



Music impressions

"Music is essentially a play upon feeling with feeling" (Seashore 1938)¹

There is probably no other area in the media which attracts as much attention for young people as music. Particularly secondary school students will hardly be seen without some form of mobile music player and they spend a lot of time expanding their music collection. Music appears in every media form such as internet, radio, television and film but also as background in places such as shopping centres or airports.

Music has its established place in nearly all school curricula and issues such as the history of music, the theory of music and different music genres such as classical music, jazz, pop, rock and dance are taught. It is important however to keep in mind that music is not just a pure and isolated form of entertainment, but can serve a wide range of different functions, including influencing decisions and supporting attitudes. It can become linked with certain images and ideas of lifestyle which are especially attractive for young people.

Music and its functions

Where can we begin exploring the depth of the world of music? A first point of departure could be to consider its different functions. The media awareness network gives us first ideas about the functions of music:²

- as personal expression
- as communication
- to uplift human spirit
- for religious purposes
- for group identity
- as a way to pass on traditions
- to sell a product
- to enhance film
- to increase nationalism
- as propaganda
- for dance
- as a form of protest
- as an agent of social change
- to tell a story

How can we become more aware of the manipulative possibilities of music? We suggest beginning with the two introductory exercises which form part of our theme. These are intended to help students explore ways of how music influences them. We have further looked at how meanings are created by the combination of sound and image.

¹ Seashore, Carl E.: Psychology of Music. New York: Dover Publications, 1967 (1938)

² http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/resources/educational/lessons/secondary/music/function_of_music.cfm

