

# Research on the Narrative Function of Musical Symbols in Youth Movies

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## Abstract

**Film is an art form that combines sound and picture, and music, as a symbolic expression, plays an increasingly important role in films. In genre films, musical notation often has its own aesthetic value and ideographic function. As an important film genre, youth-themed films have formed a set of proprietary "systems" in the process of continuous development. Its function is not only to cooperate with the picture, but also to express the meaning and textual value of the music independently in the narrative process. Through the analysis of musical symbols in youth-themed movies, this paper attempts to clarify the ideographic mechanism of music in youth movie texts, interpret the main role of musical symbols as an interpretive link in the narrative process of movies, and make Chinese genre film music more vital.**

## Keywords

**Youth Film; Musical Notation; Film Music; Narrative.**

## 1. Introduction

Daniel Bell pointed out that "visual concepts, sound and images are currently dominant." Sound is one of the indispensable symbolic elements in modern film and television works, and its narrative role in the film can be said to be the most important. Music, as one of the symbolic representations in the film, plays a finishing touch on the narrative function of the film. And it is the organic combination of musical notation and picture narrative that makes the film arouse a "sense of consensus" and "sense of resonance" in the hearts of the audience. The film allows the audience to better integrate into the film through musical notation, and thus perceive the film narrative given by the director deliberately.

For youth-themed movies, the role of music is more to interpret the beauty of nostalgia, and to establish a unique formulaic style through the sense of nostalgia, making the audience feel moved when watching the movie. The film uses a beautiful and youthful style to show the content of the picture and the comfortable and warm picture content, coupled with the signifier music symbols that resonate with empathy, to explain the youth story created by the director, which arouses the broad resonance of the audience's youthful memories and the reluctance of the youthful past. recall. This paper focuses on semiotics theory, and analyzes youth-themed films from three aspects: the meaning of the plot and the extension of the plot, the connotation and extension of the characters, the process of signification and the rhetoric of symbols interpreted by musical symbols.

## 2. The Narrative Effect of Music on Youth-Themed Films

As a way of expressing symbols, the main function of music in the film is to describe the plot and interpret the connotation of the style. Through the unique expressiveness and appeal of the music, the film makes the audience associate with sound and picture, and evokes the audience's infinite emotions about the past of youth.

## 2.1. The Designation and Shaping of the Style of the Plot by the Music

Cinema is through the art of the body to complete its marriage with spiritual thinking. As one of the mediums of the body, music plays a referential role in the film to set off the atmosphere and set the tone of the film. For example, the film "The Best of Us" adapted from the novel of the same name by Chang'an in August, at the beginning of the film, the soothing and long piano music is used as the soundtrack, the picture language full of warm colors and the shooting method of soft focus photography, and then the protagonist's self-narration The commentary sets the tone of the film-a youthful and beautiful high school life in full bloom. Bringing the audience's thoughts back to high school, making the audience and the film a perfect fit, allowing the audience to tell their own youth in the movie.

Music often enriches the expression of the film text, and conveys the director's style to the audience with the pictures. In Guo Fan's film "You at the Same Table", the film begins with Lin Yi, played by Lin Gengxin, standing on a cross street in New York. He wears a suit and ties with his monologue. The seemingly beautiful and stable real life is Deep sad piano music as background music. The director depicts the unsatisfactory life of Lin Yi through the montage technique of contrasting sound and picture. In this way, the director implies that Lin Yi, who is in the United States, is living a life that backfires. Then in the narrative part, the director turned the camera on Lin Yi in the United States. The same crossroads, the same deep piano music. Through the use of repetitive montages, the director not only interprets Lin Yi's sad life again, but also conveys to the audience Lin Yi's regret after deciding to go to the United States and his regret for not being with Xiaozhi. The sluggish mood expressed by the music also caused the scenes in the second half of the movie "You at the Same Table" to describe the realistic narrative. In the film, the use of the palindrome technique of music and the repeated theme melody make the whole plot scene full of infinite sentimental signifier color. However, it basically makes the audience have a mentality of reminiscence and passing of youth.

## 2.2. The Extension Effect of Music on the Performance of the Plot

Music is often expressive and uncertain in the plot presentation of the film. Although the content of its expression is not as intuitive and specific as the footage, it still has a unique expressive force in the film. In "My Deskmate", Lin Yi was quarantined due to the SARS flu, and Xiao Zhi smashed the glass of Lin Yi's dormitory with a flashlight. The director also used surreal sound to amplify and exaggerate the sound of the glass breaking. After the collective escape, the director used relatively passionate and cheerful background music, and even used the music "We are the champions" sung by Queen. The director pushes the plot to a climax through this background music, but also highlights the love of Lin Yi and Xiaozhi and the brotherhood of Lin Yi and others, and relies on musical symbols to extend the crazy youth and beautiful love in the hearts of the audience, arousing the audience resonance.

As a special form of symbols, in the film, the main purpose of music is that when the text cannot express a complete narrative, music can become a reproducible auxiliary form as a carrier to transmit information. In the film "The Best of Us", in order to continue to be at the same table with Yu Huai, Geng Geng chose a science subject that he was not good at, and with the help of Yu Huai, he came to the college entrance examination period. In the performance of the film, the soothing and high-pitched cello was used as the background music, and then it was changed to a relaxed and cheerful piano music. Through the transition of piano music, the fragmented narratives are connected in series, so that the fragmented plots can be coherent and complete and expressed to the audience.

Music has a direct rendering effect on people's emotions, and the audience's aesthetic experience is also different depending on the style of music. In the film "The Year in a Hurry", Chen Xun and others participated in a basketball game, and the background music used the theme song "Looks Like I Love You Loudly" from "Slam Dunk", expressing the high emotions of

Chen Xun and others when playing basketball, It also ignites the emotions of the audience. The emotions of the characters in the movie are not only manifested through music, but also infect the audience's emotions through music, so that the emotions rendered by the plot extend beyond the screen through musical symbols.

### 3. The Role of Music on the Characters of Youth-Themed Films

In the film text, musical symbols form a sequence combination with other symbols such as images and pictures, conveying the rich emotions and inner feelings of the characters in the film to the audience, and the audience also reads the connotative emotions and denotative content of the movie characters by means of the symbolic content. and resonate with it.

#### 3.1. Demonstration of the Connotation of Music on Character Shaping

The addition of musical notation enriches the artistic form of the film text, which, in conjunction with the content of the picture, highlights the connotation effect of the characters in the text. In the movie "You at the Same Table", Lin Yi, a student, faced Xiao Zhi who was bullied by Xiao Chuan. Although he didn't pay attention to him on the surface, he sat at the table and played with toy frogs, but he would look for Xiao Chuan after school. During the fight, her nose was bruised and her face was swollen, Xiaozhi took out a big white rabbit toffee and handed it to Lin Yi. During the narrative presentation of the film, the background music selected the song "Love" by the Little Tigers, which is not only a unique space to build a sense of age, but also shows the youthful emotion between Lin Yi and Xiaozhi. It is worth noting that in the singing of the lyrics, "Shout out to the sky, say I love you...", the picture at this time is Lin Yi fighting with Xiaopang and others on the rooftop. The director did it deliberately to show from the side that Lin Yi guarded Xiaozhi in his own way and expressed his love connotation.

The music text and the video text are often read against each other, and the audience can taste the video characters and perceive the characters from the music of the film. In the film "The Year in a Hurry", Chen Xun and others in the roller skating rink clashed with the thugs. The chaotic scene, the exciting sound and the picture made Fang An at a loss. With Fang An's sentence "Chen Xun, we Let's break up!" Chen Xun, who fell to the ground, learned that Fang Hui had agreed to the two of them to date, so he stood up instantly and pulled Fang Hui to run. The "Dang" of the power train sounded as the background music, and the climax part "When we are companions in the world, live unrestrained and unrestrained...". The use of pop music not only reflects the times, but also sets off Chen Xun's beautiful vision for the relationship between the two. Then, from Zhao Ye's perspective, he found that his favorite girl, Lin Jiamo, was looking at Su Kai infatuatedly. At this time, the background music was replaced by Su Huilun's "Duck". The cheerful and relaxed music set off Lin Jiamo's love for Su Kai. Here, musical notation is used as a communication mechanism, and the use of lyrics can better set off the characters and express the connotation of the characters outside the music.

#### 3.2. The Extensional Performance of Music on the Emotions of Characters

As a symbol, music plays a role in connecting the emotional bond between the audience and the film, allowing the audience to better feel the emotional performance of the characters in the play. In the movie "Youth School", the student who failed the college entrance examination actually thought that he could study hard for love, but he learned that Huang Jingjing had made a boyfriend. The running exercise on the show, accompanied by the music "My Sky", the phrase "Goodbye my love, I want to say goodbye..." seems to be a self-report of the unexpected, and the director expresses the pain and depression through the musical symbols, And told the audience about the sad experience of the sixteen-year-old boy.

In a movie, a piece of music can help the audience to understand the mood changes of the characters through the changes of rhythm and pitch rhythm, so that the audience can better

feel the emotional changes of the characters in the movie. In the film "The Year in a Hurry", back in 2001, Zhao Ye set up a carpet at the entrance of Lin Jiamo's university, waiting for Lin Jiamo to go to school and saving SK money for him. Under the slow and long background music, it is the sympathy of the two "spare tires" when they meet. The two people in the sun are full of love, but the low-key and slow music also implies that the two cannot love each other in the final outcome. Zhao Ye's lovesickness for Lin Jiamo and Lin Jiamo's affection for Zhao Ye, through the ups and downs of the music, infect the audience's emotions, causing the audience to be infinitely sighed and saddened.

In the film, pure pictures cannot directly express the inner emotions of the characters. At this time, symbolic musical symbols are needed to indirectly express the perceptual things. In the movie "The Best of Us", Geng Geng called Yu Huai after learning the real situation of National Day singing in high school from the radio. At this time, the film played "Geng" sung by Wang Sulong. The picture is composed of youthful memories composed of warm colors and cruel reality dominated by cool colors. It is explained to the audience that the reason for the separation of the two is not the fixed betrayal of one party, but the cruel and cold sad reality, which contrasts with the beautiful memories of youth and makes the audience sad. It can be seen that music in the film not only plays a role in assisting the audience to understand the characters in the film, but also acts as a form of expression, which affects the audience's thoughts by means of extension.

#### **4. The Imagery Effect of Music on Youth-Themed Films**

As one of the important elements of audio-visual language, music plays a role not only in the coordination of sound and picture, but also because of its unique ideographic effect, it has become an important part of film texts that cannot be ignored. In the study of semiotics, musical notation can be divided into intentional meaning, textual meaning and explanatory meaning.

##### **4.1. The Process of Music'S Signification to Film Narrative**

The music collocation in youth-themed movies often contains the intention and meaning that the creator wants to convey through the music, so that the music narrative and the film text are organically combined and the meaning is unified. In the film "To Our Dying Youth" directed by Zhao Wei and supervised by Guan Jinpeng, the director used a lot of musical symbols to refer to the narrative process of the film. At the beginning of the film, Zheng Wei, who is wearing a fairy tale princess costume, walks in fairy tales, explaining that as an only child, she is like a princess, full of hope in love but with a ladylike temperament. And it is precisely because of this that Zheng Wei met Chen Xiaozheng and developed a secret affection for him. When Zheng Wei bravely took the stage and sang "Red Sun", she hoped to tell Chen Xiaozheng her love for him loudly through this song. Zheng Wei sang her heart through songs and passed it on to Chen Xiaozheng. Then Chen Xiaozheng accepted Zheng Wei's love, and Zheng Wei, who was walking on the snow, suddenly put on crystal shoes on her feet, and the exclusive music of "Cinderella" also played in the film, which not only made it clear that Chen Xiaozheng gave up being a "Cinderella" The daughter of the dean of the "Daughter of Gold" chose "Cinderella" Zheng Wei. As the relationship between the two continued to heat up, under the big tree in Ruan Wan's hometown, the two kissed warmly and sincerely, and the background music of the piano and violin sounded, which was gentle and long, telling the love of the two.

In the process of disseminating musical symbols, the film conveys to the audience the film itself and the mark of the film's textual thoughts. After Zheng Wei learned that Chen Xiaozheng was going abroad, she ran to the water room to question Chen Xiaozheng, and learned the answer. Zheng Wei's calm dialogue is accompanied by the background music of the violin, which is tragic and abusive. At the end of the film, Zheng Wei and Chen Xiaozheng sat in the aquarium again. Facing Zheng Wei's question, the piano sounded again in the film, and the slow piano

music conveyed a helpless and sad mood. From the movie "To the Youth That Will Die", it can be found that the existence of music not only conveys the emotions of the characters in the play, but also serves as an explanation, telling the audience the narrative content of the movie, forming a symbolic Means the content, connecting the storyline of the entire movie.

#### 4.2. The Symbolic Rhetoric of Music to Film Narrative

Symbolic rhetoric was revived in the twentieth century, and its research object is the basic way of representation of human civilization. Metaphor is the basis of all figures of speech. Common symbolic figures of speech mainly include simile, metaphor, symbol, irony, metonymy, and synonymy. And Wayne Booth believes that rhetoric is a "way of communication" between people. In the film, rhetoric is one of the symbolic representation methods, and its communication object has also changed, becoming the "communication method" between the director and the audience, and often plays a finishing touch in the film. In the movie "To Our Dying Youth", after Zheng Wei showed her love to Chen Xiaozheng, Chen Xiaozheng did not deny it. Then Zheng Wei walked in the snow, and the music of "Cinderella" sounded, which not only showed that Chen Xiaozheng chose Zheng Wei who is "Cinderella" compared with the dean's daughter, but also through the music of "Cinderella". Zheng Wei will eventually become her weakness because of money.

Not only that, but there is a special causal relationship between musical notation and film text. Music intervenes in the film with a special identity, presenting the indirect abstraction directly to the audience through the film, leaving the audience with unlimited imagination space. Ruan Wan, the school flower in "To Our Dying Youth", as a microcosm of a rock-and-roll crowd, accompanies Goatskin's "So Young" in his first appearance. Rock music is often enthusiastic and carnival when singing, but after singing, it is replaced by tragic and sentimental. The rock music "So Young" has also become Ruan Wan's symbolic figure of speech in the film. Ruan Wan, who has been in love with Zhao Shiyong for several years, chose to forgive even in the face of Zhao Shiyong's fault. This obsession with love is like Roker's obsession with rock music. When she told Zhao Shiyong that she was pregnant, Zhao Shiyong's attitude could not help disappointing her, just like in a modern society, rock music is gradually becoming lonely, and Ruan Wan's love for Zhao Shiyong is gradually dying out. But when Ruan Wan received a call from Zhao Shiyong, talking about the goatskin band's China tour, Ruan Wan was still desperate to see Zhao Shiyong for the last time. At this time, the rock music "So Young" sounded again, changing from active music in two-person headphones to passive music. On the way to find Zhao Shiyong, on the way to the concert, Ruan Wan had an accident in the music of "So Young", and the music stopped abruptly. Ruan Wan, who has the ideal of immortality of youth, was finally shattered on the way to pursue the ideal after experiencing the debauchery of youth, the cruel reality after the passing of time, and the helplessness of recalling youth. "So Young", so young, the perfect young people in the film are all focused on Ruan Wan, but it is precisely in pursuit of perfection to put an end to his youth, Ruan Wan also put an end to his life, This is undoubtedly full of irony. It is through these passages of songs that the director makes the narrative more complete, builds an invisible "bridge" between the audience and the film, and makes the film context beyond the meaning of the music itself.

#### 5. Conclusion

The biggest theme of youth-themed movies is the recollection of time and regrets for the past, and most of these youths are linked to music. Compared with other symbols, music symbols often have unique aesthetic functions and ideographic values. In the film, it not only enables the audience to better integrate into the film, but also plays a role in rendering the atmosphere and setting off the theme. More importantly, through the carrier of music, the audience can empathize with the music, and the music can tug at the audience's heartstrings, so that the

audience can accompany the music in the movie to find their own memories and figures in the past, and evoke the hidden hearts. Young memories, relive the regrettable time that has been dusty for many years.

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