

Le processus de réception de la philosophie de la musique d'Adorno en Chine depuis les années 1970 jusqu'à aujourd'hui

PENG, Bei

(Institut pour la mondialisation et les stratégies de développement culturel, Université Normale de Pékin, Zhuhai 519087, Chine)

Résumé: Comment la philosophie de la musique d'Adorno a-t-elle été reçue en Chine ? Cette question est suivie en quatre étapes en relation avec quatre périodes historiques de la réception : (1) les premières rencontres avec la philosophie de la musique d'Adorno de la fin des années 1970 à la fin des années 1980 ; (2) une discussion plus étendue durant la première moitié des années 1990 ; (3) une phase de critique et de déclin de l'intérêt durant la seconde moitié des années 1990 ; (4) une nouvelle phase plus mature depuis le début du nouveau millénaire. Ceci inclut une prospection critique des sujets de recherche historiques, des méthodes et des perspectives des œuvres les plus importantes et les plus représentatives de chaque phase ainsi qu'une réflexion sur les problèmes généraux de la réception durant chaque phase.

Mots clés: Adorno, philosophie de la musique, histoire de la réception, culture chinoise

The Process of the Reception of Adorno's Philosophy of Music in China Since the 1970s Until Today*

PENG, Bei

(Institute for Globalization and Cultural Development Strategies, Beijing Normal University, Zhuhai 519087, China)

Abstract: How was Adorno's philosophy of music received in China? This question is followed in four steps in relation to four historical periods of the reception: (1) first encounters with Adorno's philosophy of music from the late 1970s to the late 1980s; (2) a more extended discussion during the first half of the 1990s; (3) a phase of critique and declining interest during the second half of the 1990s; (4) a new and more mature phase since the beginning of the new millennium. This includes a critical prospection of the historical research topics, methods, and perspectives of the most important and most representative works of each phase as well as a reflection on the general problems of the reception during each phase.

Keywords: Adorno, philosophy of music, history of acceptance, Chinese culture

Half a century before China was to encounter Theodor W. Adorno's (1903–1969) philosophy of music, Adorno encountered Chinese music. In 1924, the famous sinologist and translator Richard Wilhelm (1873–1930) had returned to Frankfurt from China, and a year later he founded his China Institute (German: *China-Institut*) at the Goethe-University of Frankfurt¹. It created a wave of strong interest in Chinese culture. In Frankfurt, Wilhelm organized a number of Chinese cultural events, including concerts with Chinese instruments. The largest of these events was the "Week of Chinese Music" (German: "*Woche der Chinesischen Musik*") that took place in August 1927². The event included several lectures and concerts. It is not known whether Adorno personally attended these events or not. It is clear that the young Adorno had known little about Chinese music until around 1930. On the basis of the articles on Chinese music written by Richard Wilhelm³ and others⁴ in the context of Frankfurt's China Institute, Adorno

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¹ Cf. Dorothea Wippermann, *Richard Wilhelm: Der Sinologe und seine Kulturmission in China und Frankfurt*, Frankfurt am Main, SOCIETÄTS-VERLAG, 2020, pp. 82-86.

² Cf. Richard Wilhelm, *Chinesische Musik, anlässlich der "Woche chinesischer Musik" im Rahmen der internationalen Ausstellung "Musik im Leben der Völker"*, August 1927, Frankfurt am Main, CHINA-INSTITUT, 1927.

³ Cf. Richard Wilhelm, « Das Wesen der chinesischen Musik », *Sinica : Mitteilungen des China-Instituts zu*

realised that traditional Chinese music is very different from Western music. For Adorno, traditional Chinese music was “mythical” in its aim to “establish a great peace between God and man”⁵. The aesthetics of Chinese music, of which the core is the doctrine of affects, and the alleviation of the fear of myth through consolation necessarily formed a dialectical “Tao”⁶.

It was not until half a century later that a few Chinese scholars started to pay attention to Adorno’s philosophical thought in a first and very general fashion, namely in the context of a germinating study of *Xifang Makesi Zhuyi* 西方马克思主义 ‘Western Marxist thought’. Against this background, a knowledge interest in Adorno’s philosophy of music has been unfolding. Adorno’s philosophical critique of music gained in importance during the “Cambrian explosion” of the Chinese popular music industry since the end of the 1980s. As of November 2022, 388 Chinese journal articles, 103 master’s theses, and 15 dissertations have been dedicated to Adorno’s music thought⁷. From an overall perspective, the interest and acceptance of Adorno’s philosophy of music by Chinese scholars has been unfolding in a sort of undulating pattern of ups and downs since then. This bidirectionality or “back-and-forth-situation” coincides to some extent with the development of contemporary Chinese music, especially in the sector of popular music culture. In addition, it also reflects how Chinese cultural researchers are constantly trying to use Adorno’s music to examine their own contemporary music culture in a cross-cultural context.

This paper analyses and provides new research results regarding the reception of Adorno’s music philosophy in China during four time periods. The research perspective spans from the late 1970s until the present time.⁸ The late 1970s and 1980s mark the initial period, when only a few scholars introduced Adorno and his musical ideas in most general terms. Since the 1990s, with the further development of China’s market economy, contemporary Chinese popular music developed rapidly. At the same time, a critique of popular culture began to take momentum. At this time, Adorno, along with the Frankfurt School’s theory of mass culture, received attention in Chinese academia, and his music theory became a sharp tool for Chinese scholars to critically engage with the newly emerging manifestations of popular music. However, such critiques also

Frankfurt a.M., vol. 2, no. 11/12, 1927, pp. 201-217.

⁴ Cf. Wang Guang Ki, « Über die chinesischen Notenschriften », *Sinica : Mitteilungen des China-Instituts zu Frankfurt a.M.*, vol. 3, no. 3/4, 1928, pp. 110-123.

⁵ Theodor W. Adorno, *Musikalische Schriften VI*, Gesammelte Schriften, vol. 19, Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Wissenschaft, Frankfurt a.M., SUHRKAMP, 2003, p. 345.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Cf. CNKI 中国知网, 2022 年 11 月 1 日 (Zhongguo Zhiwang, November 1, 2022), <https://kns.cnki.net/kns8/defaultresult/index>.

⁸ The present article provides new materials and research results on the topic. It expands the perspective and the first steps that were taken in an earlier research article by the author, cf. Bei Peng. « Adorno in China. Kritik oder Akzeptanz », *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, no. 5, 2020, pp. 52-54.

revealed their own deficiencies during the late 1990s, and Chinese popular culture became even stronger and more mature as a result of these critiques. This phenomenon raised the awareness of critics regarding possible limitations in the application of Adorno's theory. Some discussants argued that Adorno's views on mass culture and popular music might not be entirely consistent with the characteristics of Chinese culture and its contemporary development. Thus, Adorno's theory was challenged.

1. 1978–1980: The Humble Beginning of Chinese Adorno Studies

World Philosophy (*Shijie Zhexue* 世界哲学), founded in 1956, is the oldest foreign philosophy journal in China. It was the only one in China at the time that provided translations of the most recent publications and which introduced the latest developments in foreign philosophy discourses. After a twelve-year hiatus during the "Cultural Revolution", it was relaunched in 1978 as a non-public journal and then openly published again since 1979. Zhao Xinsan, a female scholar who had graduated in German and who was then working on modern Western philosophy at the Institute of Philosophy of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, published the first introduction to Adorno in *World Philosophy*⁹. According to Zhao's account, this introduction is an adaption of the longer entry on Adorno in *Meyers Neues Lexikon* (*Meyer's New Dictionary*), published in Leipzig (GDR) in 1972¹⁰. This short essay of just 500 Chinese words introduced Adorno as a Neo-Hegelian and leftist existentialist philosopher, who also dealt with music aesthetics, music sociology, and music history. In the same issue, another article also refers to Adorno. This paper, translated with excerpts by Jiliang Tu¹¹, represents an adaption of contents from the book *Социальная философия Франкфуртской школы* (*The Social Philosophy of the Frankfurt School*), which was published in the Soviet Union in 1975¹². It placed Adorno in the developmental history of the Frankfurt School from the 1920s to the 70s—but completely ignored his studies in music. Apart from a book review of Adorno's *Negative Dialektik* (*Negative Dialectics*), Chinese scholars showed little interest in Adorno during the following six years after

⁹ Cf. 赵鑫珊 (Zhao Xinsan), «法兰克福学派的主要代表人物——阿多诺» (*Falankefu Xuepai de Zhuyao Daibiao Renwu—Aduonuo, The main representative of the Frankfurt School: Adorno*), *世界哲学* (*Shijie Zhexue, World Philosophy*), no. 5, 1978, p. 50.

¹⁰ Cf. *ibid.*

¹¹ Cf. 涂纪亮 (Tu Jiliang), «法兰克福哲学社会学派基本思想的历史发展» (*Falankefu Zhexue Shehui Xuepai Jiben Sixiang de Lishi Fazhan, Historical Development of the Basic Ideas of the Frankfurt School of Philosophical Sociology*), *世界哲学* (*Shijie Zhexue, World Philosophy*), no. 5, 1978, pp. 44-48.

¹² Cf. Б.Н. Бессонов и др. (B.N. Bessonov et al.), *Социальная философия Франкфуртской школы* (*Social Philosophy of the Frankfurt School*), Москва, МЫСЛЬ / Прага, СВОБОДА, 1975.

that¹³.

To summarise this period, one can say that Chinese researchers did not yet independently read Adorno's writings. No one studied his ideas "ad fontes". Only a limited amount of basic information about Adorno's personal development and his ideas was provided in summaries and sketches¹⁴. Thereby, Adorno research did not start by accident: it was based on a renewed interest in the contemporary state of development of Western philosophy, especially Western Marxist philosophy, namely to overcome the preceding collapse and contemporary paralysis of the intellectual discourse. There was a need to correct the left-wing extremism of the pre-1978 period on the basis of Marxism and dialectical materialism. This explains why Adorno, on the one hand, received attention to the extent of being briefly introduced as one of the representatives of the Frankfurt School while, on the other hand, almost no attention was paid to his philosophy of music during that period.

2. The Following Research Attempts Since the Middle of the 1980s

In the context of the economic policy of Reform and Opening-up, the importance of art and the need for art was brought to the fore. There was a wave of aesthetic studies in mainland China during that time¹⁵. At the centre of this aesthetic knowledge interest was the sector of materialist aesthetics, especially Neo-Marxist aesthetics¹⁶. In the mid-1980s, the aesthetic of art by György Lukács and Herbert Marcuse became a centre of attraction in aesthetic studies. Adorno's critique of popular culture had not yet penetrated the horizon of philosophical research at that time. It was only brought to the attention of experts in musicology with the emergence of sociological studies of music in China.

At that time, the younger generation of music researchers in Chinese musicology realised that they had to deal with the urgent theoretical problem that neither the traditional Chinese system of musicological concepts of *yin-yang* 阴阳¹⁷ nor the purely

¹³ Cf. 林一 (Lin Yi), «评阿多诺著否定的辩证法» (Ping Aduonuo Zhu Fouding de Bianzhengfa, Review of Adorno's Dialectic of Negation), *现代外国哲学社会科学文摘* (Xiandai Waiguo Zhexue Shehui Kexue Wenzhai, Modern Foreign Philosophical and Social Sciences Abstracts), no. 5, 1980, pp. 60-61.

¹⁴ Cf., in addition, Bei Peng. «Adorno in China. Kritik oder Akzeptanz», *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, no. 5, 2020, p. 53.

¹⁵ Cf. 潘家森 (Pan Jiasen), «第一次全国美学会议学术讨论纪要» (Diyici Quanguo Meixue Huiyi Xueshu Taolun Jiyao, Proceedings of the First National Aesthetics Conference Academic Discussion), *中国社会科学* (Zhongguo Shehui Kexue, China Social Science), no. 5, 1980, pp. 135-140.

¹⁶ Cf. «全国美学学会第二届年会大会发言» (Quanguo Meixue Xuehui Dierjie Nianhui Dahui Dayan, Speeches at the 2nd Annual Conference of the National Society of Aesthetics), *中华全国美学学会第二届年会简报* (Zhonghua Quanguo Meixue Xuehui Dierjie Nianhui Jianbao, Briefing on the 2nd Annual Meeting of the Chinese National Society of Aesthetics), 1983, pp. 24-31, 39.

¹⁷ Cf. Bei Peng, *Musik als Harmonie von Himmel und Erde – Zhū Zǐ yìyù (1536-1611) und seine Musiktheorie*,

Western system of classical music theory¹⁸ could be used to explain the new and unique musical phenomena that were emerging in China at the time. The rise of Chinese popular music initiated by the pop music of Hong Kong and Taiwan, the transmission and new interpretation of traditional folk music in the new rural social environments, and the inevitable fusion of traditional Chinese music with Western music— all of this called for a new theoretical foundation to foster the discussion. It became clear that this newly awakened Chinese musical consciousness needed to be reflected upon and analysed by means of new methods.

In 1986, the participants of a symposium of young and middle-aged music theorists in Liaoning Province published a summary of the conference under the title “Zhongguo Yinyue de Jinpo Renwu” (The Urgent Task of Chinese Music)¹⁹. The then young scholars Zeng Suijin and Wan Ningyi both argued that the social environment in contemporary China had led to profound changes in traditional Chinese musical life. According to them, such changes required the theoretical support of a new sociology of music. Both scholars declared the special importance of mastering the philosophical foundations of the sociology of music. The resulting knowledge interests were directed in two directions: (1) a new understanding of Chinese ethnic and folk music, namely in view of the question of what kinds of specificities and universals of Chinese societies were expressed in the music practices of Chinese ethnic minorities and in Han folk music; (2) the use of the sociology of music as a tool to develop a critique of Chinese popular music, which was emerging at the time, or in view of a study of its *raison d’être*. However, these approaches did not yet contain elements of Adorno’s sociology of music. They were rather influenced by the Soviet school of sociology.

The first Chinese scholar to distinctively comment on Adorno’s music aesthetics, however, was Wang Caiyong²⁰. He had obtained a doctorate in art history in Frankfurt and provided an essay on Adorno’s music aesthetics from three perspectives: (1) the social origins of music; (2) the soteriological role of music; (3) the transcendental character of music. The essay introduced the basic ideas of Adorno’s music aesthetics. Wang also paid special attention to the ideas in Adorno’s book *Philosophie der Neuen Musik* (*Philosophy of New Music*). However, his introduction did not receive the attention of his colleagues. Moreover, during this period, none of Adorno’s works were translated into Chinese. Chinese researchers were thus unable to gain insight into Adorno’s ideas. A

Dissertationsschrift, Heidelberg: HEIDOK, 2019,

https://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/volltextserver/26815/3/Peng_Dissertation.pdf.

¹⁸ Cf., p. ex., Thomas Christensen (dir.), *The Cambridge History of Western Music Theory*, Cambridge, CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS.

¹⁹ Cf. 魏廷格, 罗艺峰, 居其宏 (Wei Tingge, Luo Yifeng, Ju Qihong), «中国音乐的紧迫任务» (Zhongguo Yinyue de Jinpo Renwu, The Urgent Task of Chinese Music), *人民音乐* (*Renmin Yinyue, People’s Music*), no. 9, 1986, pp. 4-7.

²⁰ Cf. 王才勇 (Wang Caiyong), «阿多诺音乐美学思想述略» (Aduonuo Yinyue Meixue Sixiang Shulue, A sketch of Adorno’s musical aesthetics), *音乐研究* (*Yinyue Yanjiu, Music Research*), no. 1, 1986, pp. 59-64.

biographical book on Adorno's life and thought, written by the American scholar Martin Jay, was translated twice from English into Chinese²¹.

3. Using Adorno to Criticize Pop Music in the First Half of the 1990s

In the late 1980s, based on the increasingly rapid reforms of the Chinese market economy, a new era of popular culture began. By the mid to late 1990s, the financially lucrative Mandopop music industry conquered the music market in mainland China. Pop music from Southeast Asia such as Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan and Singapore became the new standard of musical aesthetics for the masses, and with the support of the private mass media, corresponding market-oriented business models flourished. The motto of the time was "Listen to 'Old Deng' by day and to 'Little Deng' by night" (Chinese: "*Baitian ting Lao Deng, wanshang ting Xiao Deng* 白天听老邓, 晚上听小邓。"). This meant that business activities conducted during the day should be carried out in the spirit of Deng Xiaoping 邓小平 (the initiator of Chinese economic reforms) while the pop music of Deng Lijun 邓丽君 (the most famous pop singer in Taiwan at the time) should characterise the evening pastime.

At the same time, with the rapid development of modern media in China, "mass culture" also quickly became the focus of attention for cultural researchers. The term *dazong wenhua* 大众文化 'mass culture' was applied broadly and indiscriminately with regard to a wide range of socio-cultural phenomena that were widespread and common at the time. For example, television, music, art, literature, and even bars as well as Mah-jong were all indiscriminately referred to as *dazong wenhua*. Not only from the present perspective of our times, this vagueness or fuzziness of the category has to be criticized. It is always imperative that researchers clarify and define such kinds of terms very precisely. Only in such a manner, is it possible to identify the target audience, characteristics, goals, trends and impact of "mass culture" on society.

Because of that deficiency, several representative researchers of that period were only able to distinguish between what they thought of as two opposing extremes of the cultural phenomena of their times: *jingyin wenhua* 精英文化 'elite culture' and *dazong wenhua* 'mass culture'²². *Jingyin wenhua* was considered an offshoot of traditional Chinese

²¹ Cf. 马丁·杰 (Martin Jay), *法兰克福学派的宗师——阿道尔诺* (*Falankefu Xuepai de Zongshi—Aerduonuo, Adorno: Patriarch of the Frankfurt School*), 胡湘 (Hu Xiang, Translation), 长沙 (Changsha), 湖南人民出版社 (Hunan Renmin Chubanshe Hunan People's Publishing House), 1988; 马丁·杰 (Martin Jay), *阿多诺* (*Adorno*), 瞿铁鹏, 张赛美 (Qu Tiepeng, Zhang Saimei, Translation), 北京 (Beijing), 中国社会科学出版社 (Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe, China Social Science Publishing House), 1992.

²² Cf. 高丙中 (Gao Binzhong), «精英文化、大众文化、民间文化: 中国文化的群体差异及其变迁» (*Jingying Wenhua, Dazhong Wenhua, Minjian Wenhua: Zhongguo Wenhua de Qunti Chayi Jiqi Bianqian, Elite Culture, Popular Culture, Folk Culture: Group Differences and Changes in Chinese*

Confucian scholarly culture and to be represented by a certain educated group. In 1994, the International Confucian Association (Chinese: *Guoji Ruxue Lianhehui* 国际儒学联合会) was founded in Beijing. During that time, the Confucian civilizational foundations of elite-culture were reintroduced.²³ In the 1990s, the aforementioned commentators were able to ascribe to this re-emerging Confucian foundation the task of educating society in terms of ethics and morals, and those researchers viewed it as representing the classical and orthodox worldview and values. It was also seen as a basic underlying lens of interpretation and transmission of the official ideology. On the other hand, the researchers of that period also viewed *jingyin wenhua* 'elite culture' as being fundamentally in crisis-mode: *dazong wenhua* 'mass culture' was interpreted as the cause of this²⁴. It is in this context that Li Bing pointed out that in his opinion, Adorno had made the most accurate and universally relevant assessment of the nature of mass culture and that Adorno's method should be applied to criticise the contemporary phenomenon of *dazong wenhua* 'mass culture' in China²⁵.

The cultural drift and shift towards mass culture disenchanted the visions of the socialist school of aesthetics. Those who had still been able to perceive themselves as intellectual constructors of aesthetic standards during the 1980s were now sensing a change that was uncontrollable—and this was due to the rapid rise of the new pop culture. To ideologically combat this change, contemporary mainstream aesthetics borrowed from the Frankfurt School's critique of mass culture and the culture industry. Max Horkheimer's (1895–1973) and Adorno's *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (*Dialectics of Enlightenment*; Chinese: *Qimeng Bianzhengfa* 启蒙辩证法) with its famous critique of the culture industry, Adorno's critical article "On Popular Music" (Lun Liuxing Yinyue, 论流行音乐), the anthology *Shehui Shuini—Aduonuo, Maerkusai, Benjieming lun Dazhong Wenhua* 社会水泥——阿多诺、马尔库塞、本杰明论大众文化 (*Social Cement: Adorno, Marcuse, Benjamin on Popular Culture*)²⁶.

Furthermore, pop culture was distinguished from traditional folk culture. The former was analysed through the lens of Walter Benjamin (1892–1940) and Adorno—namely as a mass "reproduction" for entertainment and consumerist purposes

Culture), *社会科学战线* (*Shehui Kexue Zhanxian, Social Science Front*), no. 2, 1996, pp. 108-113;

²³ Cf. Reg Little, « Confucius in Beijing: The Conference of the International Confucian Association; A Conference Report », *Culture Mandala: The Bulletin of the Centre for East-West Cultural and Economic Studies*, vol. 1, no. 2 (article 4), 1995, p. 59, <http://epublications.bond.edu.au/cm/vol1/iss2/4>; Reg Little, *A Confucian-Daoist Millennium?*, Bacchus Marsh, CONNOR COURT, 2006, p. 84.

²⁴ Cf. 徐圻 (Xu Qi), « 冲突中的交融——论当今中国三种文化形态及其关系 » (Chongtu zhong de Jiaorong—Lun Tangjin Zhongguo Sanzhong Wenhua Xingtai Jiqi Guanxi, Confluence in Conflict: On Three Cultural Forms and Their Relationships in China Today), *贵州大学学报* (*Guizhou Daxue Xuebao, Journal of Guizhou University*), no. 5, 1998, pp. 22-23.

²⁵ Cf. 李彬 (Li Bin), « 反观电视——一种批判学派的观点 » (Fanguan Dianshi—Yizhong Pipan Xuepai de Guandian, Television in Reverse: A Critical School of Thought), *郑州大学学报* (*Zhengzhou Daxue Xuebao, Journal of Zhengzhou University*), no. 6, 1996, pp. 29-33.

²⁶ Cf. Bei Peng, « Adorno in China. Kritik oder Akzeptanz », *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, no. 5, pp. 53.

that took advantage of the industrialisation, urbanisation, and commercialisation of China at the time²⁷. The rapid spread of *dazhong wenhua* 'mass culture' was discussed as another event that bore no equivalent development to compare with in the preceding history of traditional Chinese culture and its historical process. It was emphasized that, as an illusory or deceptive cultural phenomenon, it would never be able to free itself from the domination of material interests. Thus, it was argued that it should not be allowed to dominate the sociocultural process in China²⁸. One might add that the fierce academic criticism was not able to limit Chinese popular culture in any way. On the contrary, it has been spreading inexorably and is now most accepted as a cultural phenomenon in China.

At the time, the defining criterion to count a piece of music as mass culture was its commodification. For example, Wu Yongyi and Zhang Rulun argued that since popular music was created, performed, and reproduced for the purpose of making money, it was not produced in view of intrinsic aesthetic values. Therefore, it could not be considered as a truly creative intellectual activity. It was just a form of mass culture, lacking intrinsic artistic and social value. Furthermore, the commentators stressed that even though Western classical music and Chinese traditional music can be reproduced and sold as well, they should be distinguished from pop music culture—because of their intrinsic cultural and aesthetic value²⁹.

However, the contemporary "appropriation" of the relevant original theories of Adorno and the Frankfurt School as well as the correlating analyses of the context of Chinese popular culture merely scratched the surface of what might have been possible otherwise: contemporary scholars were mostly unaware of the profound social and political context of the Frankfurt School's critical theory; and their approaches were lacking a fundamental comparative perspective. The problem of the cultural differences between China and Euro-American societies did not enter the minds of the aforementioned scholars at that time. In this underdeveloped situation, the application of Adorno's thoughts as a tool for aesthetic criticism had to reveal certain limitations. As a result, objections were raised. They were based on the conviction that it was inappropriate to simply apply Adorno's critique of the culture industry to Chinese pop music.

²⁷ Cf. 张汝伦 (Zhang Rulun), «论大众文化» (Lun Dazhong Wenhua, On Popular Culture), *复旦学报* (*Fudan Xuebao, The Journal of Fudan*), no. 3, 1994, pp. 16-22.

²⁸ Cf. 徐圻 (Xu Qi), «冲突中的交融——论当今中国三种文化形态及其关系» (Chongtu zhong de Jiaorong—Lun Tangjin Zhongguo Sanzhong Wenhua Xingtai Jiqi Guanxi, Confluence in Conflict: On Three Cultural Forms and Their Relationships in China Today), *贵州大学学报* (*Guizhou Daxue Xuebao, Journal of Guizhou University*), no. 5, 1998, pp. 25.

²⁹ Cf. 伍雍谊 (Wu Yongyi), «商品化音乐的本质及其影响» (Shangpinhua Yinyue de Benzhi Jiqi Yingxiang, The Nature of Commercialised Music and its Impact), *高校理论战线* (*Gaoxiao Lilun Zhanxian, Theoretical front in higher education*), no. 4, 1993, pp. 64-68; 张汝伦 (Zhang Rulun), «论大众文化» (Lun Dazhong Wenhua, On Popular Culture), *复旦学报* (*Fudan Xuebao, The Journal of Fudan*), no. 3, 1994, pp. 21-22.

The new opposing position was based on the argument that Adorno's position represented the culture of the Western elites and of the Euro-American bourgeoisie. In the perspective of his Chinese critics, this had led Adorno to discriminate the culture of the common people, that is, cultural practices that were popular among the working class, from the very beginning. Another argument referred to the lack of intercultural reflection: especially in the sense of the cross-cultural context, Adorno's critique was now seen as an inappropriate tool to reflect on contemporary Chinese pop music. Adorno's theory did not take into account or did not match the aesthetic needs, both sensory and psychological, of the contemporary Chinese music audiences, the critics stated³⁰.

In this context, Adorno and the Frankfurt School were soon challenged—even though their core ideas were not yet properly understood. A common perception at the time was that cultural criticism in Chinese academia was “too Frankfurt”³¹. In this camp of Adorno-critics, the most representative article was provided by Xu Ben, a young scholar who was living in the United States at the time. In his influential article “Meixue·Yishu·Dazhong Wenhua: Ping Dangqian Dazhong Wenhua Piping de Shenmeizhuyi Qingxiang” (“Aesthetics – Art – Mass Culture: An Overview of the Aesthetic Tendencies of Current Mass Culture Criticism”)³², Xu formulated the programmatic slogan “Zouchu Aduonuo Moshi 走出阿多诺模式!” (Get out of Adorno's model!)³³. Xu pointed out the limits of Adorno's critical theory and the problems that arise when this theory is applied in the Chinese cultural context. At the same time, he proposed to embrace a new Chinese mass culture that could help young Chinese who were in need of deconstructing old ideologies and to liberate their personal emotions. In such a context, Adorno's theory had no point of contact with Chinese mass culture, but was rendered useless, Xu argued.³⁴

4. From the Year 2000 to the Present: Progressive Development of the Study of

³⁰ Cf. 明言 (Ming Yan), «新时期大众流行音乐的文化属性探析» (Xinshiqi Dazhong Liuxing Yinyue de Wenhua Shuxing Tanxi, Exploring the Cultural Attributes of Popular Pop Music in the New Era), *中国音乐学* (*Zhongguo Yinyuexue, Chinese Musicology*), no. 3, 1995, pp. 118-125; 沈正钧 (Shen Zhengyun), «流行音乐是一种气候» (Liuxing Yinyue shi Yizhong Qihou, Pop Music is a Climate), *北方音乐* (*Beifang Yinyue, Northern Music*), no. 4, 1995, p. 27.

³¹ Cf. 雷颐 (Lei Yi), «今天非常“法兰克福”» (Jintian Feichang Falankefu, Today is very “Frankfurt”), *读书* (*Dushu*), no. 12, 1997, pp. 60-64.

³² Cf. 徐贲 (Xu Ben), «美学·艺术·大众文化——评当前大众文化批评的审美主义倾向» (Meixue Yishu Dazhongwenhua—Ping Dangqian Dazhongwenhua Pipan de Shenmei Zhuyi Qingxiang, Aesthetics - Art - Popular Culture: A Review of the Aestheticist Tendency of Current Popular Culture Criticism), *文学评论* (*Wenxue Pinglun, Literary criticism*), no. 5, 1995, pp. 57-67.

³³ Cf. Bei Peng, «Adorno in China. Kritik oder Akzeptanz», *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, no. 5, pp. 53.

³⁴ Cf. 徐贲 (Xu Ben), «美学·艺术·大众文化——评当前大众文化批评的审美主义倾向» (Meixue Yishu Dazhongwenhua—Ping Dangqian Dazhongwenhua Pipan de Shenmei Zhuyi Qingxiang, Aesthetics - Art - Popular Culture: A Review of the Aestheticist Tendency of Current Popular Culture Criticism), *文学评论* (*Wenxue Pinglun, Literary Criticism*), no. 5, 1995, pp. 57-67.

Adorno's Philosophy of Music

Since the beginning of the 21st century, when the new field of "Western Marxist aesthetics" was established at Chinese universities and research institutes, scholars also recognised the need for a more systematic analysis and more specific study of the Frankfurt School and of Adorno's aesthetic thought in particular. In 2003, Nanjing University organised the first Adorno symposium in China. The conference was organised in collaboration with the German Goethe-Institut under the title "Aduono Danchen 100 Zhounian Jinian ji Guoji Xuehui Yantaohui 阿多诺诞辰 100 周年纪念暨国际学会研讨会" (International Symposium on Occasion of Adorno's 100th Birthday). On this occasion, Adorno's former student Stefan Müller-Doohm (Professor of Sociology at the University of Oldenburg in Germany) came to China to provide a keynote lecture³⁵. This conference was seen as a new turning point for Adorno studies in China. Thus, the study of Adorno's philosophy became a more regular topic at Chinese universities. In this context, however, Adorno's philosophy of music was mostly only mentioned in passing. Ten years later, in 2013, the commemoration of Adorno's 110th birthday was organised at Wuhan University and in cooperation with the German Rosa Luxemburg Foundation. This conference did not deal with Adorno's philosophy of music³⁶.

The dilemma in the research development of Adorno's philosophy of music in China is particularly evident in view of the numbers of dissertations. The first Chinese dissertation on Adorno was published in 1998³⁷, but the first dissertation on the subject of Adorno's philosophy of music was not published until 2007³⁸. Two more followed in 2014³⁹, and the most recent one in 2021⁴⁰. These four dissertations focus on the sociology

³⁵ Cf. 张亮 (Zhang Liang), «阿多诺诞辰 100 周年纪念暨国际学术研讨会综述» (Aduonuo Danchen 100 Zhounian ji Guoji Xueshu Yantaohui Zongshu, Review of the 100th Anniversary of Adorno's Birth and International Symposium), *哲学动态 (Zhexue Dongtai, Philosophical Trends)*, no. 2, 2004, pp. 41-43.

³⁶ Cf. 王晶 (Wang Jing), «纪念阿多诺诞辰 110 周年国际学术研讨会暨第八届国外马克思主义论坛综述» (Jinian Aduonuo Danchen 110 Zhounian Guoji Xueshu Zantaohui ji Dibajie Guowai Makesi Zhuyi Luntan Zongshu, Review of the International Symposium on the 110th Anniversary of Adorno's Birth and the 8th Forum on Marxism Abroad), *哲学动态 (Zhexue Dongtai, Philosophical Trends)*, no. 4, 2014, pp. 112-113.

³⁷ Cf. 陈刚 (Chen Gang), *阿多诺对现代艺术的分析 (Aduonjiao dui Xiandai Yishu de Fenxi, Adorno's Analysis of Modern Art)*, 北京 (Beijing), 北京大学 (Beijing Daxue, Peking University), 1998.

³⁸ Cf. 方德生 (Fang Desheng), *阿多诺新音乐哲学研究 (Aduonuo Xiyinyue Zhexue Yanjiu, A Study of Adorno's New Musical Philosophy)*, 江苏 (Jiangshu), 南京大学 (Nanjing Daxue, Nanjing University), 2006.

³⁹ Cf. 唐应龙 (Tang Yinglong), *美学救赎: 阿多诺音乐哲学研究 (Meixue Jiushu: Aduonuo Yinyue Zhexue Yanjiu, Aesthetic Redemption: A Study of Adorno's Philosophy of Music)*, 黑龙江 (Heilongjiang), 黑龙江大学 (Heilongjiang Daxue, Heilongjiang University), 2014; 马卫星 (Ma Weixing), *阿多诺音乐社会学思想研究 (Aduonuo Yinyue Shehuixue Sixiang Yanjiu, A Study of Adorno's Musical Sociological Thought)*, 黑龙江 (Heilongjiang), 哈尔滨师范大学 (Harbin Shifan Daxue, Harbin Normal University), 2014.

⁴⁰ Cf. 岳亚 (Yue Ya), *阿多诺艺术哲学思想范畴研究 (Aduonuo Yishu Zhexue Sixiang Fanchou Yanjiu, A Study of the Scope of Adorno's Philosophical Thought on Art)*, 哈尔滨 (Harbin), 哈尔滨音乐学院 (Harbin

of Adorno's music, the logic of the dialectic of negation in Adorno's musical thought and the Marxist connotations of Adorno's philosophy of music. But they only represent a tiny fraction of the approximately 30 dissertations on Adorno-related topics so far. Moreover, it is also very noteworthy that, apart from these four dissertations, no one has published a monograph on Adorno's philosophy of music in Chinese. It is usually discussed as a segment or subtopic in the context of the Frankfurt School's theory of the culture industry, modern Western music philosophy, 20th-century Marxism, and so on.

This stagnation in the discourse is directly related to the lack of adequate Chinese translations of Adorno's writings on music. Most Chinese researchers are not able to read Adorno's works in German, and translations of Adorno's music-related works into Chinese are only few. For a long time, only a small number of chapters were available in translation⁴¹. The language barrier and the scarcity of translations meant that researchers had only very little material to work with. It was supplemented only by secondary literature from English-speaking countries. The first music-related translation of a respective work was *Beethoven: Philosophie der Musik; Fragmente und Texte* (*Beethoven: The Philosophy of Music; Fragments and Texts*; Chinese: *Beiduofen—Aduono de Xin Yinyue Zhexue*) in 2009⁴². The famous book *Philosophie der Neuen Musik* (*Philosophy of New Music*; Chinese: *Xin Yinyue de Zhexue*) was translated in to Chinese in 2017⁴³. The translation of *Einleitung in die Musiksoziologie: Zwölf Theoretische Vorlesungen* (*An Introduction to the Sociology of Music*; Chinese: *Yinyue Shehuixue Daolun*) followed in 2018⁴⁴.

It was only on this basis that in recent years, more and more scholars began to engage with the contents of these three major works. Nevertheless, research into Adorno's philosophy of music is still limited to a relatively narrow field, and a number of issues remain unexamined or pending: the overall content and structure of Adorno's philosophy of music; the place of Adorno's philosophy of music in the history of philosophy of music as a whole; the fetishist critique of musical commodities; the study

Yinyue Xueyuan, Harbin Conservatory of Music), 2021.

⁴¹ Cf. 金经言 (Jin Jingyan), «阿多诺的音乐听众类型» (*Aduono de Yinyue Tingzhong Leixing, Types of Music Listeners in Adorno*), *中国音乐学* (*Zhongguo Yinyuexue, Chinese Musicology*), no. 2, 1994, pp. 124-130. 西奥多·W·阿多诺 (Xiaoduo W. Aduonuo), 周欢 (Zhou Huan, Translation), «论流行音乐» (*Lun Liuxing Yinyue, On Pop Music*), *当代电影* (*Dangdai Dianying, Contemporary Cinema*), no. 5, 1993, pp. 86-91.

⁴² Cf. 阿多诺 (Aduonuo), 彭淮栋 (Peng Huaidong, Translation), *贝多芬：阿多诺的新音乐哲学* (*Beiduofen: Aduonuo de Xinyinyue Zhexue, Beethoven: Adorno's New Musical Philosophy*), 台北 (Taipei), 联经出版事业有限公司 (Jinglian Chuban Shiye Youxian Gongs), 2009.

⁴³ Cf. 泰奥多尔·W·阿多诺 (Taiaoduoer W. Aduonuo), 曹骏峰 (Cao Junfeng, Translation), *新音乐的哲学* (*XinYinyue de Zhexue, Philosophy of New Music*), 北京 (Beijing), 中央编译出版社 (Zhongyang Bianyi Chubanshe), 2017.

⁴⁴ Cf. 特奥多尔·W·阿多诺 (Teaoduoer W. Aduonuo), 梁艳萍, 马卫星, 曹骏峰 (Liang Yanping, Ma Weixing, Cao Junfeng, Translation), *音乐社会学导论* (*Yinyue Shehuixue Daolun, Introduction to the Sociology of Music*), 北京 (Beijing), 中央编译出版社 (Zhongyang Bianyi Chubanshe), 2018.

of new music; the critique of Wagner; the relationship between Adorno's music philosophy and the Marxist critique of political economy; the connections to the music philosophies of Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, and Thomas Mann; and many more topics which yet have to be discussed.

Starting in 2021, a team of young Chinese scholars has begun to translate almost all of Adorno's writings into Chinese and to publish them. Almost 30 volumes of Adorno's writings will be translated in this edition. The team includes philosophers and musicologists, many of whom hold doctorates from German universities and have a good command of the German language. In 2022, the author's translation of *Über Wagner und Mahler (Lun Wagena he Male)* was published⁴⁵, and over the next five years, a representative selection of Adorno's musical writings will either be newly translated by the present author and by other colleagues of the team. Many of these works will be published in Chinese translation for the first time. I believe that this translation project will lay an important foundation for the future Chinese discourse on Adorno's philosophy of music. It is expected to lead to more comprehensive and in-depth research activities in this field.

5. Conclusion

This article has provided a summary of the chronological development and the status of the developing discourse on Adorno's philosophy of music in Chinese scholarship from the late 1970s to 2022. An increasing number of scholars is discussing Adorno's points of view. In view of this, noteworthy aspects can be deduced and identified. This is of great importance for the further inculturation of Adorno's philosophy of music in China.

First, the level of cross-cultural research on Adorno's philosophy of music is closely linked to the translation of Adorno's writings. Without translated texts by Adorno, there would be no way to provide researchers with primary sources for their work. The sole use of secondary literature would limit the research results to a small area and could not yield innovative results, of course. Furthermore, Adorno's use of language is unique in that he frequently uses metaphors and obscure wordings as well as complicated phrasing in his philosophy of music to suggest his philosophical ideas. Thus, he is difficult to read and to understand even for native German speakers. Therefore, in order to further develop the study of Adorno's music philosophy in China, it is paramount that Chinese

⁴⁵ Cf. 阿多诺 (Aduonuo), 彭蓓(Bei Peng, Translation), *论瓦格纳与马勒 (Lun Wagena yu Male, On Wagner and Mahler)*, 上海 (Shanghai), 上海人民出版社 (Shanghai Renmin Chubanshe, Shanghai People's Publishing House), 2022.

translations of Adorno's works are of an excellent quality. This can only be achieved if the translators have mastered the German academic language and really do understand Adorno's thoughts.

Secondly, the context of Adorno's philosophy of music is very complex and very interdisciplinary. Not only does a researcher need a broad background knowledge of German philosophy but also an understanding of Western music—which includes the knowledge of Western music history (from Baroque music to 20th-century New Music), music theory (including specialised musical knowledge, such as the theory of harmony, compositional techniques, orchestration, work analysis, etc.), and music criticism. However, due to the restrictive nature of the disciplinary structure of Chinese universities, the possibility of conducting interdisciplinary research has been very limited so far. Researchers in philosophy have only a very limited understanding of the theoretical knowledge of musical disciplines, while researchers in musicology are unable to understand the complex philosophical terminology and principles. Therefore, in order to further the development of the study of Adorno's music philosophy in Chinese academic contexts, there is a need for dialogue and collaboration between the three disciplines of musicology and philosophy as well as German studies. They have to be coupled and interlinked to enable an adequate discussion format.

In view of new Chinese translations and the possibility of a correlating increase of researchers as well as knowledge interests, one can be optimistic: the author is sure that Adorno's music philosophy will receive more attention in China. It will surely be studied more thoroughly and diligently in the near future. The whole field has a good perspective for further development.

About the Author:

Bei PENG (彭蓓) holds a doctorate in musicology (University of Heidelberg). She is a lecturer at Beijing Normal University at Zhuhai and focuses on the philosophy of music and cultural exchange. Peng is the Co-Editor-in-Chief of the first Chinese edition of selected works by Theodor W. Adorno, and she translated his writings on Wagner and Mahler.