

Music And Emotion

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How can one explain that the same piece of music evokes different emotions in different listeners?

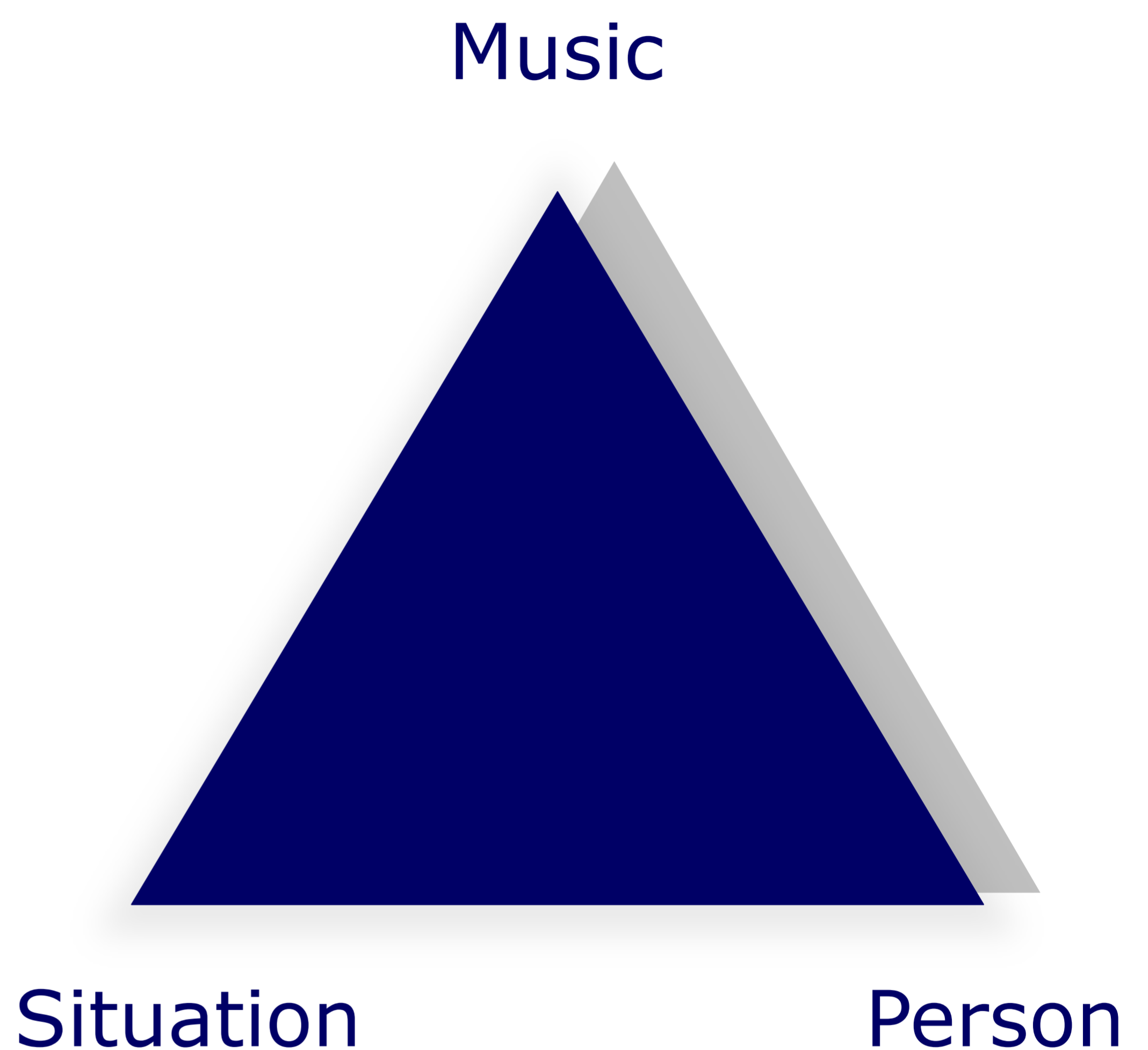
The given graphic shows the interplay between the music, the person who listens to the music, and the situation the person is in while listening. Since these factors are constantly changing, the same piece of music can evoke different emotions in different listeners.

The underlying thought of this theory is that not only specific musical structures or figures are leading to an specific emotional reaction. Important are also the circumstances the experience of listening is made in. It is even possible that a song makes the listener happy on one day and the same person melancholic on another.

To shortly introduce the three factors music, person, and situation, it is important to have in mind that even though this graphic seems to be pretty simple and logic, it is fairly impossible to examine the influences affecting the experience of listening, and in what kind of way and extent they do. The factor of music means what kind of music one hears, be that classical music, techno, rock, pop, or something else, and in which conditions the music is heard. The person who listens to the music has gained memories and experiences throughout their life. These experiences and memories might be directly connected to a specific song or kind of music. But they can also be experiences and memories in general that, for example, form somebody to a rather open minded or conservative person and listener. Other parameters can be age, physical and psychological condition, knowledge about music, and more.

The third factor is the situation the person is in while listening to music. This can be physically defined. Is the person at home, at university, or in a club while listening? Is it warm or cold? Are they surrounded by people they like or not? But it can also be a political or emotional situation, like a demonstration or a funeral.

Obviously, the three factors can not be clearly separated. As said in the beginning, it is an interplay between music, person, and situation which leads to an emotional reaction in the listener. As soon as one of these factors changes, even if it is just a small alteration, the emotion evoked in the listener can be different.



Please create some sentences with the variables below. Do not hesitate to also combine person, music, and situation that do not really seem to fit.

X = Person: child, party-tourist, old lady

Y = Music: House-Music, Sesame Street theme music, Beethoven's „Mondscheinsonate“

Z = Situation: in the waiting room at the dentist, at a kids birthday party, at a techno festival, while having their first kiss

X listens to Y Z.

What do you think? What emotion is generated? How does it change by altering the person, music, or situation?