

 **BOOK REVIEW*****The Psychology of Music***

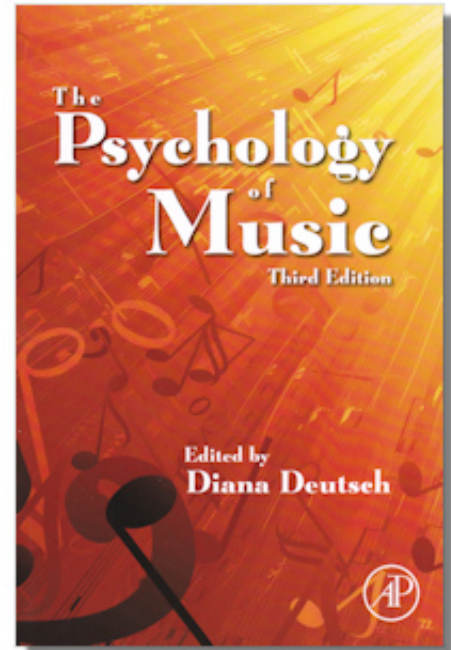
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Academic Press, Third Edition, 2013, pp xvii + 765
ISBN-10: 012381460X
ISBN-13: 978-0123814609

The psychology of music was first explored in detail in modern times in a book of that name by Carl E. Seashore... *Psychology Of Music* was published in 1919. Dover's paperback edition of almost 450 pages (ISBN-10: 0486218511; ISBN-13: 978-0486218519) is still in print from half a century later (1967) and remains a good starting point for those wishing to understand the relationship between our minds and music, chiefly as a series of physical processes.

From the last quarter of the twentieth century onwards much research and many theories have changed the models we have of the mind when listening to or playing music. Changes in music itself, of course, have dictated that the nature of human interaction with it has grown. Unsurprisingly, books covering the subject have proliferated too. These range from examinations of how memory affects our experience of music through various forms of mental disabilities, therapies and deviations from "standard" auditory reception, to attempts to explain music appreciation psychologically. Donald Hodges' and David Conrad Sebal'd's *Music in the Human Experience: An Introduction to Music Psychology* (ISBN-10: 0415881862; ISBN-13: 978-0415881869) makes a good introduction to the subject; while Aniruddh Patel's *Music, Language, and the Brain* (ISBN-10: 0199755302; ISBN-13: 978-0199755301) is a good (and now classic/reference) overview. Oliver Sacks' *Musophilia: Tales of Music and the Brain* (ISBN-10: 1400033535; ISBN-13: 978-1400033539) examines specific areas from a clinical perspective. Daniel J. Levitin's *This Is Your Brain on Music* (ISBN-10: 0452288525; ISBN-13: 978-045228852) is an essential study by one of the world's leading experts. William Forde Thompson's *Music, Thought, and Feeling: Understanding the Psychology of Music* (ISBN-10: 0195377079; ISBN-13: 978-0195377071) is an equally good all-round survey. Also of general interest are Philip Ball's *The Music Instinct: How Music Works and Why We Can't Do Without It* (ISBN-10: 0199896429; ISBN-13: 978-0199896424) and John Sloboda's *The Musical Mind: The Cognitive Psychology of Music* (ISBN-10: 0198521286; ISBN-13: 978-0198521280). David Huron *Sweet Anticipation: Music and the Psychology of Expectation* (ISBN-10: 0262582783; ISBN-13: 978-0262582780) deals specifically with music and expectation.

Now here's an authoritative, wide-ranging and well-produced book from Academic Press (an imprint of Elsevier) which appropriately and skillfully, comprehensively and accessibly deals with the bulk of the topics and issues addressed by specialists in the field. It takes the work of the above-mentioned authors fully into account and acknowledges their work – as all (such) surveys and compendia should. Indeed, Patel, Forde Thompson and Sloboda have chapters in *The Psychology of Music*. It's edited by Diana Deutsch at the Department of Psychology in the University of California San Diego La Jolla. Deutsch also contributes three of the 17 articles in the book. There is a total of a dozen and a half or so other contributors.

Originally published in 1982, *The Psychology of Music* was updated in 1999. But the fact that the field has generated so much research and advances is evidenced by the appearance of yet a third, fully revised, edition this year. Most chapters are between 30 and twice as many pages long, begin with an introduction to the area, set the scene and then deal in well-elaborated subsections examining in depth the half dozen or so main issues pertinent to the subject matter. This is a successful formula: given the scope, breadth and depth of prior work,



understanding the context is vital. Most chapters then contain a well-constructed conclusion or set of implications for future work as well as a commendably exhaustive area-specific bibliography, which includes online and journal material etc as well as books.

After a useful preface by Deutsch herself which also sets the scene, three main areas of work can be discerned. Perception: Andrew Oxenham covers tone – but also leverages that particular aspect of music to survey the wider areas of perception that are covered throughout the rest of the book. Stephen McAdams looks at timbre, of particular interest in the light of the importance which new music attaches to texture and texture. Then Johan Sundberg answers a number of central questions about singing. In a chapter exemplary for its clarity and typical of the way in which *The Psychology of Music* handles its subject matter more generally, he advances explanations for some of those aspects of vocal music which we tend to take for granted; yet realize we really should know the answers to once brought to our attention. How can a single voice make itself heard above a whole orchestra? How do our perceptions of vocal, as opposed to spoken, music work? How can the (singing) voice be so expressive? Again, (recent) research and thinking are mentioned, referenced and assessed. Again, clarity and unambiguous yet undiluted argument is used, is well-crafted and is highly successful in informing us of the issues and of the relevant range of plausible conclusions.

How we know about pitch is further examined by William Forde Thompson in terms of intervals and scales; are some intervals easier to recognize than others, for instance? How do we account for different tuning systems? Once more, this chapter illustrates the book's blend. It presents and assesses (historical) background, surveys current thinking and advances (new) specific findings by the current author(s)... and ideal mixture. Absolute pitch (caught or taught?) and our processing of pitch combinations (how do we use them to organize phrasing coherently? What role does short-term memory play?) are explored by Deutsch, who also has a fascinating chapter on how we relate to grouping in music: (how) do we listen – horizontally or vertically, or both? This chapter is a splendid instance of the multi-disciplinary approach taken by the majority of authors in the book where appropriate. Here physiology and acoustics are pressed into service just as readily as perception and processing. Rhythm, its construction and interpretation, is dealt with by Henkjan Honing in an equally competent and highly informative survey of an area that has received a great deal of attention since the time of the second edition of *The Psychology of Music*.

Cognition, of course, receives significant attention: in an actually quite wide-ranging chapter Glenn Schellenberg and Michael Weiss look at other abilities than those specific to music: speech, training, intelligence; and reaction to background music. Isabelle Peretz looks at biological foundations as well. Yet she takes the opposing view to that of Schellenberg and Weiss; she suggests that music works differently from language. Note that *The Psychology of Music's* purpose is not to advance the claims of any one school of thought or trend. Rather, it's to assess even-handedly the current state of thinking. An admirable aim and one well met: the book's perhaps bland-sounding title really belies an immensely useful catholicism. Catherine Wan with Gottfried Schlaug look at brain "plasticity" as affected by learning; making us wonder, perhaps, how music can ever function as it does given the complexity of processes involved, they allude to work in their own laboratory at the Bess Israel Deaconess Medical Center (Boston); then they cover clinical and pathological material that also illuminates more general cases. Patrik Juslin and John Sloboda examine music and emotion in a fascinating chapter that covers ground as old as music itself; their overview, conclusions and theories suggest that there are really two types of emotional response to music: innate and induced.

Sociologically, the cross cultural setting is addressed by Aniruddh Patel and Steven Demorest in a chapter on comparative cognition that even extends to what is known and coming to be studied in species other than the human. Then computational models of music cognition are examined by David Temperley in a contribution which could be seen as a microcosm of the entire book in that it addresses from a quite different perspective (one drawing on and describing a more apparently mechanical scheme) most of the issues covered elsewhere. Laurel Trainor and Erin Hannon look at our relationship with music as it develops throughout life: this is actually a wider-ranging piece than it may appear... considerations of innate as opposed to environmental influence, universal and culture-specific aspects of musical processing; and – again – the relationship between music and language feature. Caroline Palmer examines movement and coordination in performance: How do players transform symbols into motor acts? In her special emphasis on ensemble playing, Palmer also explores the fascinating question, How do performers work in such a way that their playing conforms with those of their colleagues properly?

Finally, Robert Gjerdingen has a superb summative chapter surveying the past, present and future work of psychologists across the field. This makes a nice close. Gjerdingen fails to draw conclusions which cannot be reasonably drawn; but suggests those directions and answers which can be taken and given. This chapter also sums up current thinking in an analogous way to that in which Oxenham's initial overview set the scene.

So the attributes of *The Psychology of Music* are thoroughness, authority and clarity. That one volume can so adeptly select, draw on, arrange, assess, amplify its material and invite the reader to draw meaningful and reliable conclusions relevant to his/her love of music is a huge achievement. That the book does so with apposite and well-adduced illustrations while at the same time blending technical and specialist accuracy with accessibility is remarkable. Thoroughness and interest, a refreshing amalgam of (the authors') enthusiasm with their collective and individual command of the literature and practices in the field(s) of each make it nothing short of superb as a reference (to be consulted) and a narrative (to be read from cover to cover) by lovers of serious music of all types.

The Psychology of Music, then, is a substantial and important book. Physically, it's well laid out, uses an attractive design and is easy to use, refer back and forth in and find material from. The general index stretches to 18 pages; the author index to twice as many. Diagrams, charts, tables, graphs and musical examples abound. These are invariably clean, uncluttered and add immeasurably to the ground which the book covers in their substance and presentation. There's a companion website, which is under active development and expansion: it currently contains carefully-described .wav and .mp3 sound samples to illustrate material in chapters 1, 2, 6, 7, 9 and 16. As said, each chapter contains a minimally-annotated list of (published and online) resources. A quick glance at these sections of the book reveals that the target audience is chiefly researchers and professionals. At the same time, though, sufficiently well-honed and chosen are the contributions, and skillfully-written the text, that the general reader is sure to benefit. The psychology of music is an important area for music lovers and listeners alike (not to mention performers). Here is perhaps the most authoritative and comprehensive single volume in the field. It's relatively expensive; though at almost 750 pages, not proportionately so much so as many comparable academic textbooks. But indispensable and likely to remain one of the few single best sources on the subject for some time.

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