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BEYOND THE LINGUISTIC MODEL: MUSIC, METAPHOR, AND INTERSEMIOTICITY

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Abstract
If music is not a language, how can it nevertheless participate in processes of signification, interpretation, and communication with other semiotic systems? This article addresses this question by reconsidering the linguistic model that has shaped much of musical semiotics. Rather than asking whether music can be understood as a language, it examines how music interacts with other sign systems without being reduced to them. This shift leads to a consideration of metaphor as a mechanism through which heterogeneous systems can become commensurable. Drawing on Rousseau, Saussure, Hjelmslev, Eco, Mithen, and Paolucci, the article approaches metaphor not merely as a rhetorical device, but as a cognitive and semiotic operation that precedes and enables linguistic articulation. The relationship between music and language is then reconsidered through Jakobson, Lévi-Strauss, and Ruwet, highlighting the limits of approaches that interpret music primarily through linguistic categories. The argument ultimately reverses the traditional direction of analysis: rather than translating the musical into the linguistic, it proposes that linguistic articulation can itself be understood as emerging from a more fundamental semiotic condition in which the metaphorical and the musical play a constitutive role. Musical semiotics can therefore take the musical as a starting point for investigating processes of signification across different semiotic systems.

Keywords
Musical semiotics, Intersemioticity, Metaphor, Transemiotics, Music and language, Signification, Semiotic systems

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