

DAVID HURON, PHD WHAT SIGNALING THEORY CONTRIBUTES TO OUR UNDERSTANDING MUSICAL AFFECT

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In accounting for music-evoked emotion, the extant research literature has tended to rely on four sources: acoustic reflexes (such as orienting and startle responses), learned associations (such as topic theory), expectation-related phenomena (notably processing fluency), and conjectured mirror-neuron processes. This presentation proposes that ethology provides an overlooked fifth source in the form of signals and indices. Signaling theory offers plausible accounts for a number of sound-related affects, including alarm, affiliation, auditory cuteness, aggression, lamentation and grief. Ethological principles help to clarify how and why particular affects tend to arise. Moreover, signaling theory provides a more disciplined way of thinking about emotion and motivation.

David Huron is Arts and Humanities Distinguished Professor at The Ohio State University, where he holds joint appointments in the School of Music and in the Center for Cognitive and Brain Sciences. Trained as a performer, Huron worked for several years as a composer before turning to research.

Among other interests, Prof. Huron is especially interested in how music evokes emotion in listeners. In addressing such questions, Huron's research employs a range of methods, including perceptual and cognitive experiments, computer-based corpus studies, simulation and modeling, interviews and surveys, and physiological and endocrine studies. In addition, his research has drawn on traditional historical and analytic methods. Dr. Huron's research has been communicated in some 150 publications, including three books. Huron has delivered over 400 lectures in 25 countries, including 28 keynote conference addresses.