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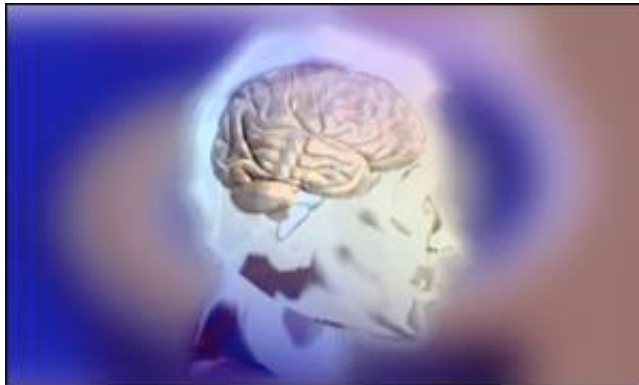
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Friday, 13 December, 2002, 10:35 GMT

Brain secrets of music melody



Parts of the brain responded to certain melodies

The difference between a catchy tune and a dirge may be which part of the brain the notes activate, says a scientist.

Professor Peter Janata, of Dartmouth College, in the US, played a group of volunteers a series of keys and watched the way the brain responded.

He told the BBC: "One chunk of the brain was responding when the melody was in G major or E minor and another part of the circuit was responding when it was in E major for example."

Professor Janata said that composers had always known how to manipulate their audience, but said that their research was looking at how.

Manipulate

"In some sense psychologists are merely playing catch up to explain how music works.

"I think composers are masters at manipulating music.

"I think music is a marvellous mystery and the brain is also a marvellous mystery, so ultimately we are just trying to explain two wonders of nature and how they react."

Roderick Swanston, of the Royal College of Music, told the BBC's

“ Why is it that this purely abstract series of tones can have an

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- Musical Brain
- The Royal College of Music
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Today programme that the research did pose some interesting questions. **incredibly emotive power on us**

Roderick Swanston, of the Royal College of Music

But he said that even if composers knew what particular notes to strike to tug on the heart strings of their audience, that they were unlikely to write their music solely for this purpose.

He said he would like to see more research carried out, particularly on babies which have a blank canvas for musical taste.

"Why is it that this purely abstract series of tones can have an incredibly emotive power on us?"

"Is it because we have learned that it should have an emotive power, does it apply to all of us?"

"If you come from New Guinea would you be powerfully affected by the last duet out of Aida."

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