Metaphor in Musical Discourse –
The Conceptualization of Music in Academic and News Texts

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Like time, the concept of music is almost exclusively referred to in terms of metaphor. Musical pitches are understood as objects organized in space. A change in pitch height is perceived as motion. These very basic mappings give rise to large-scale compound metaphors like MUSIC IS ARCHITECTURE and MUSIC IS A LIVING ORGANISM (cf. Zbikowski 1998). According to Conceptual Metaphor Theory, linguistic output reflects cognitive mappings which suggests that we do not only talk about music in terms of time and space but we actually perceive and think of it in spatio-temporal terms.

The study focuses on the dual nature of musical motion. Like many abstract concepts, music is conceptualized as either a moving entity or a location through which we can move. It will be analyzed whether this duality is arbitrary or context-dependent. Spitzer (2004) claims that experts in the field of music tend to conceive of music as a static location or landscape whereas laymen tend to depict music as a moving entity.

For the analysis, a corpus was created consisting of texts taken from British and American peer-reviewed music online journals. These are taken to represent the musical expert's perspective. A random sample was retrieved and coded for metaphor applying the MIPVU procedure (cf. Steen et al. 2010). This material will now be contrasted with a second sample retrieved from British and American broadsheet music reviews which are to represent the laymen's perspective. The comparison shall investigate whether different registers (academic and news) attract different conceptualizations especially with reference to the motion dual. In the paper, the notion of music will be restricted to the "serious" music of the Western tradition.

The analysis is expected to reveal that language on music is highly metaphorical. Furthermore, the status of already identified conceptual mappings for the concept of music (cf. Zbikowski 1998, Johnson and Larson 2003) will be tested empirically. If metaphor in musical discourse proves to be highly pervasive, the question arises how metaphorical these metaphors really are. If there is hardly any way of referring to music other than metaphorically, expressions relating to musical items seem to have almost literal status or are "music-literal" (cf. Guck 1991). In the light of these issues, metaphor as a gradable phenomenon and its relation to metonymy shall be discussed.

Keywords: conceputal metaphor, music, metonymy, duality, gradability

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