occidental moderna es beneficioso para ordenar el contexto y las características de desarrollo de la ópera china en diferentes momentos. Al mismo tiempo, proporcionar un método de análisis sistemático para la estética moderna de la ópera y la música vocal promueve el desarrollo estético del arte y contribuye a la innovación de la forma y la refinación técnica del arte de la ópera y la música vocal nacional. La investigación comienza con el análisis teórico de la hermenéutica y la estética de la recepción y verifica y explora la historia de desarrollo de la ópera china. El análisis de la esencia artística de la ópera y la música vocal se resumirá principalmente desde la perspectiva del objeto del texto operístico y el sujeto del público estético. El propósito de esta investigación es explicar las características esenciales del arte de la ópera y la música vocal desde la relación entre el sujeto y el objeto. Además, tiene como objetivo examinar la relación entre el comportamiento de comprensión de las masas y el comportamiento de resumen de los creadores y artistas para el arte de la ópera y la música vocal.

**Palabras clave:** Hermenéutica. Estética de la recepción. Ópera china. Arte de la música vocal. Relación sujeto-objeto.

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## AN ANALYSIS OF THE ESSENCE OF CHINESE OPERA AND VOCAL MUSIC FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF HERMENEUTICS AND RECEPTION AESTHETICS

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**Abstract:** The development of Chinese opera art, in modern times, has greatly changed with the times. Explaining the essence of Chinese opera and vocal music art from the Western modern hermeneutics and reception aesthetics theory is conducive to sorting out the development context and characteristics of Chinese opera in different times. At the same time, providing a systematic analysis method for modern opera and vocal music aesthetics promotes the aesthetic development of the art and contributes to the form innovation and technical refinement of domestic opera and vocal music art. The research starts with the theoretical analysis of hermeneutics and reception aesthetics and verifies and explores the development history of Chinese opera. The analysis of the artistic essence of opera and vocal music will be summarized mainly from the perspective of the object of the opera text and the subject of the aesthetic audience. The purpose of this research is to explain the essential characteristics of opera and vocal music art from the relationship between the subject and the object. Besides, it aims to examine the relationship between the understanding behavior of the masses and the creators and performers' summary behavior for opera and vocal music art.

**Keywords:** Hermeneutics. Reception aesthetics. Chinese opera. Vocal music art. Subject-object relationship

### INTRODUCTION

Philosophical hermeneutics and reception aesthetics have been developing since the 1960s. At first, they had more theoretical achievements in the literary field. However, with the continuous development of philosophical subjectivity and text-audience relationship theory, philosophical hermeneutics and reception aesthetics gradually show their value in other art fields (Kuykendall, 2022, p. 113). After the 1980s, in the field of vocal music art and music aesthetics, the viewpoints, derived from phenomenology and Heidegger's ontology philosophy, have continuously produced new theoretical achievements in vocal music aesthetics (Pei, 2012, p. 444). Although the research of China in the field of music history and music aesthetics also vaguely contains the views and methods of reception aesthetics, Chinese researchers have not carried out in-depth research in this field. The art of Chinese opera originated in the 1920s, and its origin cannot be separated from the introduction of Western opera art forms by the New Culture Movement and the localization choice of the

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domestic vernacular promotion movement. From the perspective of interpretive theory, the emergence of Chinese opera art has adapted to the era of cultural development. Therefore, the use of vernacular Chinese to build an opera stage is also aimed at promoting vernacular Chinese and developing domestic culture. From the perspective of reception aesthetics, the acceptance of the audience of opera art indicates the achievements of domestic efforts to localize Western culture. Therefore, starting from Gadamer's hermeneutics and Jaus and Iser's aesthetic theory of reception, combined with the development process of Chinese opera and vocal music art, the study has conducted a fundamental exploration of vocal music art from the perspective of an opera text object and audience subject (Koutsomichalis, 2018, p. 14). Chinese opera art has gone through the exploration stage from 1919 to 1944, the foundation stage from 1949 to 1955, and the deep development stage from 1955 to the present. In the first stage, opera mainly reflected the revolutionary struggle of the masses, so valuable attempts were made to learn from the experience of Western opera and to nationalize artistic forms. In the second stage, the Yan'an Literature and Art Symposium laid the foundation for the development of opera in China, namely the development of cultural popularization of opera and the promotion function of revolutionary construction and development. In the third stage, Chinese opera followed the "double hundred" policy to further explore the creative experience of new opera, combined Western art forms with local vocal music language content and repositioned Folk art culture at the center of opera development. In the aspect of objectivity, this paper summarizes the intelligibility, comprehensiveness and expansibility of Chinese opera and vocal music art as the essential characteristics of objectivity. In the aspect of subjectivity, the research has discovered that the essence of Chinese opera and vocal music art includes the comprehender's aesthetic behavior and expectation, including the communication and dynamic filling of the blank by the comprehender, and the interaction between the opera text and the feedback text from the comprehender.

## **1 A STUDY ON THE ESSENCE OF CHINESE OPERA VOCAL AND MUSIC UNDER THE PERSPECTIVE OF HERMENEUTICS AND RECEPTION AESTHETICS**

### **1.1 THE OBJECT NATURE OF CHINESE OPERA AND VOCAL MUSIC**

The main research topic of different forms of vocal music art and vocal music aesthetics, in the field of philosophy, is the understanding of music. The understanding of vocal music art includes the exploration of the meaning of vocal music art and the essence of vocal music beauty. The core work of this paper is to analyze and explore the essence of Chinese opera and vocal music art. The main theories of its philosophy and aesthetics focus on Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics and Jaus's reception aesthetics. The understanding of vocal music art is mainly to understand the relationship between the subject and the object, and the unity of perceptual cognition and rational cognition. The greatest contribution of

hermeneutics and reception aesthetics theory to the exploration of the essence of vocal music art is to bring the receiver of cognitive theme into the perspective of essence analysis.

Western traditional hermeneutics tended to be silent after the 20th century, and then revived in the 1960s with the publication of Gadamer's book *Truth and Methodology* - Basic Characteristics of Philosophical Hermeneutics. But Gadamer was deeply influenced by his teacher Heidegger's ontological philosophy, thus his core of hermeneutics changed from classical hermeneutic methodology to philosophical hermeneutics. Gadamer's pursuit is not to improve the skills of hermeneutics but to explore the commonalities between all interpretive behaviors and the understanding behaviors of the audience (Gadamer, 1977). The ideological trend of reception aesthetics came into being in the 1960s. Germany is the center of the study of the two theories (Gadamer, 1960, p. 181). The representative figures of hermeneutics are Gadamer and Emilio Betti, while the representative figures of reception aesthetics are Hans Robert Jauss and Wolfgang Iser (Austgard, 2012, p. 831). The theory of reception aesthetics expands the concept of taking the author and the work as the core of analysis in traditional literary judgment to take the relationship between the work and the audience as the core of the analysis. In the theory of reception aesthetics, important propositions like "expectation", "effective history" and "concretization" are all derived from Heidegger's exposition of "innate structure" and "horizon of understanding", and are also influenced by Gadamer's "fusion of horizons" and Ingarden's "visualization" concept. Therefore, Gadamer's discussion on the essence of art and the aesthetic understanding of art aesthetics directly affected the formation and development of reception aesthetics. The understanding and aesthetic experience of literature and art, including text, vocal music, image and other media, is the combination of the understanding behavior of the audience and the commentator's interpretation behavior (Cuadro, 2009, p. 21). Therefore, this paper will start from the field of Chinese opera and vocal music art, and explore the enlightenment of the understanding of the essence of opera and vocal music art under the philosophical hermeneutics and reception aesthetics theory.

The broad sense of Chinese vocal music art includes all types of vocal music performance in history, but the Chinese opera art form originated in the 1920s. Domestic artists, such as Nie Er, Li Jinhui and others, have been influenced by the May 4th Movement, the Chinese national spirit, and Western scientific thought, and have explored ways to popularize vocal art. The explorers combined the Western opera singing experience with the localization and nationalization content. To respond to the needs of patriotic activities, they also carried out artistic reflections on the revolutionary behavior of the masses at that time. The historical and cultural connotation, contained in the opera culture and vocal music art in the exploration period, is expressed through the stage character image, script story content etc. (Zhou; Liu, 2011, p. 273). The opera art of China is based on historical figures and allusions, and it also has advanced opera art processing skills. Therefore, the development model of Chinese opera can be summarized as the model of learning from advanced creative

singing experience and the localization of creative content at the same time (Scollan; Gallagher, 2015, p. 123). Based on the different acceptors' different subjective consciousness, the understanding and interpretation of artistic creations, such as opera, depend on the exploration of artistic truth and essence in philosophical hermeneutics.

This article explores the essence of opera and vocal music art from the subjective and objective dimension, that is, analyzes the philosophical hermeneutics theory and the reception aesthetics theory from the perspective of the subject of opera and vocal music works or the object of performance activity and the artistic aesthetic. Philosophical hermeneutics, as a theory under the influence of Heidegger's subjective philosophy, and although the study will carry out an objective analysis of opera art, shows the final destination is still the subject of acceptance. Therefore, this article will pay attention to the combination of the subject and object of vocal music aesthetics in the discussion.

First of all, from the form of vocal music art, Kant considered pure music activities having no intelligibility represented by language art, so Kant advocates an aesthetic and cognitive understanding of music in form. Gadamer's hermeneutic theory holds different attitudes toward Kant's formalist aesthetic view. He believes that, whether music has the characteristics of language expression or not, the original purpose of music object creation is to convey ideological content. Therefore, music, whether pure music or opera vocal music with language characteristics, as the creators' thought carrier, has content intelligibility. The first point of this paper is to summarize one of the essences of vocal music art as intelligibility. Intelligibility means that the art of opera and vocal music can be understood by the audience. As a meaning carrier, the art of opera and vocal music is the combination of content and form, the association of concrete features and abstract features, and the unity of historical content aesthetics and realistic content criticism (Yang, 2021, p. 365). As mentioned earlier, the artistic form of Chinese opera often conveys ideological content with historical stories and characters. The connotation of modern Chinese opera and vocal music art is mainly divided into two types. First, the commemoration of historical events, heroes and masses during the turbulent period of war, such as "Heroes" and "Liu Sanjie". The second is the reconstruction and reinterpretation of national culture and ancient allusions, such as "Su Wu" and "Yu Tang Chun".

Secondly, the definition of opera, in academic circles, can be summarized as follows: opera is composed of poetry and music. There is no daily dialogue in this kind of art, but a combination of instrumental accompaniment and singing, sometimes accompanied by dance. It is a large-scale drama with singing, action, music, expression, dance, scenery, painting and other elements. From the perspective of the nature of the object, Chinese opera art is a comprehensive artistic aesthetic activity, which includes not only the literary attribute of the story script, but also the vocal art attribute of the singing performance. The opera

script should not only determine the story frame, but also set the characters' relationship and characteristics, the rhythm of lyrics or poems, and the connection and presentation of stage scenes (Ambrogio, 2018, p. 57). The essential reason why *White Haired Girl* has made great achievements, in the field of Chinese opera and vocal music art, is that the literary creation, represented by its opera script, has explored the path of the national spiritual and cultural creation of China.

The *White Haired Girl* represents the maturity of the artistic concept of Chinese opera and vocal music. The work was produced in the context of the Anti-Japanese War and the production struggle, reflecting the darkness of society at that time and the military and people's real expectations. Therefore, *White Haired Girl* has broken through the performance of previous operas in terms of literary aesthetics, such as the depth of the connotation of the opera, the freshness of the character's characteristics, the display of the artistic national characteristics of the language of the drama and poetry, and the dramatic conflict of the opera scenes. *The White Haired Girl* is an opera written by He Jingzhi and Ding Yi, and composed by Marco, Zhang Lu, Qu Wei, Huan Zhi, Xiang Yu, Chen Zi and Liu Chi in 1945. The *White Haired Girl* is based on the folk legend of the "White Haired Fairy" and is a new ethnic opera that combines poetry, song and dance. It draws on the method of dividing scenes from traditional ethnic opera in terms of structure. The scene changes are diverse and flexible. The language inherits the excellent tradition of both singing and speaking in Chinese opera. The music adopts the tune of Folk music in northern China, and absorbs the opera music and its expression techniques.

The aesthetic of opera and vocal music is a dialogue between the comprehender and the understood. But, at the same time, the auditory experience of an opera performance is also an aesthetic content that cannot be ignored. Therefore, the aesthetic of vocal music also has historical content characteristics. The *White Haired Girl* also displays a new aesthetic feature in music function and vocal music aesthetics. It has highly completed the combination of literary aesthetics and musical aesthetics of Chinese opera. In the category of traditional Chinese vocal music art, the important aesthetic feature of drama performance is the unity of singing, reading lines, fighting and other dance movements. This aesthetic trend of vocal music art has also affected the development of the new opera of China to a certain extent. Therefore, the new opera often requires opera actors to achieve the unity of vocal rhythm and dance movements, and the harmony of singing and expression.

During the development of the new opera of China, it absorbed the excellent achievements of Western opera performance and traditional opera singing and formed *bel canto* and traditional singing. *Bel canto*, as an exotic, is mostly used in vocal music in Italian, German and other languages in the West. So, it is more in line with the pronunciation habits and voice of western languages (Roy; Bayo, 2011, p. 29). The pronunciation habit of Chinese



is completely different from that of Western languages, so some early music creators believed that *bel canto* was not suitable for the domestic environment. On the other side, traditional singing is derived from the singing skills of traditional operas, which is more suitable for Chinese pronunciation. In terms of traditional vocal music aesthetics, the combination of music and poetry has been accepted by the masses and creators of poetry and music for a long time (Rothlauge, 2014, p. 303). Therefore, in the new Chinese opera, the national singing method is combined with the script and poetry. The script lyrics pay attention to the rhyme of level and oblique tones, and the singing method and composition pay attention to the harmony of tones. For example, the lyrics, in the opera *Wang Zhaojun*, are strictly following the level and tone requirements of regular poems, which proves that the development of Chinese new opera has integrated the aesthetic characteristics of literary aesthetics and vocal music aesthetics. So, the second essence of Chinese opera vocal music art is comprehensive. For example, in the opera *Wang Zhaojun*, the libretto are as follows: “Look back at the pipa, the mountains and rivers of my country will always be heartbroken.”; “Look at the pipa in two stacks, the grass and flowers are long.”; “Look forward to the future of the pipa in three stacks, and your life experience will be lost.” The opera *Wang Zhaojun*, launched in 1930, is the first opera created by Chinese people. It as composed by Zhang Shu and premiered at the New Oriental Theater. This work represents the maturity of the formal stage construction of Chinese opera. Since then, the professional personnel and equipment conditions have become the necessary content of Chinese Opera serial works.

From the perspective of the historical philosophical theory of hermeneutics and reality, the third essence of Chinese opera vocal music art is extensibility. The aesthetic activities of vocal music art cannot be accomplished overnight, and the essence and end point of art cannot be reached directly in the understanding activities. Therefore, in understanding activities, people also need to participate in many ways and learn from historical experiences. Vocal music art is bound to change, with the times, in the process of creation. In the development history of the new opera of China, it has gone through the exploration stage of Li Jinhui’s children’s song and dance drama, the foundation stage of the serious drama and Yangge Opera, the mature stage represented by the national opera *White Haired Girl* and the modern in-depth exploration stage. In different stages, Chinese opera shows different artistic styles, and the content of ideological expression is also different. In the current stage of opera vocal music aesthetic activities, most audiences have never experienced the tumultuous times expressed by the opera. So, the opera should strive to overcome the obstacles of the times and the limitations of time, while explaining the content and expressing the emotion, and constantly improve the skills and optimize the ideological content as time goes on.

To sum up, starting from the theoretical perspective of philosophical hermeneutics and the development of Chinese opera, this paper summarizes the intelligibility, comprehensiveness and extensibility of Chinese opera and vocal music art as the essential

characteristics of objectivity. Its intelligibility shows that Chinese opera works must contain a connotation that can be understood by the audience. The content of Chinese opera mainly focuses on the reconstruction of traditional allusions and characters, as well as the transmission of the national spirit in the revolution, and the commemoration of heroes. Its comprehensive connotation is that Chinese opera and vocal music art pay attention to the unity of literature and music, and the combination of performance and singing. In terms of extensibility, the article concludes that the art of opera vocal music needs to constantly meet the aesthetic needs of the masses, constantly update the content and ideas, and improve the vocal music skills and stage display effects from the historical horizon theory of hermeneutics and the development process of Chinese opera.

## **1.2 AN ANALYSIS OF THE SUBJECTIVE ESSENCE OF CHINESE OPERA VOCAL MUSIC**

From the historical perspective of hermeneutics, this paper summarizes the objective nature of Chinese opera works. After that, the subjective essence of Chinese opera and vocal music art is discovered through the theory of reception aesthetics. In the aesthetic activities of opera and vocal music, the works are regarded as the object, while the comprehender or appreciator is the subject-object. Through theoretical tracing of philosophical hermeneutics, it is obvious that Gadamer was deeply influenced by his teacher Heidegger's philosophical ontology in the process of forming modern hermeneutics theory. Therefore, from the perspective of understanding and acceptance of vocal music activities, hermeneutics and reception aesthetics have the same theoretical basis, that is to treat the audience as the subject. It can be said that Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics is the direct pioneer of Jaus's reception aesthetics theory. In the analysis of the objective nature of vocal music art, this article also refers to Gadamer's theory of historical horizon. The complete expression of this theory should be a "fusion of horizons" because Gadamer advocates that the final understanding of any artistic work should achieve the integration of the historical horizon conveyed by the work and the reality of the audience (Jones, 2022, p. 119). Only through continuous expansion and progress can Chinese opera and vocal music always have the aesthetic experience and cognitive connotation required by the audience. Gadamer also focused on the issue of reception and understanding of works in his book *Truth and Methods* - Basic Characteristics of Philosophical Hermeneutics. However, he did not agree with Dilthey's "reconstruction" and believed that such reconstruction was impossible and unnecessary. Reception should be a dynamic process, and the meaning of the work must be realized through this process. The understanding of the work is not a one-time or passive reception. On the contrary, it is a changing, proactive and creative understanding.

It is undeniable that operas, and even other forms of artistic works, are the products of creators' understanding of the world through their self-cognition. In the theoretical



view of reception aesthetics, the self-expression process of art is completed after receiving the understanding and aesthetic experience of the audience. Even the aesthetic part of the audience is more important than the author's self-expression part, which can better reflect the artistic essence of the work. The theoretical core of the two representatives of reception aesthetics, Jauss and Iser, is respectively focused on the subject understanding of philosophical hermeneutics and the analysis of the relationship between artistic texts and audiences (Sprigge *et al.*, 2022, p. 187). In the first few centuries of the gradual decline of religious philosophy and the rapid development of scientism, the cognitive system constructed by Descartes has been constantly dissolved. By the first half of the 20th century, the contradiction between the spiritual world and the material world has been intensified and reflected a profound cognitive crisis (Leigh, 2008, p. 1). Therefore, Husserl constructed phenomenological theory. He analyzed the cognitive activity of consciousness and regarded it as the composition of the world by suspending the controversy of the world ontology philosophy. Later, Heidegger's philosophical subjectivity and Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics inherited the construction of "subjectivity" and, finally, completed the return of subjectivity in aesthetic activities and humanism in Jauss and Iser's reception aesthetics.

In addition to the inheritance of modern hermeneutic theory and Heidegger's philosophy mentioned above, reception aesthetics also developed Russian formalism theory and phenomenological philosophy. Reception aesthetics and formalism both oppose the author's central view and pay attention to the appreciators' aesthetic activities and understanding behavior towards the works. The theory of reception aesthetics and phenomenology both pay attention to the analysis of the relationship between subject and object in aesthetic activities.

The exploration of the subjective nature of Chinese opera and vocal music art is carried out from the theoretical perspective of reception aesthetics (Wagner, 1984, p. 1173-1184). First of all, the essence of Chinese vocal music includes the understanding of the audience. Because the art of opera and vocal music are both musical and literary, the acceptance of opera and vocal music by the masses and listeners not only includes the cognition of the abstract auditory sense, but also includes the visual sense cognition of the story and concrete performance. The aesthetic activity of opera and vocal music is not only a rational and logical cognitive activity, but also a perceptual and experiential perception process. After the process of acceptance, the audience thinks about the meaning of the opera. And then, all the aesthetic features of the opera works are completed. From the perspective of reception aesthetics, the audience, as the aesthetic subject of opera and vocal music art, has initiative and creativity.

From the perspective of reception aesthetics, this paper regards the stage of opera and vocal music art after the composer and screenwriter have finished their works as the first text, the stage of the singer's performance as the second text and, finally, the stage of the aesthetic

activities of audience and different subjective thinking as the third text. The common feature of the three stages is that the meaning contained, in the works of opera art, is reflected in the text, while the difference is that the number of people, who comprehend the artistry of the text, is increasing. After reaching the final stage, the aesthetic connotation of opera art expanded the audience. Take the dramatic opera work *The Yangtze River Storm*, in the exploration period of Chinese opera, as an example. The opera is based on the real event that the Shanghai dock workers held a general strike to resist the delivery of arms of the Japanese army. After Tian Han and Nie Er finished the opera script and music score respectively, the first text stage was completed. This process reflected the two creators' understanding of group images in the context of anti-Japanese war and national salvation, their innovative ideas on stage performance forms and their anticipation of the spirit conveyed by the works.

During the performance of the opera, the performer needs to deeply understand and even re-create the work. Therefore, the performer's performance behavior and preparation for the performance are taken as the second text of the work. At this stage, the performer's acceptance and understanding are more focused on the vocal music display skills of stage effect and the understanding and transmission of script emotion. Finally, after the workers, peasants and soldiers accepted the opera, as receivers, and made aesthetic thinking, the work completed the final creation and the perfect integration of aesthetic characteristics. For example, when the audience accepts the singing section of the wharf in the play, they can feel the hardship of the workers' lives and the oppressed workers' struggling spirit in the group performance and lyrics. The view of "expectation" in the reception aesthetics theory expresses the opera receiver's initiative mechanism. Before understanding the aesthetic activities of vocal music works, the audience will inevitably be curious about the known and uncertain artistic connotations of the opera works and have doubts about the sensory experience in the opera. According to the receivers' own experience and relevant aesthetic experience, they have formed different and unformed understandings of content before understanding the work. Therefore, expectation is also an important part of the subjective nature of artworks.

Secondly, the subjective essence of Chinese opera and vocal music art is the exchange of aesthetic experience and understanding. Based on the intelligibility of opera works and the expectations of the audience, this paper further analyzes the flowing and changing characteristics of the subjective nature of Chinese opera and vocal music art. A thousand audiences have a thousand Hamlets. The premise of the flow and change of the subjective essence of opera vocal music works lies in the different aesthetic experiences of different understandings of the same work. In philosophical ontology and reception aesthetics, there is a state in which the existence of the subject causes the aesthetic understanding activities of the group to fail to reach a perfect unity. However, in terms of artistic aesthetics, most critics still pursue the idea of harmony, but differently.

For different aesthetic experiences and subjective views, communication and change have become an inevitable link in the understanding of artistic works. In the theory of expectation of reception aesthetics, when the expectation of the interpreter is different from the ideological connotation conveyed by the first and second texts of the opera, the object fails to completely point out or express the vague subjective expectation, which is called blank in the theory of reception aesthetics. The comprehender's subjective initiative is mainly to fill in the blank of the opera works. However, each comprehender has different interpretations of the blank, which leads to the communication among the comprehenders and, finally, fills the blank of the opera works in the process of continuous change and integration.

Finally, the subjectivity of Chinese opera and vocal art is reflected in the interaction between the work and the audience. Based on the difference between the opera creation and the expected text of the audience, the interaction between the two has also become the focus of the study of reception aesthetics. Iser focuses on the relationship between text and subject to explain the interaction between them. First of all, from the perspective of the influence of the opera object on the receiver's subject, the opera can provide aesthetic feelings for the receiver and meet the receiver's artistic aesthetic needs. In the aesthetic activities of opera and vocal music or other works of art, the comprehenders can often immerse themselves in the spiritual world of themselves, without thinking about the distress caused by the problems of realistic interests. They can also face their own emotional needs, without restraint in the art of vocal music, to obtain comfort.

At the same time, opera works of art can help the comprehender achieve the progress of self-cognition and world cognition. For example, after watching the opera *Sparrow and Child*, the receivers have a clearer reference for their self-values after watching the contents of family affection and kindness. Therefore, people will be affected by the work to produce self-cognition, praise for good qualities and memories of family affection, and be moved by children's pursuit of justice. Secondly, in terms of the influence of the subject of reception on the object of the opera, the aesthetic experience of the third text has guiding value for the creation of the first text and the performance of the second one. In the communication nature of opera works, in addition to the communication between aesthetic subjects, the communication between aesthetic subjects and creative subjects is equally important. The playwright and the songwriter expect to be recognized by the masses, and the performer expects the understanding and applause of the audience for their vocal music skills. Similarly, when the masses, as the aesthetic subject, have critical opinions on opera works, the creators should reflect on their cognition and use it as an experience to guide their creation.

To sum up, through the subjectivity theory of reception aesthetics, the research has discovered that the essence of Chinese opera vocal music art includes the aesthetic behavior and the comprehender's expectation, including the communication and dynamic filling

of the blank by the comprehender, as well as the interaction between the comprehender's opera text and the feedback text. The study analyzes the relationship between understanding and acceptance in the theory of reception aesthetics and it also summarizes the relationship between understanding and meaning. The comprehender's art form in the aesthetic activities of vocal music is affirmed, and the comprehender's subjective initiative, in the aesthetic acceptance of vocal music, is also valued. Unifying the subject and object of vocal music art is conducive to the exploration of the value and social responsibility of vocal music aesthetic activities, as well as the connection between lively subjective consciousness and changeable artistic content and form.

Therefore, this study analyzes the essence of Chinese opera vocal art from the subjective level of reception aesthetics and the objective level of hermeneutics. From the perspective of subjectivity, the essence of Chinese opera vocal art is the aesthetic behavior and the comprehender's perspective of expectations, as well as the interaction between the opera text and the feedback text received by the comprehender. From the perspective of objectivity, the essence of Chinese opera is a cognitive, expandable and artistic carrier that inherits Chinese folk culture.

## **2 THE ENLIGHTENMENT OF HERMENEUTICS AND RECEPTION AESTHETICS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHINESE OPERA AND VOCAL MUSIC**

With the support of science and technology at the present stage, opera art, which has a little audience in the past, has gradually become popular. At the beginning of the development of Chinese opera, it was also influenced by the artistic forms and techniques of Western opera, the memory and inheritance of traditional Chinese opera, and the national struggle. At this stage, the development of Chinese opera is still on the path of combining national opera with Western scientific concepts. From the hermeneutics perspective of the fusion of horizons and the essential characteristics of the communication and interaction between subject and object of the opera art of reception aesthetics, the author, performer and receiver of the opera art are connected, which is not only conducive to the promotion of vocal music art but also helps to improve the creators and performers' artistic aesthetic cognitive level and performance skills (Rich, 2017, p. 222). This paper puts Chinese opera in the development history of vocal music art for analysis and discussion. It can be concluded that the main force to continuously develop vocal music art comes from the broad audience. The opera acceptor's exchange and supplement of the aesthetic needs can promote the continuous innovation of vocal art forms and techniques. Therefore, the development of Chinese opera art should adhere to the critical opinions of the majority of aesthetic subjects, strengthen the foundation of vocal art and explore the direction of progress of vocal art aesthetic theory in continuous practice (Droz; Diederich, 2000, p. 4226). The performance skills, forms and

techniques of vocal music performance have been constantly updated, keeping pace with people's the increasingly diverse aesthetic tastes.

After expounding the enlightenment of hermeneutics and reception aesthetics theory on the development of Chinese opera vocal music art from the historical perspective of opera vocal music, this paper also analyzes the enlightenment of music essence on humanism and audiences themselves in the demonstration of the subjectivity of hermeneutics and reception aesthetics. In Gadamer's theory, not only artworks, but also human understanding of all things, have similarities. The main reason is that these things have cognitive properties and carry meaning that cannot be ignored by our wisdom. In the contemporary era, where scientism prevails, human beings are constantly searching for the meaning of existence. In Heidegger's theory, understanding behavior and reality has produced indelible traces, which is the factor of human existence. In this way, our conscious and spiritual world can be unified with the material and real world.

## CONCLUSION

Hermeneutics believes that works of art are essentially a unique form of self-expression achieved by humans by expressing something, which is a pure self-expression without a purpose or intention. The task of art lies in its self-discovery within the natural and historical world of humanity. And any performance activity is a performance activity carried out for certain people. The aesthetic of reception believes that the receiver and the comprehender are not passive beings in the artistic activities of opera vocal music, but actively participate in the creation. Opera works only have true meaning expression after receiving public understanding, so the structure and content of the work constantly progress between creation and acceptance. This paper explores the essence of Chinese opera and vocal music art from the perspectives of subjectivity and objectivity by expounding and analyzing Gadamer's, Jauss's and others' theories, and introducing the theories of hermeneutics and reception aesthetics into the development history of Chinese opera vocal music. In the aspect of objectivity, this paper summarizes the intelligibility, comprehensiveness and expansibility of Chinese opera and vocal music art as the essential characteristics of objectivity. In the aspect of subjectivity, the research discovers that the essence of Chinese opera and vocal music art includes the comprehender's aesthetic behavior and expectation, which includes the communication and dynamic filling of the blank by the comprehender, and the interaction between the opera text and the comprehender's feedback text. Based on the analysis of modern hermeneutics and reception aesthetics, the study believes that the art of Chinese opera and vocal music should continuously meet the aesthetic needs of the masses, constantly update the content and ideas, and improve vocal music skills and stage effects. As the masses, the

aesthetic subject, have critical opinions on opera works, the creators should reflect on their cognition and use it as the experience to guide their creation.

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