Searching for the right feelings:
Emotional metadata in music

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About me: music, music librarianship, cataloguing, and technology

Ruth Negri Collection

The University of North Texas library is fortunate to have received a generous donation of over 200 orchestral and opera harp parts from Ruth Negri Armato, retired harpist of the New York Philharmonic. Please explore this collection online (http://www.library.unt.edu/collections/music/ruth-negri).

Biography

Ruth Negri was born in San Diego and began piano lessons at age four and a half. At age eleven when she was introduced to the harp... “the most beautiful sound I ever heard” influenced her study of the harp. In addition to harp lessons, she studied double bass because of the scarcity of orchestral harp parts. At age sixteen, Ms. Negri was harp soloist with the Los Angeles NBC Orchestra as a finalist in the Hollywood Bowl Auditions of the Air.

Ruth was a scholarship pupil of Marcel Grandjany at the Juilliard School of Music and graduated with highest honors as a winner of the prestigious Damrosch Scholarship. While still a student at Juilliard she performed with the New York City Opera, RCA and CBS Orchestras with Fritz Reiner, Leopold Stokowski, Wilfred Pelletier, Pierre Monteux, Donald Voorhees, and Andre Kostelanetz before beginning a nine year engagement as principal harp of the New York City Ballet Co. in 1950.
How do people look for music online?

• Name of the artist?
• Name of the song?
• Name of the album?
• These are all bibliographic-based searches… but what if you want to look for something that puts you in a good mood?
YouTube suggestions – based on similarity, past user history…?
Types of information; ways of finding

• Information professionals tend to think of online “information” as a textual document residing in a database that meets a user’s “need” or “query” based on bibliographic descriptions that cataloguers provide.

• Information comes in many forms
  – bodily, such as pain (Yates, 2015)
  – photographs, videos, music (Rasmussen Neal, 2012)
  – “matter and energy” (Bates, 2006)

• “Looking at us as a species that exists physically, biologically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually, it is not unreasonable to guess that we absorb perhaps 80 percent of all our knowledge through simply being aware, being conscious and sentient in our social context and physical environment” (Bates, 2003)
The Glass Engine started it all...

Source: www.philipglass.com/glassengine
Some of my other prior research into emotional information in music

• [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l-dYNttdgl0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l-dYNttdgl0) v. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d8ekz_CSBVg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d8ekz_CSBVg)

• Difficult to agree on emotion in music; we respond to music individually, but some musical facets are consistent, like slow songs in a minor key sounding ‘sad’ or heavy metal sounding ‘angry’

• Emotional tags in music

• Online music recommender systems do not cross genres (but probably should)

The contest...

Watch this video. How does it make you feel? What might the producer have been trying to convey?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lQCsvlrgcn4
Theoretical framework

- “Basic emotions” from fields such as cognition, psychology, music therapy (Ekman, 1992)
- Emotional Information Retrieval (EmIR)
- Domains of fandom and aca-fandom (Stein & Busse, 2009; Bennett, 2014)
- Online participatory culture, such as writing fan fiction or making cover versions of videos for loved songs (Jenkins, 2013)
- U2 academic studies (U2conference.com)
- Intertextuality as a practice in online participatory culture among fans (Vernallis, 2013)
Methods and sample

• Discourse analysis, a method for qualitatively analysing language and other forms of communication (Budd & Raber, 1996; Iedema, 2003); applied to intertextuality

• To analyse the emotional information conveyed in 150 YouTube cover videos of U2’s “Song for Someone” by:
  – The producers (people who made the videos)
  – The consumers (people who watched the videos)

• Through the videos themselves, producers’ descriptions, consumers’ comments and likes/dislikes on the videos
Quantitative overview of the videos

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Types of videos created by producers

- Cover versions
- Original versions of the song with new visual content
- Tutorials on how to play the song
- Videos showed deep, personal involvement with the song and the band
Cover versions: Emotions through facial expression
Cover versions: Surroundings

Published on 27 Mar 2015
Family sing-a-long! Candace, Lindsay and Jimmy Balfour singing little Cordelia to sleep...
Published on 28 Mar 2015
Just me and my guitar in my own room singing a song I love. Enjoy!
Cover versions: Surroundings; fun with family; humour
Cover versions: Surroundings

#SongForSomeone
Cover version: Personal experience; the producer’s wedding and kid photos

Dedicated to
My wife: Ruta Riekstina
&
My Son: Gaetano E. Pavano

Song for someone
Original version: photographs of friends having fun
Original version:
Video out a plane window

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I made this video while flying to Bruxelles in October, 2014, just half an hour after sunrise. I then had to find the best song to go with this perfect moment, so thanks U2 for THE song! Love the outcome!
Tutorials: Guitar

Song for someone Cover U2 Acoustic guitar tutorial chords
Tutorials: Karaoke Piano
Intertextuality: *Achtung Baby* poster
Intertextuality in cover version: “Song for Someone” lyrics and title on wall; “Stuck in a Moment” music
Intertextuality: *Rattle and Hum*; looking like Bono and The Edge
Producers’ comments and descriptions

• “So this song is a memory that lasts, an idea that comes from another place that cannot be explained simply as things that happen can be, because there is no reason to forget what had still not enough [sic].”

• “was awaken [sic] by the last three lines […] and I fell in love […] It is amazing how one part of a song can call out to you and make you want to listen to it over and over again”
Responses from consumers: more likes than dislikes; almost all positive

• Quality of the cover version
  – “Excellent performance […] even makes me appreciate U2’s version considerably greater, as your acoustic guitar and incredibly sincere raw, emotionally gifted vocal capabilities emphasize the song with pure soul & heart”
  – “Starts slow, but you get really good (passionate.)”
  – “Really, really amazing. You give me chills, everytime.”

• Emotional impact of the song
  – “Sometimes things happen in your life and you have no control, and a song just brings you to tears and makes things ok.”
  – “Beautiful song. Intense meaning.”
  – “Omg this song makes me melt every time I hear it.”
  – “Una canzone piena di emozioni” (Italian for “a song full of emotions”)
Discussion: expression of emotion

- Producers: tenderness, facial expressions, surroundings, musical elements, textual descriptions, U2 intertextuality
- Consumers: likes, positive comments
- Conversations between producers and consumers indicated social constructionism of emotion among fans
- But also individual reactions to the song
Discussion: U2 as authoritative version, and FRBR relationships

Songs of innocence /
Illustrated by Jacynth Parsons; with a prefatory letter by W.B. Yeats.

Main Creator: Blake, William, 1757-1827.
Contributors: Parsons, Jacynth.
Yeats, W. B. (William Butler), 1865-1939.
Format: BOOK
Language: English
Published / Created: London, Boston : The Medici Society, [1927]

#SongForSomeone#USA
• We need to design systems for description that accommodate more than just keywords/bibliographic records
• No full text inherent in music or other non-textual document: indexing problem
• Account for not only emotion, but also socially constructed and individually experienced emotional responses to items
• Ultimate goals: help people find things in meaningful ways and even potentially contribute to well-being as in music therapy (Hanser, 2010)
• How can this all be encapsulated?
June 2018: U2CON2018, Belfast

• “Lookin’ for a sound that’s gonna drown out the world”: Resolving musical emotional ambiguity in U2’s POPVision

Source: http://u2conference.com/u2-con-2018-program/
References