

Into Composer's Mind: Understanding the Process of Translating Emotions into Music

Authors : Sanam Preet Singh

Abstract : Music in comparison to any other art form is more reactive and alive. It has the capacity to directly interact with the listener's mind and generate an emotional response. All the major research conducted in the area majorly relied on the listener's perspective to draw an understanding of music and its effects. There is a very small number of studies which focused on the source from which music originates, the music composers. This study aims to understand the process of how music composers understand and perceive emotions and how they translate them into music, in simpler terms how music composers encode their compositions to express determining emotions. One-to-one in-depth semi structured interviews were conducted, with 8 individuals both male and female, who were professional to intermediate-level music composers and Thematic analysis was conducted to derive the themes. The analysis showed that there is no single process on which music composers rely, rather there are combinations of multiple micro processes, which constitute the understanding and translation of emotions into music. In terms of perception of emotions, the role of processes such as Rumination, mood influence and escapism was discovered in the analysis. Unique themes about the understanding of their top down and bottom up perceptions were also discovered. Further analysis also revealed the role of imagination and emotional trigger explaining how music composers make sense of emotions. The translation process of emotions revealed the role of articulation and instrumentalization, in encoding or translating emotions to a composition. Further, applications of the trial and error method, nature influences and flow in the translation process are also discussed. In the end themes such as parallels between musical patterns and emotions, comfort zones and relatability also emerged during the analysis.

Keywords : comfort zones, escapism, flow, rumination

Conference Title : ICMP 2023 : International Conference on Music Psychology

Conference Location : New York, United States

Conference Dates : May 15-16, 2023