

A Study on the Relationship between the Rhythm Structure and Psychological Symptom: Focusing on the Film 『The Hours』

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Abstract

A narrative, which shows the change in a mental state of a character depending on the flow of the film, forms film music and can be expressed using characteristic elements of minimal music. This paper is focused on the depression of the four major characters in the film, 『The Hours』, caused by psychological oppression in human relationships and the mental state, which causes a conflict in the boundary between life and death. This narrative creates hemiola with a polyrhythmic structure, repeated rhythm patterns and fixed patterns using the eighth note, and is used in the character ways when a character has a depression symptom and commits suicide. Throughout the relationship, the elements of minimal music enable psychological films to express and describe images in a more effective way with details.

Keywords: *The Hours, Depression, Minimal Music, Film Music, Hemiola, Rhythmic Pattern*

1. Introduction

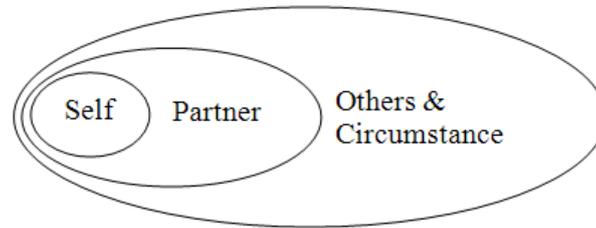
Film is a composite art to be expressed using visual and auditory images. Music, one of auditory images, offers physical, psychological and technical functions [1].

These three functions, which display the events or conditions reflecting the aspects of modern times and the tension and atmosphere of the film, are nicely expressed by settling dissonance, the repetition of patterns and an imperfect cadence in modern music [2]. These are minimal music elements and can be interpreted from diverse angles. Also, auditory message, provided by a film in various ways, delivers another meaning of a visual image to the audience [3].

2. Main Subject

Phillip Glass(1937~), a music director of 『The Hours』, adopted minimal music elements to lift the psychological effect of the film [4]. One of the interesting functional characteristics of music in this film is that music doesn't appear in the narrative for positive emotion and only appears in the narrative for negative emotion such as depression [5]. This classification reveals that the dispositions of major characters are expressed by music, and the personal relationships depending on the mental state of each character can be classified as follows.

Table 1. A Diagram of The Personal Relationship of Each Character



‘Self’, the core of the diagram, describes the mental state regarding self id and superego as a 1:1 relationship, and ‘partner’ in the second stage describes the mental state regarding superego of self and a husband or partner as a 1:2 relationship. A 1:3 relationship in the third stage refers to the mental state regarding the change in superego and others or circumstances.

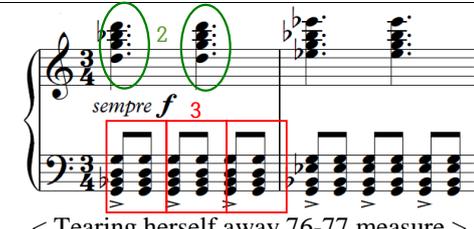
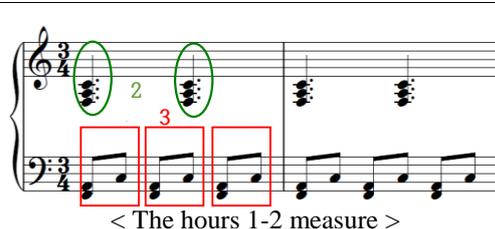
Table 2. Common Characteristics of Characters

	Virginia	Laura	Clarissa	Richard
Common material	The Novel, 『Mrs. Dalloway』			
Common disease	Depression[6]			
Common character	Richard			

The novel, 『Mrs. Dalloway』 is used as the common material for the characters of the film in different times and spaces. In the film, Virginia is the writer of 『Mrs. Dalloway』 , Laura is the reader of the novel and Clarissa is the indirect doer, who symbolizes the characters of the novel. Though Richard’s role is identical to Virginia as the writer, he inherits Laura’s psychological symptom. These role characteristics of the characters introduce the flow of time and the spatial backgrounds of the four characters, the depression symptom of each character and the relationship between the surrounding people and the environment, using the filming technique like ‘Cross Cutting’. First, Virginia is driven to suicide due to the opposition between id and superego, caused by a conflict with her husband. Laura suffers from depression due to the repeated daily routine and lethargy in ordinary life, although she has a goal and an ambition to achieve. In the end, she attempts suicide, but fails and obtains satisfactory in her own life by leaving her family. Clarissa becomes lethargic and depressed, trying to escape from her life to help Richard. Richard who is AIDS patient suffers from depression due to the past memory left by his mother and commits suicide. The feeling of helplessness in life and stress from the experiences from outside lead to little different symptoms of depression and are connected to suicide or convert their life. The external stimulus and the internal conflict in this process are revealed in the film music, too as follows [7, 8].

2.1 Musical Features in the Depression Symptoms

Table 3. Hemiola of Rhythmic and Melodic Phrase Units [9]

Rhythmic Hemiola	
 <p>< Morning passages 59-60 measure ></p>	 <p>< Something she has to do 36-37 measure ></p>
Melodic Hemiola	
 <p>< Tearing herself away 76-77 measure ></p>	 <p>< The hours 1-2 measure ></p>

As shown in the first beat of the left score of Table 3, the film music consists of a moving hemiola with a ratio of 2:3, not an onbeat. This shows a vertical polyrhythmic structure of triplets over two notes in all three beats.

In the melodic hemiola of the left, all the three beats in a bar have a ratio of 2:3, but when the up-and-down melodies of triplets are integrated into one phrase and one bar is horizontal, metric modulation, another polyrhythmic structure with a ratio of 2:1, is formed. Again, this displays a polyrhythmic structure with a long melodic phrase in the score of the right and forms a long hemiola passage with an extended metric modulation in over two bars. This passage is used in the conflict situations between self and superego of each character; when Virginia complains to her husband about her oppressed emotions and commits suicide, when Laura leaves Richard and goes to a hotel to attempt suicide, and when Richard feels anger due to the past memory left by his mother.

These two kinds of hemiola phrases are both linked to 'suicide' and bluntly describe the conflict between self and superego before suicide and the complicated mental state.

2.2 Musical Features Revealed in Thoughts and Behaviors

Forming a one-to-one relationship with self, each character thinks in their own worlds, or expresses their emotions and puts them into action. There are two typical musical features in this narrative.

First, the development of notes in inner voice and outer voice is markedly distinguished depending on what the characters think, internally and externally. The sequence of the eighth note at intervals of 3rd or 4th is applied to inner voice leading to express the conflicts or thoughts inside the self (1:1), and the sequence of the eighth note at intervals of 3rd or 4th is applied to outer voice leading, as well to express external emotions. Second, this inner and outer voice leading has fixed patterns and directions in the images of the notes, as shown in the score. The diagonal upward motion shows an enterprising behavior and the downward motion shows the mental state to suppress feelings in an unsatisfactory situation.

These two features both use ‘the sequence pattern using the eighth note’ and express the internal and external mental state, which comes from the repetition of depression.

2.3 Pattern Direction of the Sequence

Table 4. Melody Pattern Progress Direction [9]

Ascending progress pattern	
< Morning passage 105-106 measure >	
Descending progress pattern	
< I'm going to make a cake 7-12 measure >	
Ascending-Descending progress pattern	
< Morning passage 27-28 measure >	< Morning passage 120-121 measure >

The musical direction of progress is divided and is distinguished the thoughts and actions of the character suppression and inconsistency of the emotion. Ascending progress pattern is used when the character is thinking about something or is doing something. Furthermore, it also expresses the emotion of dissatisfaction. On the contrary, descending progress pattern expresses the suppression of the emotion of dissatisfaction. Lastly, the ascending-descending progress pattern is a pattern that is created by the combination of the feeling of dissatisfaction. And the psychological state to suppress it. It seems to express the up & down of the emotion by the direction of the music. This kind of pattern could also express the fluctuation of the psychological state by length and repeated numbers.

2.4 Musical Features and Upsurge of Emotion

As a character emotionally becomes unstable by gradation, phased characteristics appear in music. These changes are clearly shown in <Tearing Herself Away>. Using the song in the scene, Laura leaves Richard and goes to commit suicide. In this process, the length of the note changes, as Laura's mood becomes unstable. As notes changing into an unstable state from a

stable state, “a dotted-half note, a dotted quarter note, triplets in a hemiola structure, and 16th notes” are used in a consecutive order and the tempo goes faster to describe the boosting of the character’s feelings.

Table 5. Melody Pattern of the Sequence <Tearing Herself Away> [9]

8th note



< Tearing Herself Away 35-38 measure >

Triplet



< Tearing Herself Away 44-47 measure >

16th note



< Tearing Herself Away 61-63 measure >

Here, the melody regularly consists of G - B^b - D - E^b. This progress is 8th note rhythmic pattern triplet and 16th note that includes hemiola to express the upsurge of emotion. This harmonizing music with the image by expressing the narrative in the process of changing into the unstable state of the self of Laura that leaves her son and goes to suicide, using the length of the note.

2.5 Additional Elements Expressing Depression

The costumes of the characters in the film form the appearance, or directly reveal the inner side. This implies the change in the film’s background, flow, atmosphere and situation and conveys information to the audience [10].

White color, blue color and brown color are mainly used in 『The Hours』. First, white color is found in the sleep wears of the three women introducing the daily lives of Virginia, Laura and Clarissa in the front of the film. This color means life and death and the oppression of emotion and indirectly discloses the mental state of the three women in the beginning of the film. Also, blue color is found in the running water of the first scene of the film, the bed cover of young Richard and the sleepwear of adult Richard –these two patterns are the same-, the ordinary clothes of the three women, the flow of the Virginia’s house, the hairpin of

Angelica and the cake that Laura made. This color means loss and despair that are associated with depression. Lastly, brown color is found in the overcoat of Clarissa when Virginia kills herself and in the suit of Leonard when Laura kills herself. Brown color means depression and coldness and expresses depression and partner's cold heart when the character at-tempts suicide. All of these colors used in the film contain depression and form not only the mood of the character but the overall atmosphere of the film.

3. Conclusion

This study analyzed how the film connected the characters in different times and spaces, the common materials, the depression symptoms and the common characters to one another in the narrative using musical characteristics.

First, all the characters suffer from depression due to self-interference, partners and the surrounding environments. Typically, this depression is caused by two situations; when they decide to suicide, or put the thought of suicide into action, or when they experience an internal and external conflict due to the surrounding environments.

The study findings showed that in these two situations, the depressed state of the characters is expressed through the eighth note-based hemiola technique, the repeated rhythm patterns, and the direction of rhythm pattern melodies. This lifts the psychological effect by matching the processes of conflict between life and death, caused by depression, from the visual point of view and the listening point of view.

This demonstrates that in music of the film focusing on the mental state like depression, the consonance between the narrative and the musical expression makes it easy to express the mental state, the conflict and the anxiety using minimal musical elements. Moreover, the mentalities of the characters, revealed through colors, complete a personality and an image of each character by indirectly offering and implying a message, intended by the film.

The mental state in the film music of the past was mostly expressed by colors in the tonality or chord, while in modern society, the complicated psychological description of human being is actively used, based on the correlation with rhythms. The mental state in the film music of the past was mostly expressed by colors in the tonality or chord, while in modern society, the complicated psychological description of human being is actively used, based on the correlation with rhythms.

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