

INDIRECTNESS AND LEVELS OF OBVIOUSNESS

SUMMARY

Indirectness: Frequently used in combination with “levels of obviousness”, indirectness is an observation of the spectrum of relatedness that music can have to task, scene or situation and the effects this can create - when writing a song for a movie, for example, many songwriters immediately assume they need to incorporate the name of the movie in the song, when in fact, music with little or no semantic relationship at all to the scene, even from a different historical period or culture, can have the desired effect.

The principle here is that there is no substitute for the rote process of auditioning a piece of music or aesthetic against the task at hand - the same idea behind “aesthetic benchmarking” and many of the emotion/tone-based concepts in I.O.. A very indirect, tangential and counterintuitive relationship may be perfect: poignant, smarter, ironic, comic, etc. This applies to music vs. text, in NS it is relevant to subject vs. reification and reification vs. its harmonic language or mental space, music vs. imagery.

Generalization/New Style significance:

NS:

Part of reification process	Direct vs. tangential relation to a concept	Periphery
Metaphoric insistence in NS		

Generalization:

Idea web: full spectrum of “degrees of relatedness” - from direct to extremely elaborate, metaphoric, or even non-sequitur
 Exploring the vastness of association and relatedness
Everything is ultimately related, esp. if “degrees of relatedness” is expanded to its thinnest associations
 + Negative generalization: no... Literality

Task-Based Composing (juxtaposing against task)

The task/purpose/context creates the associated emotion(s) for the music, and syntactic content for lyrics/words

Result 1: a multifaceted work containing many emotions and points of view (general/universal)

Result 2: a narrow/focused work coloring context through one emotion/perspective (particularized)

Or choosing to explore one element of a larger whole (particular from universal)

Reverse engineer appropriateness for a specific event/time/place by observing what you listen to during those times – what relates specifically and what is more about feeling, emotion, effect, a certain lyrical message, a delivery style, the identity of the performer/composer?

Don't mention person/place/thing named in the task, aiming instead for a more intangible relatedness (lyric, music etc.)

Lyrics vs. Music

Generalize (universal represents specific)

Particularize (specific represents universal)

Vaguely relate

Same emotion: emotional content/feeling makes the work appropriate for task of same emotional value, despite content differences
 address another topic that creates same emotion

Counterintuitive: directly contrast task with the treatment

“Bridges” – unifies work of art and situation, what makes a work appropriate for a situation/use

1. Effect/Emotion created (default), spirit of work – used by audience despite of lyrical content

example 1: “Come Live with Me” > loneliness < bus ride at twilight (situation/task)

Reverse engineering: if you were to compose for a bus ride at twilight, rather than talking about travel:

a. Create music that communicates the emotion of that situation,

Then write lyrics unbound by subject

Or, assuming you want lyrics more relevant...

b. Write lyrics that aren't about obvious qualities of a bus ride – think *generally*

(“moving on”, “the road”, or lyrics of the associated emotion: ended love affair, wandering etc.)

Or write about things people might ponder on a bus ride

(Making almost anything fair game, b/c it will be de facto melancholy b/c of the music)

example 2: (rap sampling): music is appropriated b/c its musical traits create an appropriate emotion to new user

“Garden of Peace” by Lonnie Liston Smith > melancholy glistening < “Dead Presidents” by Jay-Z (hustler's life)

emotion can stretch across genre b/c of its universality created by purely musical means

melancholy glistening is appropriate emotion for Jay-Z's task,

communication of the bittersweet glamour of the ‘hustler's lifestyle’, so he uses it to great effect

counterintuition: write lyrics opposite of the emotion you're trying to portray, creating paradox

Dylan's scathing lyrics against happy music in “Positively 4th Street”

vs. pensive lyrics and pensive harmonies in “Masters of War”

2. Lyric Content: dictates what listener should think about/visualize/use the music for, powerful in itself

Lyrics can create usefulness/appropriateness for a certain context *despite* the emotion created by its music:

“Boys of Summer” – pensive summer song (lyrics make it summery, nothing else)

Title/main refrain, taken “out of context” originally referencing something different but takes on a new meaning

tie lyrics to task/context only partially, through a memorable lyric part – “We will Rock you”, or the title, etc.

Lyric Subject: Topic the lyric addresses that creates the emotion along with/despite the music

Find an aspect of a broad subject that justifies the emotion in the music

Example 1: “Ready or Not” by Delfonics seems at first listen inappropriate for subject of love, but works b/c it communicates a specific *aspect* of love, the is reason for the aggressive, high-strung emotion of the music

“Ready or Not” > aggressive < lyrical content (chasing a woman, convincing passionately)

Poetic conversion: take concept/message > “poetic” way to express it (with phrase-rightness)

“title conversion”

A universal statement that encapsulates it phrase title

Examples:

Neighborhood heroes coming back to town = “Boys are Back In Town”

Pleading for a woman to stay in bed = “Lay, Lady Lay”

Lesbian experimentation = “I Kissed a Girl (And I Liked It)”

Loneliness = “The Shadow of Your Smile”

3. Style/Genre: symbolism of a *style* - associated with a certain style despite purpose/content – “the voice of the work”

Lyric, musical, dramatic, point of view

Style/genre colors the point of view of the work (listener carries meanings of genre/style)

Use style for a particular effect for the purpose

Use a genre intuitive to the situation you’re composing for (important, but still subordinate to effect/emotion)

a. Musical style (musical genre, harmonic/melodic/rhythmic vocabulary, form presented, ensemble etc.)

b. Vernacular, choice of point of view of a character (objectivity), lyrical style (poetic/writing style)

c. Dramatic style (classical Greek, southern gothic, “modern”)

Counterintuition: use a style unbecoming to the task/context, working within a paradox

4. Messenger Symbolism: the life and symbolism of performer/composer (the “voice” behind the work)

how the source of the work, and the context when it was made influences its relevance in a situation/place/time

the life of performer (the views, stories, identity of performer) (Bach = religiosity, rigor)

the place the work was created

5. Imagery hinting at a situation/person/place/thing not known or fully known/revealed

Event not known (lyrics are obviously talking about *something* that happened, but what exactly?)

Subject of lyrics unknown (“you”, he/she, it, etc.) fictional character

Talking about a past or future event scenario (past/future tense)

Vague imagery

Overheard dialogue relayed w/o intermediary

Specific names/places/things mentioned with seeming significance (probably known to the lyricist but not to listener)

Waxing philosophical/general

Parables, quotes etc.

Referring to a different event/person (etc.) in each section, but relating to same environment (ambiguous b/c not focused)

Mixed tenses (past, present, future)

LEVELS OF OBVIOUSNESS

SUMMARY

When conceptualizing a work, the amount of ideas familiar to human experience can disqualify the ‘intuitive’ solution from use, as it would be obvious to most of the audience. Because of this, the artist must retreat from the first layers into less intuitive, more metaphorical levels. Once the next level is explored, they must retreat even deeper. In humor, for example, the first layer is a joke anyone could make, the second is more original or unforeseen, later layers question the entire premise/setup or even approach non-sequitur. In plot: more ambiguity, more twists, influence from other genres, supersession and turning points.

More universally, it shows a level of subtlety, complexity and originality of thought.

The origin of the “artistic strategies investigation” was the lure of the depth of visual art conceptual thought when compared to music.

Generalization/New Style significance:

NS:

Part of reification process	Direct vs. tangential relation to a concept	Periphery
Metaphoric insistence in NS		
Incorporated into idea process, along with artist strategies, argument angles, idea development, idea web, indirectness etc - to come up with as many “answers”/approaches to philosophical domains		

Generalization:

Idea Web: full spectrum of “degrees of relatedness” - from direct to extremely elaborate, metaphorical, or even non-sequitur exploring the vastness of association and relatedness

Everything is ultimately related, esp. if “degrees of relatedness” is expanded to its thinnest associations

+ Negative generalization: no... Literality

Similar to indirectness, also dealing with thought, relation, extremity, and full commitment.

Levels of concept, conclusion, humor, intuition/counterintuition, plot machinations etc.

Because of amount of archetypal ideas and human experience, the intuitive is often obvious to most people.

Because of this, the artist must retreat away from the first layer into less intuitive, more metaphorical levels. Once the next level is explored, they must retreat even deeper: protecting yourself from concepts “anyone could come up with”

More universally, it shows a level of subtlety, complexity and *originality* of thought

Humor:

1st layer: a joke anyone could make

2nd layer: less obvious and more original

Later layers *question entire premise*

Plot: more ambiguity, more twists, influence from other genres

extend to relate to pop genres - what “layer” is the obviousness? (Cold Thing)

Visual artists undertake concepts that are much less literal than composers - concept art, for instance

See idea web, general form: translate the semantic meaning in different ways (the ways meaning can be “harvested”/represented)

The “metaphoric relation” principle:

A historical principle of art: one can only equal (or dialogue with) an iconic work of the past (the inspiration) by making a new work that uses *metaphoric relation* (an indirect relationship) to it - because pure imitation of the work *or its idiom* results in a redundant work. One must extract the objective function/property from the old inspiration (e.g. Hammerklavier fugue = complexity, audacity) = Invent new way to achieve an objective value (polyphony, complexity etc.)

EXAMPLES:

The “Deadly Sins” as concept

Example 1: **Same as origin:** changing no elements considerably - *only enough to be recognized as a new work*

An oratorio or program symphony lamenting each sin and representing its result

Example 2: **Unique yet linear:** unique aspect to predictable valences

Orff: *Carmina Burana*: a turning wheel determines fortune (and nature of sections), pre-existing text (poems from the 1800s)

Example 3: **Conceptual irony/humor:** take the expected concept and switch certain elements (the concept as quirk)

Brecht’s Seven Deadly Sins

Ambivalent sinner with split personality, envying those who engage in the sin the character has been *deprived of*

Cynical characters criticize her “purified” versions of the deadly sins because they’re good

Her "pride" consists in not wanting to work in a strip club

Her "lust" is wanting to marry the one she loves rather than marrying for money

Her "anger" is righteous anger against ill-treatment of a fellow worker.

Not doing the deadly sin = misfortune (usually financially) - examining the plights of the righteous

Also: metaphoric division of scenes (new situation in new city each time)

Tribute to Martin Luther King:

Example: “O King” - Berio, using his own techniques, divides Martin Luther King into phonemes

Finally spoken in full at the end

“Bizarre mass fraught with potential for violence” - honestly reflective of the violence that surrounded the movement?