

Utilization of Pop Music as Musical Contents: A Case Study of Juke Box Musical¹

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Abstract. The reason why pop music has become popular as musical contents is because popular songs are recreated as stage performances, with which audiences have been already familiar over the years. Accordingly, the melodies and lyrics seared into people's memories endow musical with a new stage language. Such an element has been verified by the public through rapidly developing media and technology. Encountering music, a type of musical combined with pop music creates Jukebox Musical. In the light of fast development of mass media and CT, in addition to an increasing demand for mass culture, Jukebox Musicals such as *Mamma Mia* are anticipated to improve the existing cultural industry by expanding a cultural market.

Keywords: Jukebox Musical, musical contents, popular music, re-creation contents, killer contents

1 Introduction

The movie and the TV industry which had remarkably grown in the digital times have become a driving force for cultural industries of the global market since the mid-20th century. Among the trends in the unlimited competitive era emerged 'musical' in which self-cloning analogue-style performs on the stage. Musicals enable a long-run performance, thus, the cultural investors and producers have focused on musicals with anticipation of earning stable revenue. The musicals, with their popular performance style, have been paid close attention to beyond the traditional cultural environment. The musical may be similar with traditional plays in some ways, however, its purpose generally roots in a box office hit since large scale investments usually flow in the market. Thus, it takes responsibility to satisfy the investors as well as the audience [1].

The reason why musical is popular is because it provides audiences with spectacular scenes and easy-to-understand materials. In addition, musicals touch people with interesting novelty embedded in music and dance, stimulating emotions. Musical was originated in the West and was introduced in the 60s. Since in the late 20th century, a popular performance combined entertainment and artistic value has been one of the leading cultural genres in Korea. Furthermore, musicals diverged to

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comprehensive contemporary cultural contents in harmony with music, acting, singing, and dancing.

At the point of the late 20th century and the early 21st century, musical started to produce popular, light works; such works utilized a wide variety of cultural archetypes. Namely, movies, dramas, animations, and even pop music have provided good sources to musical. This kind of production method suggests that the story, tunes, melodies, and lyrics in musical already familiar with audiences should be used in musical production. For example, the recent production composed of pop music contents so-called 'Jukebox Musical' has been repeatedly made. The reasons vary, but the major concern is related to lack of human resource. Compared to the number of musicals presented a year, the manpower in the industry is relatively weak. It is difficult to find talents like Richard Charles Rodgers. The importance of composition implies that the booming of Jukebox Musical has started since the 1960s when many hit song writers actively participated in the circle of musical.

However, most of the musicals made since then could not last long; some survived, making profits. The recent work, *Mamma Mia* is one of the lucky ones. The songs used in this musical are very familiar with the public in terms of lyrics and melodies. According to a study, the audiences understood the work more easily than classical or folk music [2].

2 Comparison of Musical and Pop Music

The forms of musicals can be classified on a various perspective. 'Sung Through Musical', 'Rock Musical', 'Book Musical', 'Dance Musical', 'Jukebox Musical' and many more are categorized in more specific ways. Except these, plenty of new attempts such as Moviecal which is created based on movie, Dramacal, based on drama and Anical, based on animation have been introduced to the public. These new types of musical already have essential elements including scripts, songs, and melodies. Therefore, the process turning the contents into musical takes shorter time compared to other original pieces.

The process is following: when the scripts are completed, the lyrics and composition are worked on. After that, a choreographer starts design choreography according to the lyrics, melodies, and each scene, followed by stage design, lights, costume design, make-up and so on. Through this comprehensive process, musical is presented as the entire work of art.

On the other hand, pop music represents a certain period of time; as the period of time passes by, the songs are left in our memory of the past. A new singer always appears and his/her music appeals to the public just like the ones of the past. Musical connects the generation to generation by reviving the music of the past. Musical and pop music have several things in common. For instance, both are able to perform in front of audience and to have music while musical consists of scripts of drama and directed scenes unlike a singer's performance. A popular singer's song has a melody and lyrics, which last only a few minutes in a song. Each song is not related to each other unlike musical songs. Usually, a musical performs at least 10 songs, sometimes over 50.

These songs complement the musical so as to help the audience understand the entire story as well as connect the story consistently. Therefore, pop songs differentiate their characteristics from that of musical songs. The musical songs present each paragraph, time, background, and circumstance of the story as clearly as possible.

3 Emergence and Background of Jukebox Musical

A 'Jukebox' is a mechanical device in which one inserts a coin and chooses a song to listen to. Then the machine automatically plays the songs of the one's favorite. Similar to this, Jukebox Musical produces the work that enables audience to listen to favorite songs of the past. In other words, there is a term 'Pop Musical' which refers to pop song or pop music. That is, Jukebox Musical is defined clearly by using pop music as musical score according to the musical context of dramatized structure [3]. Some out-of-fashion music pieces can be reborn as a new musical through sound-telling. They are endowed with an opportunity to emerge a new form of original musicals. The examples are followings: *Mamma Mia* of ABBA, a Swedish band in the 1990s, *Jersey Boys* of the Four Seasons, an American rock group, *The Days* of late Kim Gwang-seok, a Korean singer song-writer, and *Gwanghwamun Love Song* of late Kim Yeong-hoon, a Korean prominent composer and *Temptation of Wolf* of K-pop Idol singers' songs.

Jukebox Musical can be defined as several categories according to its type and form such as 'Compilation' and 'A tribute show.' Both of these shows present a band or musical instruments on the stage; their setting sometimes is very similar to a concert hall. The lyrics or music are played as original numbers, however, the story or acting is produced with more creativity to give a different sense to audiences [4].



Fig. 1. Jukebox Musical Posters

[from left, *Mamma Mia*, *Jersey Boys*, *The Days*, *Gwanghwamun Love Song*, *Temptation of Wolf*]

Taking an example of Fig. 2, even though the song 'Thank You for the Music' was brought from ABBA's original number, the song was used as an sentimental medium in communicating among Sophie and the three male characters in the musical. Therefore, the audiences listening to ABBA's song feel a difference sense in lyrics

'Jukebox Musical' lies its identity in musical contents, despite this fact, it functions as media mix contents or even killer contents that provide spectacular stage performances. Considering the case of *The Days* and *December*, it is obvious that Jukebox Musical to open a gate wider to the audiences in the 40s and the 50s, who used to be indifferent to pop culture.

5 Conclusion

A French philosopher and music theorist, Peter Szendy insists that the logic and concept of a hit song should be defined, saying, "What particular characteristics of the music influence listeners? What popular nature is hidden in the music? How can harmonize our identity with originality while exchanging the surge of conventionalism or cliché." His inquiry implies that he perceived the hit songs at the philosophical aspects.

Jukebox Musical, reborn as new musical contents, gives a new meaning to the original numbers, re-creating itself to a stage performance. With this, audiences can participate in new pleasure by drawing out impressions on their favorite old songs in the past. Jukebox Musical differs from other types of dramas, which have stories based on scripts, yet it has musical elements such as lyrics and melodies, particularly already-made songs. Even though it is hard to predict this new type of musical consistently accounts for the cultural industry, the investors and producers would be actively involved in Jukebox Musical as long as they get to find ways to move audience's sensibility. A box office value is a different story, however, the recent record suggests that Jukebox Musical should be a very attractive source of musical production with positive assessment.

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