Essay question: **Examine the ways by which people deploy music reflexively for emotional and identification work, as well as the factors that determine their emotional responses to music. In what ways does music induce emotions in people?**

The idea that music induces[1] emotions has been around for centuries dating at least as far back as ancient Greece and is reflected in Aristotle's phrase that 'music possesses the power of producing an effect on the character of the soul' (Aristotle, The Politics, 1340a). As noted by Juslin and Sloboda (2001:3), it seems that most people experience music often with an accompanying affective response of some sort. Dowling and Harwood (1986:202) argue that 'music arouses strong emotions in people and they want to know why'. However, despite the fact that the main reason behind most people's engagement with music is a kind of emotional experience, emotional responses to music seem to be elusive while the study of emotions and music is fraught with considerable disagreement (Juslin, 2009:131) regarding whether and how music can induce emotions (Kivy, 1990, Meyer, 1956, Davis, 1994).

This paper examines the ways in which people deploy music for emotional regulation and construction of identity in private use in everyday life. It also looks at the factors that determine their emotional responses. The question of how music can induce emotions in people will also be explored from a psychological and cognitive perspective. By addressing these issues, this essay seeks to highlight the fact that the interaction between musical features, contextual factors and listener attributes determine the ways we respond emotionally to music. Particular attention is directed to the listener as 'an aesthetic and reflexive agent' (DeNora, 1999: 45), who through

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[1] Emotion induction: All instances where music evokes an emotion in a listener, regardless of the nature of the process that evoked the emotion (Juslin & Vastfjall, 2008).

his/her reflective musical practices is actively constructing his/her ability to be moved, and thus can be regarded as partner of the construction of music's semiotic force.

To begin with, before discussing the ways in which people deploy music, it is important to make clear what do we mean by using the term "agency". According to DeNora (2000:20), this term refers to 'feeling, perception, cognition, consciousness, identity, energy, perceived situation and scene, embodied conduct, comportment'. Viewed as such, "agency" highlights the ways by which people use music in order to interpret and constitute themselves. What DeNora (2000) suggests is that music's meanings derive from what it has been called human – music interaction. She refers to active listeners who reflexively construct emotional states and social selves as 'reflexive and aesthetic agents'. Looking at from this angle, the subject (listener) – object (music) dichotomies are bypassed since music is not conceived as merely a stimulus. Critical then is the issue that held Larger (1942), by arguing that music 'resonates with some pre existing music subjective or mental state to which it exist in parallel' (DeNora, 2001:172).What is problematic toward such an approach is that music is considered as a cause or a parallel of emotional states. Contrary to such conceptions, within sociology, music is conceived as a material against which "how one feels" may be identified and elaborated.

Examining now the initial question of how people consume music in order to reflexively construct their emotional states and social identities, music seems to be a vehicle through which people can work through mood, by sustaining states of feeling or moving out of unwanted states. Music also is a resource to which people resort to recall past events, to remind them of who they are and were at other points in their lives and to help them compose identities (Denora, 2001:171). The idea that music

seems to be a powerful medium which help people construct their life worlds, influencing their way of thinking and feeling in everyday life, is supported by recent studies based on in – depth interviews and self – reports (DeNora 1999, 2000, Gomart & Hennion, 1999, Sloboda, 2001).

Music's active role as an ordering device at a personal level that can 'create, enhance, sustain and change subjective, cognitive, bodily and self conceptual states' is illuminated in people's responses in the interviews held by DeNora (1999:49). For example, one respondent talks about her choice to consume music as an accompaniment of the domestic work. She claims that music helps her not to think about what she is doing (DeNora, 1999:53). In this case, energy levels and motivation are increased because she shifts her attention to music and away from the uninterested domestic task. Another respondent reveals music's power to move her from one emotional location to the other. As she puts it; 'music "soothes" me. I retreat into music when I can't bear the rest of the world.' (DeNora, 1999:42)

Furthermore, DeNora (1999:57) accurately points out that music, apart from expressing feeling states is also a resource for the identification work of 'knowing how one feels – a building material of subjectivity' –. Seen in this light, people can potentially construct a sense of self through music. The presentation, confirmation or configuration of identity can be achieved through the acknowledgement of the feelings induced by music. In particular, music can carry messages about our personal qualities by producing autobiographical memory, providing a template where we can find or view ourselves (Sloboda, Lamont & Greasley, 2009:435). The idea that the sense of self is locatable in music is supported by one respondent (DeNora, 1999:51) who argues that she prefers to hear music in lower sonorities because they are part of the background. She goes on by stating that this is because in real life she does not

like being in the limelight. By arguing this, she makes a conscious articulation between herself and musical structure. Seen in this light, music is a "mirror" that allows one to see one's self as it provides images of self for self. Interestingly, it is also a "magic mirror" as someone not only can provide self knowledge but also can configure his identity in future action. This view is clearly illustrated in DeNora's claim that 'music is not only a sign of existing states but is a building material of those states' (1999:54).

Hence, the private arena seems to be a space where people resort to for emotional and identification work. It appears that music is employed in human action for a reason, whether it be for self care or self discipline. As DeNora (2001:171) suggests, through these musical practices respondents produce themselves as 'coherent social and socially disciplined beings'. Moreover, it seems that people exhibit awareness, although the levels of consciousness may vary. They seem to want to know how they feel and who they are and in order to achieve this, they use music.

These facts get us back to the concept of "agency" and active listener. In none of these examples music simply acts upon individuals, like a stimulus. Rather, music's affective power comes from the ways listeners interpret and orient to it. Gomart and Hennion (1999:232) compare listeners to drug users who 'meticulously establish conditions' by engaging in active work in order to be moved. Thus, listeners are by no means simply affected by music but are rather active in constructing their ability to be moved. Yet, some critical issues seem to emerge which are related to the fact that people's musical practices are based on conventional musical associations – part of the stock of western music culture. Their agency is influenced and limited at the same time from these contextual factors that are formed throughout time. This concern leads me to the second part of my tripartite enquiry.

It feels necessary then to examine the combination of different factors that create complex interactions that must be taken into consideration when exploring the reasons and the ways by which people listen to music. Scherer and Zentner (2001: 362) have postulated that music induced emotions emerge from the interplay of musical features, listener attributes and contextual factors.

Musical features refer to composed structure, such as tempo, timbre, harmony, pitch, intervals, melody, tonality, rhythm and musical form. These can be perceived by listeners as "possessing" expressed emotions without necessarily producing an emotion to them.[2] Listener's perception of expression is based on conventional musical associations. For example, tones with higher harmonics may suggest potency, anger, activity or fear, while consonant harmony may express happiness or relaxation (Gabrielsson, 2009:143,144). However, it cannot be preordained that these musical features can induce these emotional responses in people (Middleton, 1999) and thus it is difficult to find direct links between musical features and emotions (Juslin, 2009:134). It is worth noting that performance features such as tempo, articulation and loudness can play a significant role to the perception or induction of emotion since different performances of the same piece can express or induce different emotions.

In terms of listener's attributes, Scherer and Zentner (2001:364) argue that these are based on the individual and the sociocultural identity of the listener. Listener's age, gender, personality, musical training, music preferences and transient listener states, such as motivational state, concentration and mood, are some factors that may potentially affect emotional responses to music (Juslin, 2009:135).

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[2] Emotion perception: All instances where a listener perceives or recognizes expressed emotions in music (e.g. a sad expression), without necessarily feeling an emotion (Juslin & Vastfjall, 2008).

Moreover, music can be linked with particular emotions in an individual's memory due to learned associations he/she has made between musical materials and other biographical or situational things. Thus, emotional arousal to music is a highly individualized response as may depend on factors such as previous experience with music, individual differences and cultural influences.

Nevertheless, despite the fact that we tend to think of our emotions as personal, private experiences, our emotional responses to music are colored and determined by contextual factors. As verbal utterances stand in interdependent relation to social contexts, so does music. Gabrielsson (2001:135) divide the factors related to the situation of a musical event into physical factors (location, acoustical conditions, listening to recorded or live music), social factors (listening alone or together with others, the behavior of the performers and the audience) special occasions (vacation) and performance conditions (music well rehearsed or not). The prevalence of music emotion can vary depending on the situation (Juslin, 2001:135). For example some emotions such as happiness and pleasure appear more frequently in social settings, whereas others such as nostalgia, calm and sadness are experienced more frequently in solitary settings. Additionally, emotion episodes occur more frequently in the evening, at home, and during music listening of self chosen music. It could be argued that these findings form part of an enculturation process where people are taught to respond in certain ways (emotional or not) to music in particular settings through society.

The importance of contextual aspects regarding musical emotions is highlighted also by DeNora (2000:40) who states that 'music is a cultural material with semiotic and affective power. Its impact on emotion is not interdependent on the situations in which it is heard. We should consider these complex interdependent

social factors.' This point is illustrated in an example she gives of a respondent who has chosen a quiet room and a rocking chair to sit in while listening to music. According to the respondent, the music she chose had a relaxing effect over her. But what if she was listening the same music doing aerobic exercise? Her affective response wouldn't have been different?

Thus, it appears that music gains its powers to a considerable extent from the contexts of its use, since the surrounding contexts of music not only intrude on our listening experience, but also, in many cases, form and control the purpose, nature and effect of our listening. What follows is that our emotional responses to music are 'a complex outcome of the contribution of a person's reaction to a content and reactions to the social context in which the music appears' (Sloboda & O 'Neill, 2001:425).

Reaching now this point, the question of how does music come to induce emotions could be pointed out as problematic considering that there exist controversial views regarding the underlying question of whether music can really induce emotions. Although we take for graded the emotional powers of music, it has been a matter of some controversy (Kivy, 1990) whether music can induce emotions or not. Whereas "emotivists" support that music can induce emotional responses in listeners, "cognitivists" argue that music merely expresses emotions (Scherer & Zetner, 2001:361). It would seem peculiar to me though if we accept a "cognitivist" view, since strong empirical evidence of self reported feeling has revealed that music can induce emotions. According to Gabrielsson (2002:123 - 47), emotion perception and emotion induction can occur simultaneously. Yet, emotion perception does not lead necessarily to emotion induction (Juslin, 2009:133). It could be then argued that the answer might be somewhere in the middle and that their blurred border is highly

determined by individual and contextual factors. Therefore it would be premature to prejudge the issue.

A theoretical framework presented by Juslin (2009:136,137) comes to reinforce further the point that music can potentially induce emotions, though this could not be preordained. It also comes to support further the view that emotional responses to music derive largely from listener's history and experience and that musical emotions are the outcome of the interaction of neurological factors with environmental inputs. It features six mechanisms by which music can induce emotions.[3]

"Brainstem reflex" refers to the ways in which intrinsic musical characteristics may signal an important event. For example dissonant chords may produce unpleasant feelings. "Evaluative conditioning" is a process whereby the induction of emotion happens through learned associations. For example, certain music may have always been associated with positive events (weddings) and can induce positive emotions through this conditioning. Over time, the contingency of a piece of music with a particular emotion in the past will potentially evoke this feeling when listening to the music, even if we have absence of the particular event. The listener can be unaware of this kind of repeated pairing of the two stimuli. "Emotional contagion" refers to the process whereby the listener internally "mimics" the emotion he perceives by music. For example, an individual may feel sad because he/she listens to "sorrowful" melodies. This mechanism possibly utilizes empathy related pathways since we understand the emotions perceived by others (e.g. performers) through empathy. This

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[3] "Brainstem reflex", "evaluative conditioning", "emotional contagion", "visual imagery", "episodic memory", "musical expectancy" Juslin (2009:136,137).

is based on our "mimicking" the expressive patterns seen by others. This mechanism also explains why we can be moved by a movie.

"Visual imagery" involves conjuring images during music listening. Through the interaction of music and images the emotions emerge. The listener can influence the process to a considerable extent by conjuring up, manipulate or dismiss images at will. "Episodic memory" is a process whereby the induction of emotion occurs because music evokes a personal memory of a specific event in the individual's life. When the memory is evoked so too is the emotion associated with the memory. Finally, "musical expectancy" refers to a situation where emotional arousal occurs when listener's expectations are violated, suspended or confirmed (Meyer, 1956). Meyer (1956) claims that the emotions induced by a stimulus change from person to person, and from time to time within a single individual. 'The difference,' says, 'lies in the relationship between the stimulus and the responding individual' (Meyer, 1956:13). Thus, it seems that these expectations are based on the listener's previous experiences. A musical piece may evoke different expectations at different levels of music and these expectations may also be different for different listeners.

At this point, after examining both the ways by which people deploy music for self care and the different determinants of the listening situation in producing the affective outcome, it could be assumed that music's semiotic and affective force is constructed by people's themselves as 'aesthetic and reflexive agents' and influenced highly by contextual factors, since music is a sociocultural product (DeNora, 1999:48). Concluding, it seems to me that an interdisciplinary approach from sociology and psychology and the contribution of both theory and musical practice can foster a better understanding of the complexity that lies behind musical emotions due to the variety of factors that contribute to their production. A possible further

oriented commend would be to examine further the question of whether and to what extent we are conscious about music's force to us, about the soundtrack we choose to accompany our everyday life in order to construct the way we feel and think. What if the music we choose to listen everyday moves from the background to the foreground? This is a topic that should be explored considering that the therapeutic aspects of music, if consciously be used, could probably change the way we feel, see and project ourselves in future action. Why not to take advantage of music's power to be considered as a "magic mirror"?

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