

# Historical Hermeneutics of Musical Styles

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## Abstract

The relevance of the study of the historical hermeneutics of musical styles is determined by the need to find a philosophical basis for changing the cultural paradigm and the desire to return classical canons to musical art in particular. The aim of the work is to analyse the characteristic features of the interpretation of musical styles in accordance with the principles of historical hermeneutics on the example of jazz music. The research was conducted in two stages on the basis of interdisciplinary, systematic and hermeneutical approaches using general scientific methods of cognition: analysis, synthesis, systematization, comparison and ascent from the abstract to the concrete. In the process of scientific research, the views of researchers on the interpretation and understanding of hermeneutics in the context of musical art were considered; a general characteristic of the hermeneutics of musical styles in accordance with historical and philosophical prerequisites was given; the main elements of the theoretical model of musical philosophy of interpretation, which include critical interpretation, the purpose of interpretation, compatibility with description and limitation by requirements were described; the author's concept of interpretation of musical styles, formed at three levels, were proposed; the characteristics of the hermeneutics of jazz style, in particular the presence of musical improvisational discourse, historical duality, transcendentality of content and form, advertising integration are determined; the article summarizes the specifics of jazz in accordance with two components: the European harmonic system and the fret principles of blues intonation, which made it possible to identify and generalize the theory of interpretation of jazz in the historical and philosophical paradigm. The practical value of scientific work consists in providing a comprehensive hermeneutical base of jazz style in order to further improve the practical application of musical style by teachers, students, musicians and specialists in the field of musical art.

**Keywords:** philosophical interpretation, semantics, jazz, musical composition, improvisation.

## Introduction

In the modern art space, there is a tendency to return or turn to the classics. This applies not only to fashion, painting or sculpture but also to musical art in particular. New socio-cultural conditions

contribute to the actualization of musical styles of past eras, which implies preserving their original stylistic characteristics and providing them with a "postmodern frame" in order to meet the aesthetic needs of society. Such changes make it necessary to conduct new research to identify the key prerequisites and features of the return of musical classics based on the interpretation of the semantic load inherent in each individual musical style. The perception of a musical work as a cultural text and the use of hermeneutics as a method of understanding and interpretation allows not only to reveal the root causes of these trends but also to get a thorough understanding of the cultural paradigm and trace its influence on the formation of personality as a representative of a particular culture (Tsvetkova et al., 2021; Turenko et al., 2021). The problem of studying musical art in the context of the hermeneutical approach has repeatedly become the subject of research by many scientists.

M.J. Thomas (2018) in his best practices raised the issue of interpreting pieces of early musical historical works in the context of criticizing the views of H. Gadamer and F. Nietzsche. The author paid special attention to the process of changing the original style during the performance of the work by novice musicians. J. Ferrando (2018) noted that the topic of interpreting early musical styles remains under-researched. According to the scientist, the study of musical art as such is moving away from the historical framework and moving to the field of hermeneutical research. In this context, it is advisable to note the importance of improvisational skills of a musician, the basis of which is the possession of historical prerequisites for the formation of the performed musical style. There is also an opinion that performers of early musical styles used improvisation in their practices, as a result of which the modern performance of a piece of music is aimed at repeating traditional manners. At the same time, L. Kramer (2010) emphasized the need to understand the musical content of style and the meaningful performance of stylized music. Modern musical styles are characterized by a reinterpretation of the musical scores, performance, performativity, and so on.

In addition to general research on the problem of hermeneutics of musical art, the scientific literature traces the exploration of certain aspects in the context of related areas. For example, R. Lijtmayer (2020) used a hermeneutical approach to establish a correlation between musical style and its psychological impact on a person. G. Ambrosch (2017) devoted his research to the hermeneutics of punk songs. The scientist noted the need to interpret punk music from the point of view of performance and performativity in the context of the "aesthetics of dissent". Certain musical styles also drew the attention of S. Gamble (2021). The researcher studied the influence of rap and metal music genres on society (Bodrova et al., 2020). The uniqueness of the developments was the interpretation of the stylistic features of the chosen musical styles in accordance with their perception by society. Thus, rap and metal music genres were considered "extreme musical styles" or "social problems". As can be seen, the chosen problem of the hermeneutical approach in the process of studying musical art is really relevant, but it requires

additional research in the context of generalizing the features of the interpretation of musical styles, which determined the purpose of scientific research. According to the above, the object of scientific research is musical style in the context of the philosophy of interpretation.

The aim of the work is to analyse the characteristic features of the interpretation of musical styles in accordance with the principles of historical hermeneutics on the example of jazz music.

## **Materials and Methods**

Scientific research of the chosen problem was carried out on the basis of an interdisciplinary approach, taking into account the methods of scientific knowledge of such humanities as philosophy, history and hermeneutics. The philosophical component of scientific research helped to consider the interpretation of musical style in accordance with the concepts of leading philosophers, taking as a basis the key philosophical categories of "transcendence", "intersubjectivity" and "intertextuality". The historical part of the analysis made it possible to trace the formation of the phenomenon of musical style in historical retrospect. In the course of the research, it was decided to consider hermeneutics as an independent discipline without direct correlation with philosophical teaching. In accordance with this, the hermeneutical component of the study consisted in a direct interpretation of the musical style, analysis of views on the understanding and perception of this phenomenon. The theoretical basis for the study of the historical hermeneutics of musical styles was the scientific works of researchers from other countries over the past 3-5 years, which allowed to confirm the relevance of the chosen issue and trace trends in understanding musical styles in the postmodern era. Scientific research on the philosophy of interpretation of musical styles was carried out in two stages.

The first stage involved the study of the general characteristics of musical hermeneutics, highlighting the key views of scientists on the interpretation of musical style. The second stage involved a hermeneutical analysis of the musical style on the example of jazz music, which made it possible to correlate between the general features of the interpretation of musical styles and the features of the interpretation of a specific chosen style. In the process of studying the problem of interpretation of musical styles, hermeneutical and systematic approaches were applied, as well as general scientific research methods, including the method of analysis, synthesis, comparison, systematization and the method of convergence from the abstract to the concrete. The method of analysis was used to study modern scientific and methodological works on the selected issues to identify current directions of interpretation of musical art in general and musical styles in particular, to interpret musical hermeneutics as a separate science in the context of hermeneutical teaching, to substantiate historical and philosophical aspects of interpretation of jazz style in postmodern conditions.

The synthesis method was used to study individual views on the interpretation of both musical hermeneutics and the interpretation of jazz music in the integrity and totality of all components. The comparison method was used to correlate views on hermeneutics within the general characteristics of musical styles and in the study of a particular musical style, in the case of scientific research of jazz. At the same time, the comparison method helped to establish common and distinctive characteristics for the interpretation of musical styles in general and jazz style in particular. The method of systematization helped to organize the components of the theoretical model of musical hermeneutics, to recreate the author's scheme of interpretation of musical style based on the text, compositional and directorial aspects, as well as to consider the features of the jazz style, which include the European harmonic system and fret principles of blues intonation. The method of convergence from the abstract to the concrete formed the basis of the research, thanks to which the features of the interpretation of the jazz style in the context of the general philosophy of interpretation of musical styles in accordance with the selected criteria of the hermeneutical approach were considered.

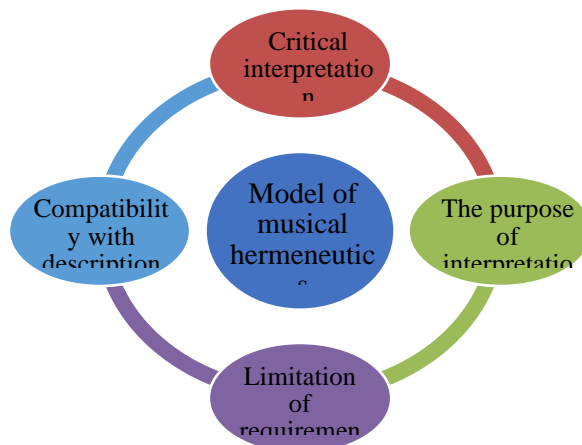
## **Results and Discussion**

In the global scientific space, the methodology of interpretation is traditionally called hermeneutics (Vlasenko, 2018). Many scientists associate hermeneutics with a critical approach, which leads to the concept of "act of understanding", "dialogic", etc. (Kramer, 2010). The primary task of hermeneutics as a philosophical doctrine of interpretation was the interpretation of literary texts, ancient Greek in particular. The gradual activation and development of scientific research led to the fact that hermeneutics acquired a new status and went beyond the exclusively understanding of texts. In this context, the concept of "musical hermeneutics" appears. It is worth starting with the fact that musical hermeneutics as such and hermeneutics of musical styles in particular are considered from the point of view of various aspects. Musical hermeneutics is understood as a specific way of analysing the ability of music to reproduce a certain meaning, certain concepts, intonations, and musical images (Hartmann, 2019).

On the other hand, the hermeneutics of musical styles are interpreted according to the understanding of the content. According to Russian researchers, the philosophy of interpretation of musical styles is an appeal to the explanation of figurative and semantic concepts inherent in musical works, the representation and interpretation of musical information and ways to convey the author's idea to listeners (Aksenova et al., 2020). This view of the definition of musical hermeneutics indicates that the intersubjectivity of a piece of music is taken into account, but it deprives the right to choose for aesthetic pleasure. The presence of a desire to interpret the author's idea excludes the possibility of one's own interpretation, as a result of which the range of semantic load of a musical work is significantly narrowed. In the same context of figurative and semantic concepts, it is advisable to turn to the hermeneutics of musical style as a method of

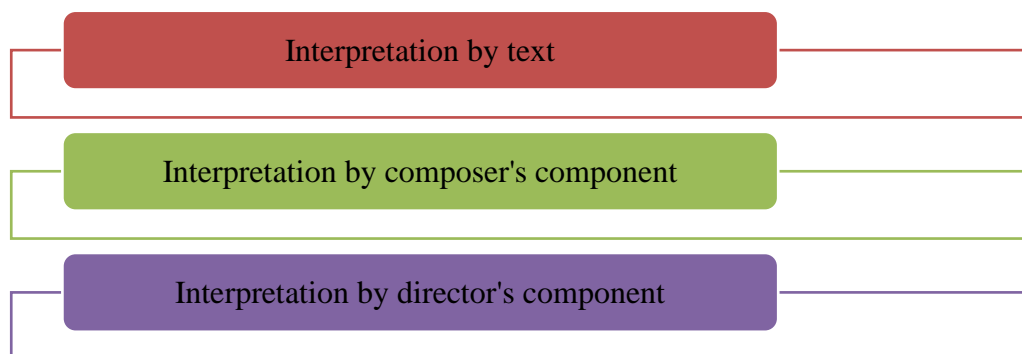
"decoding" social values (Savage, 2009). The combination of hermeneutics and criticism of musical style can explain the influence of the emotional aspect of a piece of music on the individual and their attitude to the environment. The study of musical styles, provided that the hermeneutical approach is used, involves the study of the historical factor, that is, the analysis of the formation of a musical direction in historical retrospect. In accordance with this, we find the interpretation of musical hermeneutics as the establishment of the relationship between interpretation and context in history based on the concepts of worldview, linearity, traditions, here-being from the philosophical teaching of M. Heidegger (Riera, 2015). Based on philosophical paradigms C. L. Hamlin (2015) found an interpretation of musical hermeneutics.

It is advisable to determine the intersubjectivity of music according to the scientific views of H. Gadamer and G. Gould (Hamlin, 2015). At the same time, B. Almen and E. Pearsall (2006) emphasize not only the use of the above-mentioned researchers but also the observance of certain philosophical categories in the process of hermeneutical analysis of musical styles. In particular, these include temporality, collage, borrowing and association, articulation of silence, mythopoeia, and so on (Kokbas et al., 2020; Aimukhambet et al., 2021). Hermeneutics of musical styles as a method of interpreting music samples is characterized by a division of musical interpretation (Muravska, 2017). In particular, there is a critical interpretation in the tradition of musical hermeneutics and interpretation as performance. This statement clearly shows the correlation between the content and form of a piece of music, which is important for maintaining harmony and balance (Androsova & Markova, 2020). Special attention is paid to the presence of a transcendental factor in the form of an idea. As noted by S.E. Eckerson (2012), the expression of an idea in music should be considered in the context of the philosophy of music of S. Kierkegaard based on performing variations of R. Wagner. The presence of an idea embedded in a piece of music attests to the semantic gradation of the work and the intentionality of the creator. At the same time, T. Pontara (2015) provides a theoretical model of musical hermeneutics based on four requirements in its scientific research (Figure 1).



**Figure 1: A model of musical hermeneutics based on four requirements**

According to Figure 1, the first necessary requirement is a critical interpretation, the essence of which is to give music a certain meaning that requires further "reading". The purpose of interpretation, according to T. Pontara (2015), should not be the truth, but the truthfulness of the semantic load of a musical work. At the same time, the probable interpretations must be compatible with those that are perceived as describing the music. The last aspect of the model of musical hermeneutics is limited by the requirements of historical and contextual relevance. This means that any piece of music/musical style must be perceived and interpreted in accordance with the socio-cultural space in which they were created, distributed and rooted. As noted, the performance of early-style music is actively used in modern compositions. However, this aspect contains a certain dilemma in the context of philosophical interpretation of musical styles (Shanks, 2020). First of all, this concerns claims to reproduce historical performing practices. On the one hand, we see the need to update performing techniques, on the other hand, we see the reflection of modern stylistic preferences in the early style. Thus, the attribution to the past of an early style is more imaginary than real (Nieicheva, 2019; Volkova et al., 2020). So, as a result of the analysed views on the interpretation of musical hermeneutics, we consider it necessary to provide our own scheme for interpreting musical styles (Figure 2).



**Figure 2: Author's scheme of hermeneutics of musical styles**

The author's scheme of hermeneutics of musical styles consists of three levels of interpretation, which can both correlate and be used independently. Interpretation by text involves analysing the semantic load inherent in the text of a piece of music of a particular musical style. Interpretation based on the composer's component is characterized by an orientation to the form of a piece of music. So, here we are talking about rhythm, timbre, manner, size, etc. Interpretation based on the director's component is focused on visualizing a piece of music in the process of its performance. In any case, each of the aspects was considered by the researchers, since it was about the text, the form of performance, and the body language and gestures used during the musician's performance. In modern conditions, the perception of a musical text goes beyond words or a musical string. Now the text is part of the digital world, it is becoming changeable and it is separated from its creator through ordinary everyday gadgets. In accordance with this, the format of interpretation of a piece of music changes, which is devoid of visualization

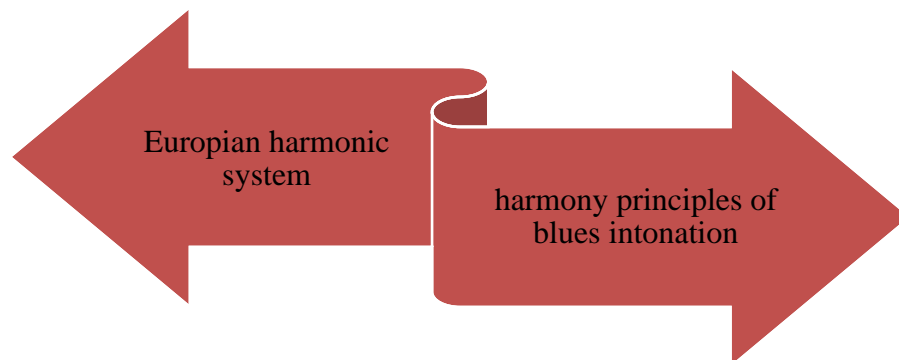
and subject content. So, in scientific circles, there are related studies on the hermeneutics of musical style, but there are no generalized approaches to this interpretation, which indicates the novelty of the study.

The analysis of a number of views on the interpretation of the hermeneutics of musical styles made it possible to identify the key characteristics of the phenomenon of interpretation, but in this context, it is advisable to turn to illustrative examples, in particular the interpretation of the jazz style based on the hermeneutical approach. Philosophical hermeneutics "conceptualized as jazz improvisation, breaks down preconceived notions of tradition, dialogue, expectations, etc." (Freeman, 2020; Khrypko et al., 2020). In this way, jazz musicians contribute to the creation of meaningful improvisational musical discourses that are both local and global in nature. One of the main features of the jazz style is the presence of local jazz worlds. These worlds (scenes) are formed on the basis of different ways of producing the semantic load of a cultural product, in the specific case of performing a musical work, which, in turn, generates both certain generalizations and individualized professional development of the artist's self or personality through binary internationalization of stable aesthetic preferences (Aleksandrova et al., 2018; Aleksandrova et al., 2020). At the same time, regular repetition of jazz compositions within such "worlds" causes a change in the behaviour of the musician on stage. The performer becomes prone to a combination of improvisation and spontaneous aesthetic movements that are perceived as a cultural code (Currie, 2014). The manner of visualizing the semantic subtext of a piece of music with the help of gestures, facial expressions, and movements reproduces the cultural tradition inherent in the musical style, the bearer of which is the musician. In this case, it is advisable to make a correlation with the general features of musical hermeneutics, among which we note the director's component or the method of visualization.

This view of the interpretation of jazz confirms the departure from the perception of the Jazz style as "a set of recorded or rewritten texts in order to consider a considerable number of elements that potentially carry meaning in each act of jazz sound" (Borshuk, 2018). Now jazz semantics is in gestures, poses, facial expressions, voice. The essence of jazz hermeneutics is to move away from the narrative as a text and shift the emphasis to the senses. In the process of studying the hermeneutics of jazz, it is necessary to turn to the historical factor, since the origin of the jazz style occurred on the basis of a dispute. At the beginning of its formation, jazz was perceived as a "subversive illegal musical practice", which led to a constant struggle in the context of discourse. The definition of stylistic features took place through this discourse, which was focused on highlighting the influence of music on artistic standards (Charland, 2016; Romaniuk, 2019). One way or another, the historical background gave rise to the development of unique musical and performing aspects of jazz. At the same time, in the same historical context, it is advisable to consider the study of G. Pickhan and R. Ritter (2015). The authors' scientific research was aimed at studying the characteristics of the spread of jazz during the Cold War. Thus, there is

an opinion that the semantic subtext of jazz as a "subversive illegal musical practice" was used by the United States government to spread discord in the Eastern Bloc.

The latter, for its part, tried in any way to avoid spreading the jazz style of music within its territorial possessions, explaining this by the possibility of undermining the authority of the government. As can be seen, the duality of the nature of jazz plays a significant role in the process of its actualization and popularization. Jazz rhetoric, based on a discourse about jazz and music as an unfolding form, finds expression in pathos through mediation or interality (Charland, 2016). The description of the pathos of the Jazz style requires a philosophical basis and an appeal to aesthetic experience or here-being, as mentioned above. In the context of the modern socio-cultural space, the hermeneutics of jazz forms new approaches to the interpretation of its stylistic features. So, in the context of digitalization and technologization, it is important to consider jazz in combination with advertising campaigns. The correlation of jazz as a musical style and advertising as a method of marketing is based on the relationship between brand, jazz music and jazz discourses. Now Jazz is becoming a musical signifier in advertising. According to the hermeneutical approach, jazz in advertising becomes a "magnifying glass" for exploring the controversial consumer culture on which capitalism is based (Laver, 2015). It is worth noting that the study of the jazz style outside of historical retrospect does not allow for a comprehensive approach to the interpretation of its features. The analysis of various views on the hermeneutical approach to the interpretation of jazz helped to identify the following features (Figure 3).



**Figure 3: Features of jazz as a musical style**

According to Figure 3, it can be seen that the specifics of the jazz style are a combination of the European harmonic system and the fret principles of blues intonation, as well as rhythm and harmonica in particular. Turning to the "language" of jazz, we can also distinguish improvisation as one of the features of its performance. On the basis of the improvisational element, the dual nature of the jazz style is formed, the essence of which consists in the use of improvisation, but also a departure from the observance of traditions. In this context, we can make a correlation with folklore, which, despite its powerful improvisational message, aims to canonise



traditional forms. The lightness and ease of elements of jazz music led to the emergence of new trends, among which we find blues, jazz-rock, boogie-woogie, etc. Each of the new directions, subject to the use of rhythmic specifics, formed its own mood, emotional and psychological state. We believe that the appearance of these musical trends is a manifestation of the interpretation of jazz music in order to reproduce academic and pop music in other forms of dialectics. Interestingly, the interpretation of jazz begins precisely from the moment of recognition/non-recognition of it by classical music. Accordingly, there was a further layering of cultural codes, which were laid down by both American and European cultures. Finally, in this case, the hermeneutics of the jazz style makes it possible to clearly trace the formation of its features in historical retrospect, on the basis of which its semantic conceptual subtext is born. The binary nature of the oppositions inherent in the nature of jazz determines its actualization in modern socio-cultural conditions and the focus of research on the historical and philosophical context.

## Conclusions

The study describes the main views on the definition of hermeneutics of musical styles. In particular, musical hermeneutics is described as a way to analyse the ability of music to intertextuality, as a method of "reading" verbal compositions, as a correlation of semantic and historical factors, and so on. The existence of a division of interpretations in the context of the philosophy of interpretation of music in accordance with the content and form of a musical work is revealed. In scientific research, attention is drawn to the transcendence of musical styles, which implies the embedding of a certain idea in each individual piece of music. The theoretical model of musical hermeneutics is analysed and the scheme of interpretation of musical styles is formed, the essence of which consists in the presence of three levels of interpretation: according to the text, according to the composer's component, according to the director's component. Features of interpretation of the jazz style in the context of hermeneutical teaching are highlighted.

In the course of the study, it was established that the hermeneutics of jazz music is based on improvisational musical discourses, visualization of semantic content using facial expressions, gestures, voice, as well as the historical component that has become a prerequisite for the duality of musical style. It was found that modern socio-cultural factors have led to the establishment of relationships between jazz and advertising. The research materials can be used both by teachers and students during the educational process, and by future musicians who are trying to improve their skills in performing the jazz style. The obtained results of scientific research will make it possible to analyse the semantic field of musical style, as a result of which views on the process of performing jazz as such will change. Prospects for further research consist in a detailed hermeneutical analysis of individual musical styles, in particular, such as pop, soul, rock, disco, etc., which is due to the limited scientific research on selected topics and the need for an exhaustive substantiation of the above-mentioned issues.

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