



Ole Kühl

Musical Semantics

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Music offers a new insight into human cognition. The musical play with sounds in time, in which we share feelings, gestures and narratives, has fascinated people from all times and cultures.

The author studies this semiotic behavior in the light of research from a number of sources. Being an analytical study, the volume combines evidence from neurobiology, developmental psychology and cognitive science. It aims to bridge the gap between music as an empirical object in the world and music as lived experience. This is the semantic aspect of music: how can something like an auditory stream of structured sound evoke such a strong reaction in the listener?

The book is in two parts. In the first part, the biological foundations of music and their cognitive manifestations are considered in order to establish a groundwork for speaking of music in generic, cross-cultural terms. The second part develops the semantic aspect of music as an embodied, emotively grounded and cognitively structured expression of human experience.

Contents: Some preliminary considerations regarding a musical semantics – An ontogenetic perspective on musical cognition – A view from cognitive semantics – Neuromusicology and the musical mind – Emotion and music – The construction of musical meaning – Some musical elements and their cognitive responses – The embodiment of musical form – Signification in music.

The Author: Ole Kühl (b. 1950) has spent most of his life working as a musician-cum-composer with improvised music like jazz, fusion and world music. Recently, he turned to the academic field, where he has specialized in a semiotic approach to musicology.

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