

Barthes Revisited: A New Perspective on Music Listening through Punctum and Studium

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Abstract:

With the rapid development of globalization and the music industry, the subjective experience of music listening has become a focal point for researchers. Roland Barthes' theory of "studium" and "punctum" provides a new analytical perspective for the field of musicology. However, existing research primarily focuses on visual culture, lacking a systematic analysis of the subjective experience of music listening. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring how factors influence listeners' perception of "studium" and "punctum" in music. The research employs a literature review and a random sampling method to select university teachers and students of different age groups as participants. In-depth interviews are conducted to gather their listening experiences with various musical works, analyzing the multiple factors influencing participants' perception. The data are summarized using qualitative analysis methods. The results indicate that the perception of music listening is influenced not only by the structural characteristics of the music itself but also by the listener's personal background, cultural background and the historical development of the music industry. By applying Barthes' theory to the analysis of music listening, this study provides a new theoretical framework and methodology for understanding the subjective musical experiences of listeners from different backgrounds.

Keywords: Roland Barthes; punctum ;studium; music listening.

1. Introduction

In recent years, with the advancement of research in music perception, scholars have increasingly recognized that music listening is not merely a rational

interpretation of notes and melodies but also an experience deeply intertwined with individual emotions. Roland Barthes stands as an indispensable figure in the realm of contemporary art and cultural theory. His work has significantly influenced not only pho-

tography, literature, and film but also stimulated extensive discourse surrounding perception, semiotics, and the construction of meaning. In his seminal work *Camera Lucida*, Barthes introduces two pivotal concepts, “studium” and “punctum”, which he employs to examine how individuals experience and interpret the world through photographs. These concepts elucidate the dual operation of visual art on both cultural and personal levels: “studium” refers to the viewers’ broad, culturally conditioned understanding of an image—an intellectual response shaped by historical, cultural, and educational contexts—whereas “punctum” denotes a sudden, affective jolt, an emotional puncture in which a particular detail unexpectedly “pierces” the viewer during the act of viewing. The introduction of these two concepts offers profound insights into the complexity of the viewers’ engagement with visual art, illuminating the intricate interplay between cultural signification and personal affective response.

Over time, “studium” and “punctum” have transcended the realm of photography and have been applied by many scholars to fields such as literature, film, theater, and painting. However, despite the widespread recognition of these concepts in visual arts, their potential in the domain of music remains largely underexplored and lacks systematic study. Music, as a non-visual art form, offers a distinctive listening experience that similarly encompasses both cultural and emotional dimensions. Applying Barthes’ concepts to music listening can provide a novel analytical lens. Therefore, the aim of this research is to revisit Barthes’ two core concepts and investigate how “studium” and “punctum” can be effectively employed in the analysis of music listening. How do listeners distinguish and perceive these two distinct experiences during the act of listening? Do different musical styles and genres influence the listener’s perception of “studium” and “punctum”? By addressing these questions, this study seeks to establish an analytical framework that integrates “studium” and “punctum” in music listening, thereby offering a new theoretical tool for musicology and enhancing our understanding of the subjective dimensions of musical experience. This not only provides musicology with innovative theoretical resources but also deepens our comprehension of the complexities inherent in the musical listening experience.

This paper will be organized into several key sections. First, it will provide a detailed theoretical explanation of the concepts of “studium” and “punctum”, reviewing their application in other disciplines as well as in music, along with relevant literature on music perception. Next, the study will explore how these two concepts manifest specifically in music through case analyses of selected musical works. Following this, through listener interviews and data analysis, the paper will assess the applicability of

Barthes’ theory in the context of music analysis. Finally, the discussion section will summarize the main findings and offer suggestions for future research. Through this study, we aim to provide a new framework for understanding the music listening experience, while also offering theoretical support for music education, composition, and dissemination practices.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Basic Concept for Punctum and Studium

Punctum and studium, concepts introduced by French philosopher Roland Barthes in his photography theory, were first articulated in his photographic reflections in *Camera Lucida* [1]. While punctum and studium were originally developed as criteria for evaluating good photographic images, they are not confined to photography alone. These concepts have also been adopted as standards for assessing works of contemporary art across disciplines. Punctum and studium exist in opposition yet coexist within the same artwork and the same temporal and spatial dimensions.

In *Camera Lucida*, Barthes defines studium as the cultural, intellectual extension of an artwork—a layer of meaning that can be intuitively grasped. The viewer draws on their educational and cultural background to readily comprehend the basic information conveyed by the work: people, events, expressions, and settings, as well as the broader social and cultural context. Studium refers to an intellectualized emotional engagement, a response that demands a certain emotional investment from the viewer. This engagement is termed “intellectual” because it is programmed by the viewer’s cultural codes and requires a “neutral emotion”—a general mental investment that may be passionate but not particularly intense. Barthes describes studium as an emotion cultivated through formal education and generated through the rational mediation of collective moral and political training [2]. It reflects the regulated desires and contradictions of modernity, with reason outweighing emotional response [3]. Studium belongs to the realm of liking, not love, activating a measured form of desire. Recognizing studium entails aligning oneself with the photographer’s intentions, whether in agreement or disagreement, as long as these intentions are understood and reflected upon. This is because cultural literacy acts as a contract between the creator and the viewer, a shared foundation of taste that enables the viewer to recognize the creator’s intent and appreciate their ideas [4]. In contrast, punctum is the element that disrupts studium and evokes an emotional response in the viewer. Punctum strikes at the viewer’s core, often represented by a detail,

an out-of-place or unexpected element. It requires emotional engagement from the viewer, revealing itself after entering a certain imaginary space. punctum pierces the surface of the work, imparting a sense of “madness” that detaches the work from its surface meaning and inherent properties [5]. It creates a space for associative imagination, weaving a broader web of meaning--establishing a punctum in reality within the studium of history. Barthes writes in *Camera Lucida*: “Punctum can either diminish or amplify studium; it refers to those details that catch the eye and disrupt the photograph’s order. The mere existence of this detail changes how I view the photograph, granting it significant value in my eyes”. For instance, in one photograph, the punctum may be the boy’s tie, while in another, it may be long fingernails. Contemporary French philosopher Bernard Stiegler argues that Barthes captures the emotional essence of photography with the concept of punctum. The significance of photography, he suggests, lies not in subjecting personal emotions to societal paradigms but in provoking the manifestation of unknown emotions [6]. As Barthes states, “It is not I who seek out punctum (as I analyze the studium from my consciousness), but punctum shoots out from the photograph like an arrow and strikes me”. Barthes further notes, Punctum is also a pinhole, a small spot, a small wound, and it carries the element of chance [7]. It involves an accidental encounter with something “strange”, a persistent and unyielding return to a “haunting” moment. Barthes uses similar terms to suggest the homology between punctum and emotional trauma: “punctum” is like a wound, both essential and spiritual, that cannot be changed and can only reappear repeatedly in the form of insistence [7].

Although Barthes’ binary analytical principles were developed to analyze single photographic images in the era of mechanical reproduction, they remain applicable to contemporary art across various media. Punctum and studium are indispensable elements in the composition of contemporary artworks. When applying Barthes’ binary analysis to music, these concepts can reveal not only the surface structures and deeper emotional content of a work but also help us understand how music evokes powerful emotional responses in listeners. Just as punctum and studium shape the perception and meaning of images in photography, they similarly constitute the multidimensional experience of listeners in music. In this way, music is not merely a combination of melodies but also a trigger for emotions and memories. In contemporary musical works, punctum and studium continue to be indispensable elements, imbuing music with unique expressive power and emotional resonance.

2.2 Applications of the Punctum and Studium

The concepts of studium and punctum, proposed by Roland Barthes, are not only applicable to the field of photography but have also been broadly extended to various art forms and experiences in everyday life. Various studies have explored the application of punctum and studium in different artistic genres. Margot Note applied these concepts to the analysis of architectural photography, suggesting that in architectural photography, studium typically represents a rational understanding of architectural design, materials, and structure, while punctum refers to those accidental details that break the uniform aesthetic of the architecture and evoke an emotional response from the viewer [8]. Jenkins applied punctum to animations, defining it as the detail and of death [9]. Wilson used the concept of punctum to analyze theatrical performances [10]. McHendry Jr. applied punctum to Instagram posts by the Transport Security Administration in the US to analyze risk factors [11]. Duarte examined Roland Barthes’ punctum in relation to the concepts of time and death, comparing Barthes’ ideas with those of Blanchot and Proust [12]. McLennan reinterpreted the philosophical meaning of the body in modern photography through the concept of the “aesthetics of the flash”, drawing from punctum [13]. Amir Dana applied studium and punctum to combine case studies in psychoanalysis with the analysis of paintings. She suggested that in the psychoanalytic interpretation of paintings, studium points to the surface level of the work, including its symbolic meaning and cultural background, which provides the necessary contextual framework for psychoanalysis. On the other hand, punctum refers to the sudden emotional responses elicited during analysis, often revealing subconscious conflicts in the case study, allowing psychoanalysis to delve into the patient’s emotional state on a deeper level [14]. Robinson, J. T. applied Barthes’ concepts of studium and punctum to analyze the multiple layers of meaning and emotional resonance in language symbols during textual interpretation. He noted that in textual analysis, Barthes’ concept of studium represents the reader’s understanding of the structure, cultural background, and context of the text, which forms the basis for interpretation and is central to critical structuralism. However, punctum evokes an unexpected emotional resonance in the text, often disrupting the reader’s rational framework, making textual interpretation more personal and emotionally profound [15].

In summary, the concepts of punctum and studium have been widely employed by researchers to analyze visual arts and literature. However, in the context of music listening, these concepts have been largely overlooked. This neglect is noteworthy, as music, like other art forms,

possesses the capacity to evoke deep emotional responses and forge meaningful connections with the listener. Therefore, by applying the concepts of *punctum* and *studium* to music, we can explore how certain unexpected musical elements or moments resonate on a personal level, breaking through the listener's conventional experience and leaving a lasting emotional impact.

2.3 Applying *Punctum* and *Studium* to Music Listening

2.3.1 State of the art in music listening research

Music listening, as a deeply meaningful activity in human experience, is not merely confined to the superficial levels of entertainment and aesthetics; it also involves more complex cognitive and emotional processes. Research on music listening spans multiple disciplines, including psychology, sociology, and musicology.

In China, many researchers have focused more on the practical applications of music education, music therapy, and music appreciation. Wang Jian studied how music listening can enhance students' aesthetic appreciation and enrich their musical imagination, while also effectively improving their musical learning abilities [16]. Li Junpeng et al. explored the impact of music listening on prosocial behavior and its mechanisms, finding that listening to prosocial songs or music associated with positive emotions can promote volunteerism, cooperation, and helping behaviors, while also effectively reducing aggressive behaviors and thoughts [17]. Li Dan examined the importance and educational value of emotional listening in elementary school music appreciation, arguing that this educational approach not only promotes students' emotional development and stimulates creativity but also helps them perceive the emotional elements in music more comprehensively, thereby enhancing their understanding of the composer's intentions. By evoking emotional resonance, students can experience the emotional impact of music more deeply, leading to a richer appreciation of its beauty [18]. Wang Yibing studied the impact of listening to classical and natural music on the mental health of university students, finding that such music can relax the body and mind, effectively alleviate stress and anxiety, and enhance positive emotions [19]. These studies suggest that music listening is not a passive process; it is a complex, active experience closely tied to an individual's psychological state and deeply intertwined with emotions.

Internationally, research on music listening has mainly focused on emotional regulation, cognitive processes, and social functions. Juslin proposed a comprehensive model to explain the various mechanisms through which music evokes emotional experiences, including emotional con-

tagion, imagery, situational memory, cognitive appraisal, and cultural learning. His research emphasized the complexity of musical emotional experiences and highlighted the importance of listeners' backgrounds and personal experiences in shaping emotional responses [20]. Egerman and McAdams explored empathy and emotional contagion as links between recognizing and perceiving emotions in music listening. Through an analysis of listeners' emotional responses to music, they found that personal emotional experiences are influenced not only by the characteristics of the music itself but also by the listeners' level of empathy and emotional resonance ability [21]. Similarly, Scherer and Coutinho proposed a multi-component process model to explain the mechanisms by which music evokes emotions, incorporating physiological responses, cognitive appraisals, and sociocultural influences, and pointing to the key role of listeners' personal experiences and cultural backgrounds in their emotional experiences with music [22].

Therefore, research suggests that music listening can influence listeners' psychological states in various ways, with certain elements of music acting as "emotional triggers" that elicit profound personal emotional responses, thus stimulating a rich emotional experience at an individual level. This perspective aligns with Barthes' theory of *punctum*, in which specific musical elements can penetrate the listeners' emotions and evoke strong reactions. Additionally, music is closely related to the listeners' personal background and cultural environment, which corresponds to Barthes' definition of *studium* as a more general and culturally informed understanding and experience.

2.3.2 Applying *punctum* and *studium* to music listening

In recent years, scholars have increasingly focused on subjectivity and emotionality in the process of music listening. This shift emphasizes the significance of the listener's personal background, life experiences, and cultural context in shaping their listening experience, thus highlighting the diversity and complexity of musical engagement.

Within this research context, the French cultural theorist Roland Barthes, in his work *Camera Lucida*, introduced the concepts of *punctum* and *studium*, which provide a unique perspective for understanding the individualization and universality in musical experience. *Studium* refers to the viewers' general cultural understanding and rational analysis of an image, a comprehension that is intellectual and universal. In the context of music analysis, listeners at this level recognize and cognitively engage with the style, historical background, period, and cultural significance of the music. This is a more common experience, largely re-

liant on the listeners' existing knowledge and sociocultural background. On the other hand, punctum represents a more private experience, referring to a particular element in the image that instantly strikes the viewer, evoking a strong personal emotional response. In music analysis, it refers to those musical moments—chords, melodies, lyrics, rhythms—that unexpectedly resonate with the listener on a personal level, triggering emotional responses or personal memories. This sudden emotional experience is often ineffable and beyond rational control, directly piercing the heart and soul.

In recent years, some studies have attempted to apply Barthes' punctum and studium theory to music analysis to explore subjectivity in musical experience and how these two aspects influence the listeners' engagement with music. For example, Peter Dayan [23] explored how Roland Barthes' concepts of punctum and studium could be applied to music listening, distinguishing between the two as rational analysis and emotional impact, respectively. He emphasized that music as a studium can be appreciated in terms of its form, structure, and the socio-cultural codes it operates within, much like a photograph can be studied for its compositional elements. The punctum in music, however, is that which pierces the listener, the moment of unexpected emotional resonance that disrupts the controlled engagement and makes the experience intensely personal. Similarly, Keightley E. and Pickering M. [24]. discussed how music, like photography, can evoke both collective and individual emotional and memory responses through studium and punctum. They noted that just as a photograph can possess both studium and punctum, a piece of popular music can simultaneously engage listeners on a collective level while also penetrating individual consciousness in a more intimate, personal way. Music, like photography, operates as a technology of memory, capable of producing studium that connects us to broader cultural narratives, and punctum that taps into deeply personal experiences. In addition, Deal K. [25] applied Barthes' concepts to women's songwriting, exploring how studium and punctum manifest in music. The core of the study lies in understanding, from the perspective of female creators, how personal emotions and experiences are embedded in their music, and how these emotions resonate with and touch the listeners. The author emphasized that through the duality of studium and punctum, female creators can express personal experiences, explore the complexities of female identity and perception, and evoke individualized emotional responses among listeners.

These studies suggest that music is not merely an aesthetic activity but also a profound emotional experience that involves personal memory, cultural background, and emotional triggers. Barthes' punctum and studium theory

can be applied to music analysis, and listeners from different cultural backgrounds may experience the punctum elements of the same piece of music differently. This variation reflects how cultural memory and individual experience influence musical understanding, providing a unique perspective for exploring emotional reactions and subjective experiences in music listening.

3. Analysis of Studium and Punctum in Different Musical Compositions

3.1 Data Collection Methods

This study employs random sampling to select 10 respondents from university faculty and students with diverse academic disciplines and backgrounds, within an age range of 20 to 50 years. Through interviews with these university students and teachers, the aim is to explore how they distinguish and perceive the experiences of studium and punctum while listening to different types of music. The study also seeks to analyze the potential background factors influencing their perception of studium and punctum, including personal background, cultural context, and the development of the music industry. This research endeavors to establish a new analytical framework in musicology to better understand subjective experiences in various musical contexts. The four selected songs come from different styles and cultural backgrounds, covering video game music, popular music, patriotic songs, and Western classical music. These works represent different eras, social contexts, and musical styles, offering a rich spectrum of dimensions for analyzing how respondents perceive studium and punctum.

Based on the research questions, the following are specific interview questions:

1. Are you familiar with the cultural background or musical style of the song you just listened to?
2. While listening to this song, were there any particular moments or elements that suddenly triggered a strong emotional response or reminded you of something? Please describe these moments or elements and your feelings.
3. Did these four songs from different styles evoke different emotional responses in you? If so, what do you think are the factors that contributed to these differences?

3.2 Analyzing Punctum and Studium in Different Musical Styles through Interviews

To analyze four songs of different styles based on Barthes' theories of studium and punctum, this study incorporates interview results from university students and faculty, exploring how they perceive these musical works and

the background factors influencing their perceptions. The following is an analysis of each song, including the experiences and viewpoints of the interviewees.

3.2.1 Where is the road from black myth: wukong

This song is a reinterpretation of the theme song from the classic Chinese TV drama *Journey to the West*. *Journey to the West* is one of China's four great classical novels, depicting the adventures of Tang Seng and his journey to the West for scriptures, with Sun Wukong being the protagonist. The song conveys the spirit of Sun Wukong and his team's courage and determination in pursuing their ideals. In the game *Black Myth: Wukong*, *Where Is the Road* has been rearranged to include electronic and symphonic elements, creating a new musical style that blends tradition with modernity. The analysis of this song reveals that cultural background, historical significance, and personal experiences are significant factors influencing the perception of studium and punctum. A 40-year-old respondent mentioned: "Every summer vacation during my childhood, I would revisit *Journey to the West*. When *Where Is the Road* plays, its melody is powerful, and Sun Wukong's resolute image and his fearless spirit always come to mind, giving me a sense of inspiration from traditional culture. It is not just a hero's story but a spiritual support for our generation facing life's challenges." This statement reflects the respondent's profound emotional connection to the song, resonating with Chinese traditional culture and history, thus giving the song special symbolic meaning. This forms their studium experience. In contrast, a 30-year-old respondent interpreted the song's cultural significance differently: "I encountered *Journey to the West* through reruns. When I hear this song in the game, the fusion of symphonic and electronic music is striking, and at the same time, childhood memories rush back, as if Sun Wukong has emerged from history with a new mission and challenges. I cried when I heard this song because it reminded me of the struggles I faced in my academic journey, just like Sun Wukong's difficult path. The strength to continue forward inspires me." This musical innovation surpasses traditional auditory experiences, making the respondent feel the tension between tradition and modernity and connecting it to their own educational hardships, thus evoking tears. This moment of emotional impact represents Barthes' concept of punctum.

3.2.2 My country and me

This song, widely known as a patriotic anthem, represents the deep emotions of the Chinese people towards their country and the collective memory of the nation's growth. A 50-year-old history professor noted: "Whenever this song plays, I associate it with the National Day military

parade, especially the flag-raising ceremony. I think this is a song that all Chinese people are familiar with and deeply moved by, as the emotions in the song are universally accessible." Similarly, a 30-year-old education graduate expressed: "This song reminds me of when my entire class participated in a choral competition using this song in elementary school. Its melody and lyrics symbolize our collective national memory, and everyone feels the emotion when hearing this song." This emotional connection belongs to studium because it conveys a universal patriotic sentiment through familiar cultural symbols and collective memory. This perception is not specific to any moment or context but is widely and consistently communicated through cultural background.

Although *My Country and Me* conveys a universal emotional resonance through collective memory, some parts of the song deeply affect listeners, forming individualized emotional experiences. A 25-year-old music college student shared her perspective: "Whenever I hear the climax of this song, especially the stirring orchestral arrangements, I am moved by its power. It reminds me of the rapid development of our country and our personal struggles. At that moment, my emotions become very intense." Her punctum comes from the song's melody and arrangement, which, combined with her personal experiences, stimulates reflection on the future of the country and personal development. This strong emotional reaction indicates that certain parts of the music can profoundly impact individual subjective experiences through specific sound characteristics or performance forms. These interviews show that studium in *My Country and Me* is based on collective patriotic sentiment and national memory, while punctum is more individualized, influenced by respondents' backgrounds, experiences, and music education. This further supports the study's discussion on the complexity of musical backgrounds and individual perceptions.

3.2.3 Sekai ga owaru made qa from slam dunk

This song, as the theme song for *Slam Dunk*, carries collective memories of the classic anime among many respondents. Many Chinese viewers were introduced to Japanese pop culture through *Slam Dunk*, and this song symbolizes representative elements of 1990s Japanese pop music, evoking widespread youth memories. The analysis of this song reveals that personal experiences and preferences are significant factors influencing the perception of studium and punctum.

A 30-year-old respondent stated: "Whenever I hear this song, I immediately recall the passionate scenes from watching *Slam Dunk*, especially Sakuragi Hanamichi's growth. This song is not just a song but a symbol of that era, evoking our generation's shared emotions of dreams

and youth.” This feeling represents studium, as the song’s cultural symbols--youth, sports, struggle--evoke collective nostalgia and memories of a specific era and cultural background, especially for those born in the 1990s. Another 26-year-old sports student shared her personal feelings: “Every time I hear the chorus of this song, I think of my high school basketball games. The melody reminds me of my youthful struggles, and I deeply feel Sakuragi Hanamichi’s indomitable spirit. I always end up in tears because it reflects my own fight for dreams.” For her, the song’s chorus is her punctum, as it directly evokes memories of her struggles and efforts during her youth. This emotional impact transcends the song’s cultural background, rooted in personal experiences.

3.2.4 Beethoven’s symphony no. 9

Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9, composed in 1824, reflects Enlightenment ideals, the spirit of freedom, and the beginnings of Romanticism. The Ode to Joy within the symphony echoes ideals of human unity, equality, and fraternity, showcasing Beethoven’s pursuit of freedom and peace. This symphony broke traditional forms by including a choral section for the first time, symbolizing a revolutionary moment in art. Beethoven completed this work while completely deaf, demonstrating his struggle against fate and indomitable spirit.

As a landmark work in classical music, the studium of Symphony No. 9 represents universal perceptions and cultural symbols, with many respondents highlighting its historical status and symbolic meaning. A 40-year-old music professor noted: “Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9 is not just the pinnacle of Western classical music; its Ode to Joy represents universal values of peace, freedom, and fraternity. As a music teacher, I often discuss the historical context and musical structure of this piece in class. It has become an indispensable part of music education”. Similarly, a 50-year-old literature professor remarked: “Even though I do not have a deep study of music, I know that Symphony No. 9 is more than just a musical piece; it represents a great spirit and philosophical reflection, especially the human unity and ideals conveyed in the Ode to Joy”. These interviews illustrate that Symphony No. 9, as a symbol of universal values, reaches audiences’ collective cultural memory through its themes and musical style, becoming a shared emotional experience for both musically educated and non-musically educated listeners. Although studium conveys universal cultural symbols, certain parts of Symphony No. 9 deeply affect individual listeners, forming personalized emotional connections. A 23-year-old piano student mentioned: “Whenever I listen to Symphony No. 9, what makes me most tense are the rhythmically complex sections, especially the tempo

and rhythm in the second movement. I face similar rapid changes in my piano performances, so when I listen to this music, I am not just appreciating it but analyzing the composer’s intentions and how to convey this tension through performance”. For this respondent, the rhythm and tempo changes in the music are her punctum, as these aspects evoke the pressure and challenges she faces in piano performance. This technical complexity allows her to engage actively with the music, contemplating its structure and performance details. These interviews reveal that personal background, cultural cognition, and music education significantly influence how respondents perceive studium and punctum in Symphony No.9. Those with music education can understand the cultural symbols and emotional conveyance from a professional perspective, experiencing the music’s profound emotions.

4. Discussion

Through an analysis of university teachers’ and students’ perceptions of four songs from different musical genres, this study reveals that music listeners’ perceptions of studium and punctum are influenced by a complex interplay of factors, including personal background, cultural context, and the development of the music industry. These factors not only shape how listeners interpret the surface meaning and cultural symbols of musical works but also profoundly affect their auditory and emotional experiences.

4.1 Personal Background

Listeners’ personal backgrounds, including factors such as their age, education level, field of expertise, and life experiences, significantly shape their perception of studium and punctum. For instance, a 40-year-old respondent expressed a deep emotional connection to Where is the Way, a song that holds special meaning due to his long-term familiarity with the Journey to the West television series. For him, this song is not merely a melody but a symbol of life’s guiding principles, shaped by his personal growth and experiences with the classic tale. In contrast, younger respondents found that the same song evoked their struggles during academic pursuits, as it resonated with their personal journeys of overcoming challenges, giving the music new personal significance. Thus, individual life experiences play a crucial role in how listeners discover emotional connections within music. At the same time, listeners with formal music education tend to perceive studium and punctum through a more technical and professional lens. In the case of classical music, the study found that students with a background in music education demonstrate a deeper understanding of the genre and

experience more intense emotional responses compared to those without formal training. For example, a 23-year-old piano student focused on the rhythmic variations and technical challenges in Beethoven's Symphony No.9. Her attention to these aspects is closely tied to her personal experience as a pianist, allowing her to engage with the music not just on an emotional level but also through structural analysis, revealing its complexity and depth.

4.2 Cultural Background

Listeners' cultural backgrounds play a crucial role in shaping their musical perception, especially when the musical works are closely tied to specific cultural traditions and historical contexts. This influence is particularly evident in responses to *My Country and Me*. Many respondents' reactions to this song stem from collective national memory and patriotic sentiment, with this cultural identification forming the foundation of their studium experience. Despite differences in age and personal experience, the cultural symbols embedded in the song hold the same symbolic meaning for all Chinese listeners. Moreover, cultural background also plays a significant role in the analysis of *Sekai Ga Owaru Made Wa*, the theme song of *Slam Dunk*. Respondents highlighted that *Slam Dunk*, a Japanese anime that gained widespread popularity in the 1990s, symbolized more than just sports competition; it represented the pop culture of that era. Many respondents encountered this anime in their youth, and as a result, the song's melody and lyrics evoke memories of their adolescence, contributing to their studium experience. The theme of youthful perseverance conveyed by *Slam Dunk* also resonated with 90s-born respondents, triggering a sense of collective nostalgia within a specific cultural context. Therefore, the listeners' sociocultural environment shapes their general understanding and emotional attachment to musical works.

4.3 The Development of the Music and Cultural Industry

As music culture and technology have evolved, the ways in which listeners from different generations perceive and emotionally respond to music have also shifted significantly. Individuals born in the 1970s and 1980s, who grew up in the era of traditional media, often experience music in close connection with collective memory and cultural heritage. For this generation, music is not merely a form of entertainment; it serves as a vehicle for cultural memory, carrying profound historical and cultural significance. Their understanding and emotional responses to classic songs are often shaped by national, historical, and communal contexts. In contrast, those born in the 1990s

matured during the rise of globalization and the internet, where their musical experiences are intertwined with personal memories of youth as well as the influence of visual and popular culture. For this cohort, music is not only an auditory experience but also a multi-dimensional cultural phenomenon, deeply integrated with elements from anime, film, fashion, and other facets of popular culture. For instance, through works like *Slam Dunk*, they associate the spirit of youthful perseverance with specific musical pieces, creating a sense of generational resonance. Those born after 2000, having grown up in an era where streaming platforms and globalization are deeply ingrained, are exposed to a more diverse range of musical styles, resulting in more individualized emotional connections. The widespread use of streaming platforms enables them to explore music from all over the world, shaping a more eclectic musical taste and aesthetic. For this generation, music is not confined to local culture but is instead experienced through a broader global lens, forming unique emotional perceptions and cultural affiliations.

In conclusion, listeners from different generations have developed distinct studium and punctum experiences due to the changes in the music industry, technological advancements, and evolving cultural contexts. Those born in the 1970s and 1980s tend to emphasize the historical and collective memory embedded in music, while individuals born after the 1990s are more attuned to the interplay between personal memories and popular culture. Meanwhile, the younger generation born after 2000 seeks more personalized emotional connections and cultural identities through a diversified and globalized musical landscape.

5. Conclusion

In summary, the personal background, cultural environment, and development of the music industry significantly influence how listeners distinguish between studium and punctum in music appreciation. Participants from different generations and academic backgrounds often have varied interpretations and experiences of these concepts when listening to the same music. This study finds that music perception is not only a personal aesthetic experience but also a dynamic process influenced by broader socio-cultural contexts. The theory of studium and punctum in musicology provides an effective framework for analyzing listeners' subjective experiences. This research addresses the gap in detailed cross-cultural music appreciation differences that previous studies have overlooked and represents the first systematic application of Roland Barthes' theories of studium and punctum in musicology. By revealing the multi-layered perceptions of music among listeners from different backgrounds, the conclusions of

this study contribute to a deeper understanding of the intertwined nature of subjective and objective processes in music appreciation. This provides a new perspective for future researchers exploring listener experiences. However, this study has several limitations, such as a relatively small sample size and a focus on individuals from specific cultural backgrounds. Future research should expand the sample size and include a more diverse range of cultural contexts and music types. Additionally, incorporating interdisciplinary methods from psychology, neuroscience, and other fields could further explore the specific connections between background factors and music perception, enhancing the comprehensiveness and interdisciplinary potential of musicology research.

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