

Preliminary Task 1: Preconceptions about Musical Meaning

Before the course begins, you are asked to think about the following questions. These will be discussed in the first session.

Which of the following statements do you agree with?

1. Without the support of other sign systems, such as words or images, music can:
 - express emotion
 - tell stories
 - depict character and show a character developing over time (as in a novel)
 - depict character but only in a caricatural way (i.e. in a one-dimensional unchanging way)
 - make ideological or political comments
 - depict abstract ideas or states

If you answered positively to any of the above, how do you think it does this? What are the mechanisms involved?

2. Musical meaning is:
 - purely subjective (i.e. in the mind of each listener)
 - culturally constructed (and so accessible to all members of that culture)
 - universal (accessible to all humans)

Music does not signify in the same way that verbal language does.