

RECOGNITION OF COMPOSER'S STYLE FROM MUSICAL FRAGMENTS

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A great number of studies suggested that in order to experience the form of musical sequences, a listener must process a mental representation which is based on points of reference (salient cues), that are picked up during the processing. The cues picked up are meaningful and distinctive features extracted from the music. Then they became the starting points in order to identify, compare and evaluate new information with respect to previously acquired knowledge. The present study is aimed at measuring the ability of naïve listeners (youths and adults) in abstracting salient features related to music style (the so called stylistic cues). Eighty musical themes (10 and 12 seconds long) were selected from the Sonata repertoire for piano solo by Mozart, Beethoven, Clementi and Schubert. Four series of forty sequences (for instance twenty from one composer and twenty from another

one) were presented to 120 subjects (young and adults, males and females) in a random order. The subjects were invited to classify the sequences as belonging to different categories (X and Y) or style families, without any information about the author's name or the piece's composition style, and to discriminate and evaluate the relationship which may exist between them. Three tasks were planned for the experiment: the first one considered the familiarization with the material, the second one the classification of the sequences and the last one the assessment of the "quality of representation" on a scale from 1 to 10. The results confirm the hypothesis: naïve listeners classify musical style differentiations and discriminate the four categories on the basis of cognitive patterns corresponding to relevant musical parameters.