

A Model Of Music And Empathy



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Empathy (as defined by the OED):

"a. *Psychol. and Aesthetics.* The quality or power of projecting one's personality into or mentally identifying oneself with an object of contemplation, and so fully understanding or appreciating it.
b. *orig. Psychol.* The ability to understand and appreciate another person's feelings, experience, etc."

The model inspired from Eric Clarke's et. al. „*Music, empathy an cultural understanding*" (2015) discusses how a listener engages with a musical event and shows an empathic reaction.

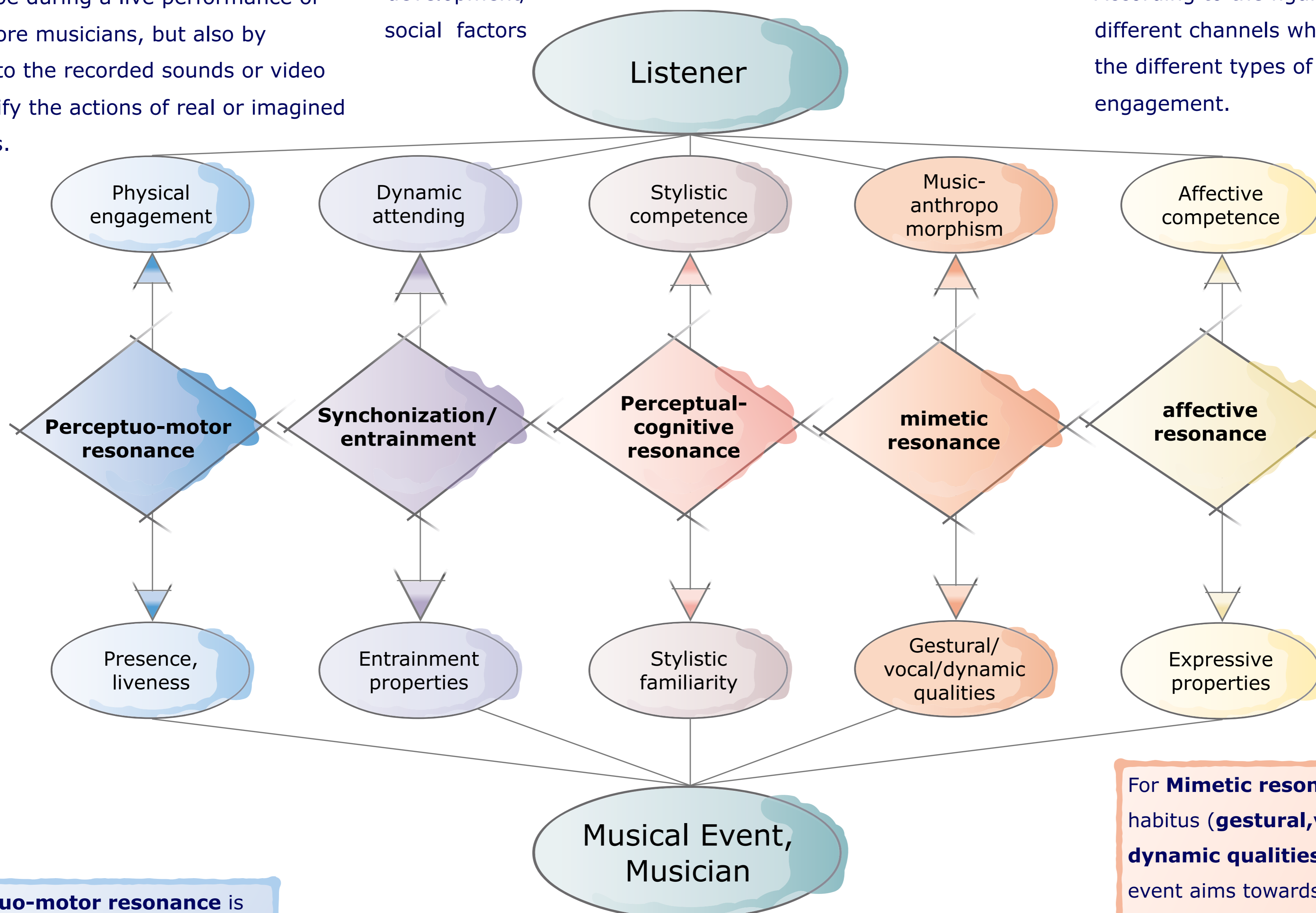
This can be during a live performance of one or more musicians, but also by listening to the recorded sounds or video that specify the actions of real or imagined musicians.

Everything the figure contains, is formed by a social and cultural context, as well as dynamic processes. The listener is affected especially by the following:

- susceptibility to contagion
- empathic disposition
- development/ social factors

Of course, the musical event and the musicians are connected by cultural contexts as well, which include the practical context, the cultural construct, the social context and the cultural style of music itself.

According to the figure, there are five different channels which represent the different types of empathic engagement.



Perceptuo-motor resonance is strongly connected to the **liveness** of the music, because it is arising out of **physical engagement** (Listener) with the musical event. This includes dancing, moving, singing along or even passive attentiveness. As a consequence, a variety of neurohormones can be released affecting social bonding and empathy. In addition, this can lead to a feed-forward effect, stepping up the resonance.

Synchronization or entrainment is also a result out of the listener engaging in the process of **dynamic attending**. The engagement between listener and a musical event is formed by an **entraining** affordance. This connection is rhythmically specified. Again neurohormones can be released.

Perceptual-cognitive resonance arises from the **stylistic competence** of the listener, in relation to the stylistic **familiarity** or novelty of the musical material. Here, it is important to point out again, how different the resonances are according to the cultural context.

For **Mimetic resonance**, the habitus (**gestural, vocal or dynamic qualities**) of the musical event aims towards an **anthropomorphic** or animated way of hearing.

The listener's sensitivity or **affective competence** arises out of an **affective resonance**, which depends on the **expressive states** of the musical event. This point is influenced by the listener's experiences and preferences for music. In this case, neurohormones can also be released, which will intensify the resonances.

The purpose of the model is to give some order and focus to the diversity of factors and associated conceptual frameworks, which are components of the relationship between music, empathy and culture.

But it has to be noted, that there are some risks in presenting a "boxes and arrows" account of a phenomena that complex, because in this case, it leads to a rather stark subject-object,

person-environment, or listener-music dualism, that dominates the structure of the diagram.

Another shortcoming is the very solitary perspective the model seems to imply. In order to present the potentially powerful interactions or additionally emergent factors like contagion between individuals, inter-personal mimicry et al., more than just one individual has to be taken into account.