

# Rossini and Beethoven: Exploring the Characteristics and Influencing Factors of Musical Value from the Perspective of Opera

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**Abstract.** Analyzing musicians' works is a hot topic in the academic world, but for abecedarian, how to preliminarily analyze the musical value orientation of musicians' works is still an important issue that needs to be solved. Besides, there are very few essays to help beginners analyze the work's musical value. This essay takes Rossini, a representative of the Italian school, and Beethoven, a representative of the German school, as examples to study the quality of musical works, their popularity among the public, the inner meaning conveyed by the works, and the social environment of the times. The results show that when analyzing the value of musical work, we should not only focus on the inner value of the work itself but also combine the experience of the composer's life and the aesthetic judgment of different periods. This study gives opinions and suggestions for music beginners to synthetically analyze the musical value of musicians' works from an objective optic angle.

**Keywords:** Musical value; rossini; beethoven.

## 1. Introduction

Today's society has been digging deep into the works of famous musicians in the past, analyzing the composer's musical ideas and connotations word by word. Compared with the past, it is challenging to find a talented music creator in today's society who can compare with the musicians in the past. This phenomenon is a regression of the times. There are plenty of music creators in today's society, but it seems challenging to see a musician who is a sensation and world-renowned like in the past. This phenomenon is actually because of the change of aesthetic standards under the changing times, which has led to a change in the definition of a musician's success. Defining a successful musician is a hot topic at this stage. The success of a musician is the success of the work he created, which is the musical value of the work. Analyzing a musician's work means investigating the value created by his work. Still, for music beginners, the value of music seems to be an occult and hollow thing, and there is no specific definition of the provision of the particular connotation of music value.

This article uses Beethoven and Rossini as examples to help music beginners understand the musician's success. Taking the characteristics of musical value and the factors that affect music value as the starting point, it analyzes the value of music works from the perspectives of the quality of the work, its popularity, the connotation of the work, and the era in which it is located. These analyses give beginners basic ideas and help them consider multiple factors more generally while appreciating music works.

To sum up, through the research of the article, music beginners will master the essential ability to analyze musical works and be able to consider the value orientation of music works more objectively and generally, not just focusing on the melody and rhythm of the music works themselves. As music researchers, we should focus on digging deep into the connotations and reasons why musicians compose this work--gradually mastering the ability to analyze music and enrich our understanding of music through continuous in-depth exploration.

## 2. Characteristics and Case Studies of Musical Value

### 2.1. Rossini and Beethoven from the Perspective of Opera

Under traditional thinking, musicians' value is often reflected in their creations, and the works they leave behind are covered with their emotions, thoughts, etc. However, with the development of society, how to judge valuable works and what the key to defining a musician's success is have become urgent issues that need to be solved.

In the nineteenth century, under the influence of the Enlightenment, people abandoned traditional religious ideas and began to pay attention to human needs [1]. As people accepted the concept of humanistic ideas, many fields were deeply influenced, such as art, literature, and music. People stopped unthinkingly admiring ancient Greece's theological stories and began focusing on the actual leaves and natural scenes.

During the decline of Italian opera at the end of the 18th century, Rossini, as a representative of the Italian school, revived Italian opera under the influence of the Italian national liberation movement. Rossini dominated the Italian opera industry in the 20s of the 19th century and even surpassed Beethoven at that time, blowing a Rossini fever." His musical works followed the public's aesthetics and were famous. Rossini not only saved the decline of Italian opera and enabled Italian comic opera to develop again but also allowed us to see his attitude toward music and feel the depth and breadth of his creations [2].

He shows off his gorgeous skills and simple and colorful orchestration when creating music. From 1806 to 1828, he created his first opera and the last work, *Demetrio e Polybio*, and *William Tell*. He created nearly forty operas, an average of one opera every six months [3]. As influenced by humanism, Rossini paid more attention to the audience's opinions and demands in the music creation process. Music is a connection between the composer and the audience's medium. To improve audience satisfaction, Rossini constantly modified according to the opinions of the audience opinions, which made the role of this medium pay its fullest. This way increases the audience's satisfaction and allows composers to get multifaceted feedback and various perspectives, helping the composer improve and modify their work. Most of his operas were completed quickly, such as his most outstanding work, *The Barber of Seville*, which took only ten days. He completed his one-act comedy *Marriage Certificate* at 18, which got a successful premiere. Then, he created six one-act operas within 12 months. In terms of opera overtures, his opera overtures are deeply loved by the audience, leaving behind many excellent concert overtures. From 1816 to 1823, when Rossini was creating opera series, he created works such as *Cinderella*, *The Girl of the Lake*, and *The Thief Magpie*, leaving some beautiful opera overtures. Perhaps because he had too little time to compose each opera and the energy to recreate specific overtures for each opera, he used the same opera overture to compose *The Barber of Seville*, *Queen Elizabeth of England*, *A Strange Misunderstanding*, and *Aureliano in Palmira*.

Beethoven covered a wide range of themes in music creation. He is known as the God of Music and one of the Three Masters of Classicism. In the turbulent European society at the beginning of the 19th century, the social turmoil after the end of the French Revolution had not subsided, and the opera with the theme of rescue opera became a symbol of the revolutionary spirit of France. Influenced by the general environment, Beethoven hoped to create a rescue opera with this background. He produced only one opera in his life, *Fidelio*. Although he was a composer with the broadest themes and the most considerable output, he only left one opera for his whole life. During the creation of this opera, Beethoven also performed in the most challenging movement of his life. He was tortured by illness, and his emotions fell to the bottom. He could not find a way to reduce his inner pain, so he could only put his inner fluctuations into music. At the same time, he used the plot of this opera to express his emotions to the world. Beethoven accepted the creation of operas; he wanted to become an opera composer like Mozart, so he was very strict about the quality of the materials [4]. In this state of a meticulous selection of scripts, it took much effort to figure out and write operas repeatedly.

*Fidelio* celebrates the unswerving spirit of divine love and the noble qualities of the fearlessness of sacrifice. After the failure of the premiere, Beethoven constantly revised and re-conceived the

overture, composed the overture, and composed four overtures for the opera. Beethoven made several significant revisions to the opera to improve it. Finally, the final success of the performance was on May 23, 1814. Beethoven has revised the aria in which the male protagonist Florestan appears 16 times, which is enough to reflect Beethoven's severe and strict attitude towards his opera. Influenced by the Enlightenment, Beethoven vented his inner emotions and desire for freedom through the characters in the opera [5]. Combining music with humanism enriched the expression of the character's emotions and innovated music creation. Beethoven's opera influenced a generation of German opera composers, such as Weber and Spohr, and improved the development of German opera.

## 2.2. Music Value Characteristics

Many factors, such as region, environment, local customs, and politics, have influenced the spread and development of music and different genres. In the continuous development of Western opera, various types of operas have emerged in the innovative development of composers, and multiple schools have been bred in different regions. In the development of opera in the 19th century, Rossini and Beethoven pushed the Italian and German schools to new peaks, respectively. Their innovative development of creation has influenced generations of music composers.

In music development, people inevitably compare different music schools and composers as if to formulate unique standard rules to judge the music's value. However, there has been no clear standard for judging value since ancient times. A relatively objective perspective cannot be used to evaluate music because it is a collection of sensuality. During the traditional rationalism period, Pythagoras believed there was a connection between music and mathematics and that music contained rational characteristics [6]. Still, this rationality caused music to lose its inner soul. In German classical philosophy, Kant's critical philosophy reflected on the metaphysics theoretical ontology of 'things in themselves,' believing that music is a sensory entertainment without meaning and placing music at the end of art. Hegel saw instrumental music as empty content and entertainment for the senses. In Schopenhauer's 'voluntarism' philosophy of music, the irrational 'will' will replace reason and liberate music from the shackles of rationalism and the supremacy of art [6]. Therefore, there is no fixed standard to define and interpret music, let alone the discussion of the music value.

People have different ideas about the value of music from various positions and perspectives. From the standpoint of some professional musicologists, the quality of musical works is the key to musical value. The German school has always paid attention to the music layout, emphasizing the motives and themes of music. Beethoven, the representative of the German school, paid great attention to the music layout in his creation. He only composed one opera in his life, focused on the quality of the materials, and paid attention to details in the creation process, hoping to create a perfect opera. He wrote four overtures for this opera, which are still widely circulated today. After the failure of the premiere, Beethoven revised the opera, almost extensively reforming the entire opera, and finally achieved a good response. In the case of opera, Beethoven's success comes from the quality of his works, which is influenced by German culture and his rigorous attitude towards creating works.

In contrast, the Italian school emphasizes music expressiveness, the development of plots, stage design, singing skills, etc. Making Italy opera an infectious and unique art form. Rossini, a representative of the Italian school, was popular with the audience. Rossini created more than 40 operas in more than 20 years. Completing such a large number of works in a short time undoubtedly reflects Rossini's talent in creation. However, the quality of the works created in such a short period still concerns many musicians. Although Rossini's works are not as high as Beethoven's, his music creation revolves around the audience's preferences. Although critics consider his music surface, he truly connects music with the audience. According to aesthetics, he needs to modify his opera and the music to cater to the audience. The success of Rossini's music stems from the fact that he catches the audience's attention. The listeners deeply love his music, and he has a broad audience, which makes his music very well-known.

The criteria for judging are rationality, and music, as a product of sensibility, cannot be defined using a rational perspective. Everyone has different experiences, perspectives, and aesthetic standards,

and they have different entry ideas for judging the music's value so that they will have different understandings of the music for the same composer [7]. Therefore, to explore the musical value of a work, it is necessary to analyze its influencing factors from an objective perspective to help today's music practitioners better judge the musical value.

### **3. Factors Affecting Music Value**

#### **3.1. Quality of Works**

Whether it is music or other aspects, quality is a concern in various fields. Quality is an essential factor in whether each product can improve customer satisfaction. High-quality work not only captures customers but also increases market competitiveness. Composers create works and put them on the market for rewards, reflecting the commodity attributes of musical works [8]. With continuous societal development, musical works must follow the survival law of the fittest, that is, create better quality works to attract more listeners and enhance their value continuously.

The quality of the musical work is the foundation of its value. It is based on the composer's rich harmony skills and cleverly conceived arrangement of notes in a unique way, which reflects the composer's superb musical skills, harmony conception, clever use of rhythm, and arranging ability. The quality is one of the keys to the success of a musical work. In a composer's career, the quality of his work is undoubtedly the key factor in their success. Just like building a house, if the foundation is not laid well, even if a skyscraper is built, it will collapse one day. The famous German musician Beethoven is known as the Music Saint by the world. He has been involved in many genres throughout his life. A good musician not only creates a work but also makes a musician.

#### **3.2. Popularity of the Work**

When a work is composed, how to test its value is often judged by its popularity in the past. In the past, musicians did not get as much remuneration as now. Many musicians depended on selling their works to afford their essential lives. The more popular a job is, the higher its performance rate is, and the more royalties the composer will get. Therefore, some musicians would write according to the hot topics of the time or the public's aesthetic preferences to capture a specific source of income at that time. Rossini, a representative of the Italian school, set off a Rossini fever in the 19th century. His music creation conformed to the public's aesthetics and built a bridge for music to communicate with the listener. In Rossini's opera work, he would listen to the audience's opinion of his music and make certain modifications to compose music that the audience liked. From this, the success of Rossini's music played an essential role in its popularity.

However, with the times change, people's aesthetic styles will also change. As the saying goes, it isn't easy to reconcile the mouth. The aesthetic standards of the audience are gradually improving, and the work quality requirements are becoming more and more stringent, which has also invisibly increased the standards for musicians to create works. The traditional opera form had to be moved towards innovation to increase popularity. As a representative of the Italian school, Rossini made a series of innovations to the traditional opera form to get out of the predicament and follow the public's aesthetic needs. Traditional opera is more solemn in terms of music, and the music lines are relatively smooth. Rossini's fast-paced music adds a lot of lightness, humor, and dramatic elements to make the opera more entertaining. In terms of performance, traditional opera highlights vocal techniques and the expressiveness of actors' emotions; Rossini's opera emphasizes gorgeous vocal techniques and humorous actor expressions [9]. Rossini's opera innovated traditional opera, enriched the opera's artistic expression, and had a profound influence on later composers.

#### **3.3. The Meaning Conveyed by the Work Itself**

The connotation of a work is the work's internal logic. The composer, performer, and audience create it. The particular meaning given to music from their respective viewpoint constitutes the internal logic of such a complete piece of music. As an independent individual, due to their own

different experiences, they will have different spiritual resonances for the same music. Because of these differences, it is revealed that there is no fixed standard answer to the connotation of the work. The connotation of music also invisibly affects its value. The connotation of music also invisibly affects its value. Composers create music that can resonate with more listeners. They put their emotions into music, allowing the audience to perceive their emotional fluctuations in their current situation and seek spiritual resonance with them [10].

Traditional rationalism mentions empty music. The music has no connotation; it is constructed by arrangement and combination of notes according to a special relationship. The fragments of music do not have any special meaning; the connotation they convey permeates the listener through the opera. A single melody has no special meaning, but the connotation expressed in a specific environment and background differs. The connotation conveyed in the music work is given by the musician. The composer incorporates his own emotions and experiences into the creation process.

Music is like words in the hands of a composer, recording their thoughts and feelings, some of which are their personal experiences and imaginations. Music connects the inner contradictions the composer wants to express as a medium of communication between the performer and the audience. In this process, the connotation conveyed itself gradually emerges. During the creation of Beethoven's opera *Fidelio*, Beethoven was deeply tortured by illness and could not express long-suppressed emotions to others. The only thing he could do was to use his works to vent the injustice of fate and inner pain to the world.

### 3.4. The Era of the Work

Music analysts have found that the composer incorporates his own emotions and experiences during the creation process and shows the general environment of the time. Under the Enlightenment, humanism made people focus on life in this world and begin to pay attention to the human self rather than the pursuit of the ethereal afterlife. Under the impact of this thought, opera gradually shifted from using ancient Greek mythology to real life and even the life of the lower class. In this context, the musicians' creations focus on describing the lives of tiny people, using multiple contradictions, character conflicts, and inner entanglements to shape the image characteristics of different characters. Rossini's most famous, *The II Barbiere di Siviglia*, is how the barber Figaro helped Count Almaviva overcome the obstruction of Basilio and Bartolo, resolved the misunderstanding with Rosina, and finally came together. The opera uses clever composition and humorous scripts to create the distinct personality characteristics of different characters. To this day, *The Barber of Seville* remains one of the most popular repertoires in major opera houses worldwide.

In the in-depth music analysis, it is not hard to find that some composers will create works with similar themes in specific periods. As the war continued, it witnessed the emergence of heroes, the birth of great men, the displacement of the people, the bloody warriors, and the ruins, all of which touched the composer's hearts. Beethoven wrote *Symphony No.5, Op.67*, under the influence of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars. The motive is its unique four-note (Fate knocks on the door rhythm). This motive runs through the symphony and has become a classic symbol in music history. In this work, Beethoven used his characteristic sustained tonic, and in the finale's conclusion, he used the sustained main chord. This continuity is Beethoven's portrayal of the hero's unyielding character [11]. Beethoven used complex thematic developments and changes, appropriate transitions, and motives to reappearance to interpret the resistance to adversity and the pursuit of victory. This work quickly became a public favorite and a milestone in Beethoven's creative career(Fig.1) .



Fig. 1 Music section display [12]

Musical value is a variable. Defining a work's value depends not only on the quality and market value but also on its audience, the cultural connotation expressed, the background of the times, and other factors. As a beginner, people cannot define the value of a work from a one-sided perspective. People should comprehensively consider analyzing and measuring the value of work from an objective and fair perspective. The analysis of all this still decides the basic music skills, analytical ability, music theory knowledge, and music practitioners' practice.

#### 4. Conclusion

This study found that the main reason for the success of musicians is the value of their musical works, but there has been no specific definition of the value of musical works since ancient times. However, it can be divided into two types of influencing factors according to the main characteristics of a musician's success: the quality of the musical work itself and the other is the work's popularity. Since music is a perceptual existence, there is no stable value scale in analyzing the musical value of a musician's work, so scholars can only use cases to compare and explore in the analysis process to find the factors that affect the change of its value. In the discussion of the characteristics of musical value, this paper analyzes the influencing factors of musical value from four aspects: the quality of the musical work itself, its popularity, its inner meaning, and the background of the times, to help beginners have a preliminary concept of the exploration of musical value. As music scholars, we should focus on the work's internal and external factors in music analysis.

In the infinitely developing future, under the impact of artificial intelligence, perhaps people's measurement of this value scale will have new changes. With the continuous development of science and technology, AI continues to infiltrate various fields. In the field of music, many artificial intelligence composers and conductors have emerged, and their creation and shaping of music may far exceed that of many people working in the music field. On September 10, 2024, at the opening ceremony of the Central Conservatory of Music, the self-composed AI symphony *Welcome*, performed by the robot Zhi Yin conductor, was performed very well, and the response was excellent. The advancement of artificial intelligence is undoubtedly a significant impact on the music industry. With the continuous development of this phenomenon, AI concerts may occupy a place in future music development.

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