

amazingly complex and dynamically adaptive organism, not a crippling corporate or state bureaucracy. *Plasticity is one of its defining features*. We would have never survived, let alone evolved, as a species if the brain had been a glorified operating system running bio-behavioural software.⁵³ Instead, it enables us, whatever our genetic inheritance, to survive and flourish in the vast variety of changing situations in which we have to live and learn from birth to death. If anything is natural —and wonderful— about how the brain deals with music, it's the way it lets us all experience so many parts of our being at the same time, *whatever* our predispositions and circumstances.

Emotion, mood and metaphor

Before rounding off this chapter, two common assumptions about music need to be addressed: [1] music expresses moods and emotions; [2] music cannot be described in words. Neither assumption is wrong: it's just that it's misleading to reduce our understanding of music to those general assumptions alone. There's no room here to discuss these issues in any depth but I'll try to pinpoint some crucial conceptual problems and, where possible, suggest ways of dealing with them.

First let's confront the notion that music expresses the feelings of the artist. Tchaikovsky certainly did not think so.

'Those who imagine that a creative artist can —through... his art— express his feelings at the moment when he is *moved*, make the greatest mistake. Emotions, sad or joyful, can only be expressed *retroactively*.'⁵⁴

I'd go further than Tchaikovsky because I don't think you even need to have felt the emotion previously to present it convincingly. After all, a good actor playing a dastardly Richard III or a psychotic Hitler does not himself need to have ever felt or behaved like those villains to elicit emotions of disgust or horror in his audience. Similarly, as Frith (2001: 93-94) notes, the applause for Elton John's rendition of *Candle In The Wind* at Princess Diana's funeral was not 'for being sincere... (his business alone)... but for performing sincerity... [It was] a performance of grief in which we could all take part'.

53. For information about *working memory* and the *phonological loop*, see pp. 272-273.

54. Cited by Ball (2010: 259).

In order to convincingly communicate a sense of grief, loneliness, joy, contentment, or whatever other state of mind is required, the musician (composer, arranger, performer, etc.) must first be in some way aware of that state of mind. It has to have been observed, grasped, appropriated and shaped before it can be channelled and presented in a culturally competent form that can be understood by an audience. If you ever had to rush to be on time for an engagement to sing or play at a funeral, and if one of the deceased's nearest and dearest thanks you afterwards for 'the beautiful music' before you hurry off to another appointment, you'll know exactly what I mean. If you had expressed your own feelings through music at the funeral you would have shown total disrespect for both the bereaved and deceased. If you can't come up with something suitably dignified and moving for a funeral, however you might be feeling yourself, you're simply not doing your job.

Viewing musical competence in this prosaic way is useful because it makes the essential distinction between *emotion* and the *representation of emotion*. That doesn't mean the artist's composition or performance is fake. It's simply a presentation, based on a combination of memory, retrospection,⁵⁵ empathy, sensitivity, imagination and skill. That presentation process also involves some distancing from the emotion or mood in question because it has to be identified and grasped conceptually — almost always in intuitively musical rather than in consciously verbal terms — before it can be packaged in a culturally viable form.⁵⁶

Having made this cardinal distinction between emotion and the musical representation of emotion, we are still not much wiser about differences of meaning between 'woolly words' like *emotion*, *affect*, *feeling* and *mood* that are commonly used when talking about music and an individual's internal state of being. Let's try to unravel some of that 'wool'.

55. As suggested by Tchaikovsky and Hindemith: see Ball (2010: 259).

56. This distinction is similar to that between the Indian concepts *bhāva* (भाव) — an individual's feeling, emotion, mood or state of becoming — and *rasa* (रस) — the dominant emotional theme of a work of art. *Rasa* can be compared to states of mind or body perceived 'through a window'. The *rasa* is not 'the emotion' or 'the mood' but its perceived framework/'packaging'; see also fn. 74, p. 335.

EMOTIONS are characterised by the involuntary physiological response of an individual to an object or situation relating both to that individual's physical state and to sensory input. This means there has to be observable response to such stimuli for emotion to exist. That is not so with AFFECT, which can exist and be felt by a subject without concomitant observable emotion. *Affect* can in that sense be seen as a larger set of phenomena in which *emotion* is a subset of primary importance.⁵⁷

FEELINGS are strictly speaking neither emotions nor affects although all three words are often used synonymously. Feelings are the *subjective experience* of emotion or affect. For example, people in a state of uncontrolled fury, paralysed panic or euphoric ecstasy are overwhelmingly occupied by living out that 'involuntary physiological response' (the emotion), but that does not altogether preclude self-awareness, however fleeting it may be, which allows the emotion or affect to be *registered* by the subject as a *feeling*.

MOOD is usually thought of as an ongoing state of mind —positive or negative, static or dynamic. A mood is psychologically more likely to last for hours or even days compared to the mere seconds normally occupied by the expression of an emotion. Perhaps this simple distinction can help us sort out notions of mood and emotion in relation to music. To test that hypothesis, let's return to two of the musogenic but 'inadequate verbal hints of musical meaning' suggested on page 68 —FEELING ANGRY ON AN OTHERWISE GOOD DAY and DESPERATELY TROUBLED IN THE MIDST OF CALM AND BEAUTY. It would not be unreasonable to identify *mood* with the *general scene* —the GOOD DAY, the CALM AND BEAUTY— and *emotion* with the more *explicit state of mind* —FEELING ANGRY and DESPERATELY TROUBLED. One problem with this distinction is that neither GOOD DAY nor CALM AND BEAUTY are simply moods without affect or emotion because a GOOD DAY (rather than a bad one) involves some degree of elation rather than depression, while CALM AND BEAUTY (rather than stress and ugliness) implies a sense of contentment and wonder (rather than of frustration and indifference). Meanwhile, the OTHERWISE and the IN THE MIDST OF both imply that the listener provid-

57. *Affect* /¹æfekt/ is an important concept in musical scholarship. However, since it is a problematic concept (Meyer, 1956: 13-22; Bartel, 1997: 29-89; Tagg, 2000a: 45-50), its discussion has to be omitted from this account in the interests of clarity and brevity.

ing the 'inadequate verbal hints of musical meaning' hears the music in both cases as each presenting a different type of emotion felt by the *same subject*. It's the same person feeling both angry *and* happy, just as the person feeling both troubled *and* the effects of great calm and beauty is also one and the same. This 'multi-affect, single-subject' conceptualisation would certainly fit the third of page 68's 'inadequate verbal hints' —SICK TO THE TEETH OF THE WORLD AND FEELING IRREPRESSIBLY ALIVE BECAUSE OF THAT DISGUST.⁵⁸ Does this mean that a musical mood is a combination of musically encoded emotions or affects? Or are emotions in music, like melody in comparison to speech, extended to last long enough to become a mood? Or is there a deeper problem preventing us from distinguishing between mood and emotion in music?

The underlying difficulty is, however tautological it may sound, that words denote states of mind in logogenic, not musogenic, terms. A brief scan of mood categories for silent film or in library music catalogues reveals this problem clearly.⁵⁹ Some musical mood labels denote emotions (JOY, SADNESS, etc.), but others use demographic, ethnic or geographical categories (CHILDREN, GYPSY, RUSSIA, etc.), or generic locations (SEA, WIDE OPEN SPACES, LABORATORY, 1960s, etc.), or types of activity, social function or ceremony (BATTLE, SPORT, FUNERAL, etc.), or generic movement (ACTION, TRANQUILLITY, FLYING, etc.), or narrative genre (CRIME, SCIENCE FICTION, etc.), or episodic function (INTRO, BRIDGE, ENDING, etc.), or musical style and genre or instrumentation (CLASSICAL, JAZZ, ELECTRONICA, PAN PIPES, etc.).

'*Emotion words*'

The fact that EMOTION WORDS⁶⁰ present just one of several ways of labelling musical 'moods' may partly be due to the audiovisual contexts in which silent film and library music are used, but that is certainly not

58. Or, as renowned pianist Lang Lang remarked about Liszt's arrangement of Schumann's *Widmung*, 'It works so well because you have the happiness and the sadness at the same time' (☐📺 BBC4 documentary, 2013-01-11, c. 21:05 hrs.).

59. See content pages of Rapée (1924); see also section on library music (pp. 223-227), particularly Table 6-2 on page 225.

60. By *emotion words* is simply meant words —mostly nouns and adjectives but also adverbs— denoting emotion, e.g. *joy, joyful, joyfully*.

the whole story. The underlying problem with emotion words when talking about music is that they denote *states of mind in abstracto*. They are not like music which culturally packages an emotion or affect into a performance, live or recorded, through the process just described (pp. 71-72). Instead they do what words are particularly good at: as signifiers they lexically denote their signifieds. It's in this way that whatever emotion or affect a word denotes can be conceptually distinguished from all the gesturality, spatiality, tactility, temporality and kinetics that are part of the 'physiological response' that is by definition EMOTION (p.73) and which is intrinsic to *musical* conceptualisation of that emotion or affect.

Consider, for example, the emotion or affect behind the verbal label 'joy'. Are we talking about: [a] the joy of a small boy excitedly bubbling over as he plays with a new toy; [b] a calm, confident sense of joy slowly welling up inside someone realising that the end of the tunnel may be in sight; [c] the joy of two young girls giggling as they share an exciting secret; [d] the joy of a large crowd, seen from above in a city square, celebrating liberation from war and oppression; [e] the joy of a parent tenderly cradling his/her new-born baby? Those five 'joys' demand very different musics. Some of them will be fast, others slow; some loud, others soft; some gentle and delicate, others energetic and ebullient; some high-pitched, others pitched lower; some rhythmically regular, others irregular; some metric, others rhapsodic; some expansive, others moderated; some private, others public; some outdoors, others indoors in a confined space, etc. Whatever the single *word* 'joy' may mean, it cannot be musical because it gives no hint of the motoric, social, spatial or physical elements that music must by definition contain as a *cross-domain, synaesthetic* type of human communication which causes neurons to fire up *all over the brain*. But the logogenic-musogenic contradiction of representing affect can also go the other way.

If 'joy' is too general and abstract as a musical mood descriptor, other emotion words can seem too precise. There are, for example, clear lexical differences between the following five states of mind: [1] ENVY —discontentment or resentful longing aroused by another's better fortune; [2] JEALOUSY —suspicion or resentment of rivalry in love or of another person's advantages; [3] SUSPICION —distrust or doubt of the

innocence or genuineness of someone or something; [4] GUILT — shameful awareness of having done wrong; [5] EMBARRASSMENT — awkwardness or discomfort in social interaction.⁶¹ The problem with these words is that, —unless we're talking about a fit of uncontrolled rage of envy or jealousy (in which case the rage itself rather than its causes would be musically important)—, the five verbally denoted states of mind are musogenically very similar. They all involve psychological discomfort linked to bodily postures of defensive containment. The distrust, disgrace or indignity involved to differing degrees in those five states of mind are much more likely to be physically expressed in terms of a motionless body, hunched shoulders, eyes down or to one side, a furrowed brow and sealed lips rather than in effusive gestures, upright body posture, full-on eye contact and expressive speech. Everyday language makes this link quite clear. We say we are *paralysed* (not liberated) by ENVY, *consumed* (not empowered) with JEALOUSY and *burdened with* (not relieved by) GUILT, while we *hide* or *hang our heads* in SHAME and *cringe* with EMBARRASSMENT —we literally shrink; we do not stand tall.⁶² In short, the musogenic aspect of these five emotion words is in the commonality of 'involuntary physiological response' they all share. Precision of *musical* meaning is more likely to be determined by how much of which sort of paralysis, burden, hiding, hunching or cringing is involved, not in *verbal* distinctions between the *causes* of the unpleasantness linked to the bodily postures just described. As with JOY, the problem with ENVY, JEALOUSY, SUSPICION, GUILT, SHAME and EMBARRASSMENT is down to the same old tautology: the verbal-lexical precision of words is logogenic, not musogenic. But that's not all.

Not only are emotion words, as we saw earlier, just one among several types of musical mood label; they are also quite uncommon in silent film and library music collections.⁶³ Those collections rarely use words clearly relating to the 'physiological response' aspect of affect —what

61. Definitions based on meanings given in *The Oxford Concise English Dictionary* (1995).

62. *Embarrass* derives from Italian *inbarare* meaning to bar in, to restrict movement. Defensive containment involves making yourself 'scarce', as small and as undetectable a target as possible, using maximum invisibility, inaudibility and immobility. STEALTH is another musogenic variant on the same theme of undetectability. It involves maximum invisibility and inaudibility but maximum mobility.

63. See Selection of library music descriptive tags on page 225.

defines it as an emotion in terms of an individual's body posture and movement. There is, so to speak, very little by way of jumping for joy or cringing with embarrassment. None of this means that emotion words and, more importantly, verbal descriptions of body posture and movement are useless when trying to give some verbal indication of a musical mood. It simply means that conventions of musical mood labelling used on an everyday basis in audiovisual production do not seem to give emotion-related words any pride of place. Apart from distinctly musical and episodic labels like CLASSICAL, JAZZ, or PAN PIPES; INTRO, BRIDGE OR ENDING, and those referring to narrative genres like DETECTIVE, DISASTER or DOCUMENTARY, the most common library music labelling categories, many of them overlapping, are those based on the following sorts of distinction: [1] demographic, ethnic, geographical or historical concepts like CHILDREN, GYPSY, RUSSIA, OLDEN TIMES; [2] generic locations like LABORATORY, SEA, OPEN SPACES; [3] types of activity, social function or ceremony like BATTLE, SPORT, FUNERAL; [4] generic movement like ACTION, TRANQUILLITY, FLYING. I'm not suggesting that these four labelling categories are more important than the verbal designation of emotion, merely that they are more common in a well-established and practice-based convention of musical mood nomenclature.

That observation, together with the problem of logogenic versus musogenic precision, raises an obvious question: why have emotion words like HAPPY, SAD, TENSE and RELAXED so often been default description mode for my students when they try to answer the question 'what do you think the music is telling us here'? Do they think paramusical associations to music are childish?⁶⁴ Don't they know that grown-up professionals in audiovisual media production use the sorts of musical mood labels just mentioned? Do they believe in notions of 'absolute music', euroclassical or postmodernist, that are still propagated in many conventional institutions of cultural learning?⁶⁵ Or, given that

64. Wittgenstein (1966/1938) suggested that words like BEAUTIFUL and LOVELY are learnt in early childhood as interjections and used regressively by adults when they can't come up with anything more adequate to say about a work of art. 'The same goes for emotion words for roughly the same reasons'... 'A Wittgensteinian analysis would seem to suggest that this fear of childishness is not only itself childish, but also has its causal roots in early childhood' (T.P. Uschanov, email to the author, 2012-11-12).

language has words denoting emotion and that music seems to touch our emotions, do they think those emotion words give any real sense of 'what the music is telling us', despite the obvious problem of logogenic versus musogenic meaning just discussed?

I try to deal with some of these questions in the next chapter, but it should already be clear that prioritising emotion words at the expense of *other types of vocabulary* can seriously skew our understanding of what music can and cannot communicate. Not only will we be less able to grasp the *prosodic*, *motoric* and *kinetic* aspects of music's cross-domain representation that are intrinsic to the types of 'physiological response' defining an emotion; we also risk neglecting music's demonstrable ability to present an infinite range of complex patterns relating to *spatiality* and *tactility*, as well as to *historical*, *ethnic* and *social* location.

Metaphor

If, as I've argued several times, music could be described in words, it would be unnecessary. But since no human society of which we have any knowledge has ever been without music in the sense defined on page 44, and since one of this book's main aims is to suggest ways of talking about music as if it meant more than just itself, we will have to find words indicating at least something of its *perceived meanings*, however inadequate those indications may be. Given the restrictive problems of 'emotion words' and of music's holistic combination of simultaneous modes of expression and perception in specific cultural contexts, it would be logical to talk about the meaning of musical sound in ways that recognise its intrinsic multimodality. This entails considering the synaesthetic and metaphorical characterisation of music less in terms of dubious or fanciful subjectivity and more as a potentially valid mode of providing at least partial clues to its perceived meanings, particularly if, as we shall see in Chapter 6, those clues trace lines of inter-subjective consistency.

Metaphors have two poles: [1] a SOURCE which acts as a previously known semantic network or model for an analogy; [2] a TARGET on to which that network of meaning is mapped.⁶⁶ For example, the *target* of

65. See also under Classical absolutism: 'music is music', pp. 89-115.

LOVE IS A BATTLEFIELD and LOVE IS A JEWEL is *love* but the *sources* mapped on to that same target are very different. Of course, neither statement is literally true but neither is metaphorically false since the connotative model of both BATTLEFIELD —victims, pain, destruction, etc.— and of JEWEL —sparkling, valuable, precious, etc.— can be mapped on to different aspects of love.⁶⁷

A similar sort of mapping is used in suggestive titles given to pieces of library music like *Across the Plains*, *Caresses by Candlelight*, *Century of Progress*, *Days of the Roman Empire*, *Fogbound*, *Green Heritage*, *Psychotic Transients*, *Reactor Test* and *The Sleepy Cossack*.⁶⁸ Each piece can be understood as metaphorological 'target' and its title as the linguistic 'source' embodying the semantic field or network acting as a model for some essential aspect of how the music is perceived. Connotative responses to music work similarly: they supply verbal-visual hints ('VVAs') acting as source models whose meaning is mapped on to the music eliciting the response.⁶⁹ Verbal metaphors of musical meaning are by definition metonymic. They 'are not' the music and do no more than suggest part of its perceived meaning. Even more importantly, they are almost always culturally specific because different audiences belonging to different social groups in different traditions at different times in different places under different conditions cannot be expected to map the same verbal 'source' on to the same musical 'target'. However, the fact that music is not a universal '*language*' (p. 47, ff.) does not mean that it's any less universal a *phenomenon* than (verbal) language. On the contrary, to understand how any music can communicate anything apart from itself it's necessary to study individual occurrences of musical semiosis in specific cultural contexts. It's only on that basis that more general patterns of musical semiosis can be extrapolated, some of which may be applicable in a wider cultural context.

In short, verbal metaphors of perceived musical meaning are a useful starting point for anyone wanting to understand 'how music's sounds

66. See Forceville (2005) and Lakoff & Johnson (1979).

67. It's also worth noting that these metaphors are irreversible. Love can be a jewel or a battlefield but neither a jewel nor a battlefield can be love.

68. All these titles are from the Boosey & Hawkes library music collection.

69. See under 'Reception tests', p. 200, ff.

can carry which types of meaning' (p. 4). Some readers may be uncomfortable with the notion of words as approximate metaphors for music because words in our logocentric tradition of knowledge are favoured as reliable bearers of meaning in a way that music isn't. I would simply ask those readers to at least consult the following sections of this book before rejecting the cultural reality of words as metaphors of music: *Polysemy and connotative precision* (pp. 167-169), *Intersubjectivity* (pp. 195-228) and *Gestural interconversion* (pp. 504-511).

Summary of ten main points

[1] Whether or not we humans are alone in having developed two systems of sonic communication (language and music), we are probably the only species to distinguish so radically between them (p.54, ff.).

[2] Music is a form of communication involving the emission and perception of non-verbal sounds structured or arranged by humans for humans. As such, music is a universal *phenomenon* in the sense that no human society has ever been without it, even though what we mean by the word 'music' may have no exact verbal equivalent in many languages (p. 44, ff.).

[3] Music is no more a universal 'language' than language itself. Being a universal *phenomenon* does not mean that the same sounds, musical or verbal, have the same meaning in all cultures. The fact that language and music don't trace the same cultural boundaries in no way means that any music or language can be understood by everyone on the planet (p. 47, ff.).

[4] Music often involves a *concerted simultaneity* of sound events or movements. Unlike speech, writing, painting, etc., music is particularly suited to expressing collective messages of affective and corporeal identity, since individual participating voices or instruments must relate to the underlying temporal, timbral or tonal basis of the particular music being performed (p. 45).

[5] By combining input from several domains of representation, music forms integral categories of cognition that, from a verbal viewpoint, may seem contradictory or polysemic but which correspond more accurately and holistically with states of mind as they are actually felt

(verbal hints: ANGRY ON A GOOD DAY, SAD AND ELATED, VULNERABLE AND EUPHORIC, etc.). Music also helps synaesthesia and cognitive flexibility (p. 62, ff.).

[6] Cognitive neuroscientists have demonstrated that musical experience causes neurons to 'fire up all over the brain'. Such observations reinforce notions of music as a particularly synaesthetic and holistic type of human expression (p. 68, ff.).

[7] Emotion and affect are essential aspects of musical 'meaning' but preoccupation with individual subjectivity in Western discourse about music tends to divert attention from equally important issues like spatiality, movement, energy and tactility, as well as from aspects of ethnic, historical and demographic connotation (p. 71, ff.).

[8] If treated with care, verbal metaphors of perceived musical meaning can serve as a useful entry point into the discussion of 'how music's sounds can carry which types of meaning' (p. 78, ff.).

[9] Music is, in different ways and to varying degrees, essential to any human in the socialisation process leading from egocentric baby to collaborative adult (p. 58, ff.).

[10] Music is important in contemporary everyday life in terms of the amounts of time and money spent on it: about four hours and the price of a loaf of bread or of a litre of milk per person per day (p.35, ff). Or, to use the words of global and/or historical celebrities:

'If you want to know if a nation is well governed,... the quality of its music will provide the answer.' 'Music produces a kind of pleasure which human nature cannot do without.' (Confucius)⁷⁰

'Music is so naturally united with us that we cannot be free from it even if we so desired.' (Boëthius)⁷¹

'Give me control over he who shapes the music of a nation, and I care not who makes the laws.' (Napoléon)⁷¹

'Einstein figured out his problems and equations... by improvising on the violin.' (G J Withrow, personal friend of Einstein)⁷¹

70. Adapted from numerous online quotation sites.

71. All three quotes are in O'Donnell (1999). The Boëthius source is Storr (1992).