METAPHOR IN TEXTS ON MUSIC

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"To think, talk, or write about music is to engage with it in terms of something else, metaphorically. Music *moves*, it *speaks*, paints an *image*, or fights a *battle*."

(Spitzer 2004: 1)

Overview

- Research Questions

- Introduction: Theoretical Framework

- Metaphor and Music: Two Levels

- Analysis

- Discussion

- Conclusion

Research Questions

- How do we talk about music? How is music conceptualized?

- What kinds of metaphors are used to structure our concept of music?

- How metaphorical are those expressions?

  - metaphor as a gradable phenomenon

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Introduction

- Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 1999)

- Event Structure Metaphor: ABSTRACT EVENTS ARE CONCRETE EVENTS (Lakoff 1993)

location-type	object-type
STATES ARE LOCATIONS *to be <u>in</u> a hurry*	ATTRIBUTES ARE POSSESSIONS *I <u>have</u> a cold*
LOCATIONS ARE CONTAINERS	
CHANGES ARE MOVEMENTS *<u>go</u> mad*	CHANGES ARE MOVEMENTS OF POSSESSION *the noise <u>gave</u> me a headache*

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Introduction - CMT and Music

- „ […] our understanding and conceptualization of musical experience, and therefore our linguistic discourse about music, are in large measure irreducibly structured by deep conceptual metaphors." (Johnson and Larson 2003: 78)

- Music Cognition (Zbikowski 2002)

Metaphor and Music - Two Levels

Choice of key also underscores the conjugal state of each couple, which rests on beliefs of trust and fidelity. Elsa's A-flat major is the closest possible to Lohengrin's A major yet stands the furthest away in the circle of fifths, the half-tone friction between the two tonal plateaus projecting Wagner's core idea of the impossibility of a human-divine union.

(Chrissochoidis, I., & Huck, S. (2011). Elsa's reason: On beliefs and motives in Wagner's Lohengrin. *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 22(01), 65–91.)

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➡ MUSIC IS SPACE (descriptive, musical form)

➡ KEYS ARE LOVERS (interpretative, musical meaning)

Metaphor in Descriptions of Music

- "[…] if we wish to speak of music, we must speak in spatial terms. […] Though these notions are thought literally true for music, their sources are metaphoric and the remnants of those sources are still discernable: such technical terms are *music-literal.*" (Guck 1991:2)

- *soft voice, dark note, bright note*
- "These 'synaesthetic metaphors' are comparable in 'feel' to primary metaphors in that their quasi-metaphorical; i.e. concept-crossing, nature goes largely unnoticed […]." (Hampe 2005: 55f.)

➡ hypothesis: there are degrees of metaphoricity

Analysis: Method

- corpus (7 million words, 2 registers: academic & news; classical music)

- sample: 5,000 words academic & 5,000 words news

  - exhaustively annotated for metaphor

  - identified metaphors were classified with respect to the source domains

Analysis: Results

	Academic	News
Metaphors in music	**26. 11 %**	**19. 30 %**
Amsterdam Metaphor Corpus (Steen et al. 2010)	18. 50 %	16. 40 %

corpus size:

Music corpus: academic = 4,607; news = 5,067

Amsterdam metaphor corpus: academic = 49,314; news =44,792

Analysis: Results

source domain	academic	news	example
space	49. 71%	41. 89 %	*motion <u>from</u> tonic <u>to</u> dominant*
physical structure	15. 95 %	11. 94 %	*construction*
object	8. 09 %	12. 83 %	*Haydn <u>set</u> the piece*
language	7. 40 %	3. 39 %	*a B-minor <u>statement</u>*
person/organism	4. 28 %	6. 06 %	*a motivic <u>cell</u>*
synaesthetic	**1. 97 %**	**7. 49 %**	*colours, palette*

Discussion

1. Event Structure Metaphor

   The majority of metaphors identified in texts about music are part of the Event Structure Metaphor. (Jandausch 2012)

   ➡ MUSICAL EVENTS ARE CONCRETE EVENTS

   ➡ MUSICAL EVENTS ARE ACTIONS

Discussion

location-type	object-type
➡ MUSICAL LANDSCAPE	➡ MOVING MUSIC
➡ STATES ARE LOCATIONS, LOCATIONS ARE CONTAINERS	➡ ATTRIBUTES ARE POSSESSIONS
in A minor, in the opening bars *We finally reach the dominant harmony at the Preludes midpoint.*	*the passage has a heightened chaotic effect* *feverish ascents to the big tuttis*

Discussion

2. How metaphorical are those metaphors?

- Is music an abstract event?

STATES ARE LOCATIONS, LOCATIONS ARE CONTAINERS	
in a hurry, fall in love	*in a piece, in the opening bars*
to enter a new stage in life	*the tenor's entrance*
more abstract	less abstract

Discussion

more abstract	less abstract
Slatkin and the orchestra totally <u>entered</u> into the spirit of his reading	*the tenor's <u>entrance</u>*
the spirit of his reading, turning the sparring <u>into</u> sport	*the division of longer notes <u>into</u> repeated smaller values*
Kennedy immediately drifted <u>into</u> reverie	
the contrast <u>between</u> action and repose was extreme	*the left hand likes that space <u>between</u> E and C*

= effect of music   = musical form

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Discussion

more metaphorical	less metaphorical
interpretative	descriptive
musical meaning	musical form
spatial metaphors refer to states that the music conveys	spatial metaphors refer to how music is organized

Conclusion

➡ metaphor is highly pervasive in texts on music

➡ to a great extent, music is conceptualized in terms of the Event Structure Metaphor

➡ BUT basic musical metaphors seem to be less abstract

➡ there seems to be a clear difference in the degree of metaphoricity in descriptions of musical structure as compared to the effect that music has, to how music is interpreted

"Talking about music is like dancing about architecture."

Frank Zappa

Thank you!

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