Book Review

Cerebro y Música, una Pareja Saludable (Brain and Music, a Healthy Couple)

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Hardback: 286 pages | **Publisher:** PUBLIDISA (2013) | **Language:** English | **ISBN-10:** 8490308543 | **ISBN-13:** 978-8490308547

Keywords: ***brain, music*** multilingual abstract | **mmd.iammonline.com**

Dr Jordi A. Jauset's latest publication is undoubtedly the most integral and comprehensive title he has released since his many interests veered him towards the study of music's properties. Born into a family of renowned musicians, the distinguished teacher and communications engineer retraced his roots after the turn of the century and plunged into full-time advocacy of musical therapies. As for '*Cerebro y música, una pareja saludable*', its central purpose is to disseminate the current body of knowledge on how the human *brain* makes sense of and benefits from *music*. The book seeks to procure its objective by providing the reader with an accessible yet exhaustive overview of the neuroscience of music, as well as a frame of reference on which music therapists and related professionals can ground their practice.

The layout of the book is straight-forward and well-balanced: the text is neatly split into two separate halves or blocks and each block is divided into two main chapters; in other words, the book covers four distinct topics or *themes*. The first half of the book is called '*The brain: a journey into the unknown*' and its respective chapters are named '*The "king" of organs*' and '*Techniques for brain exploration*'. This first block is slightly longer (117 pages) and focuses exclusively on the cerebrum, leaving its relation with music to be dealt with in the second half of the text. The first chapter delves into the physiological workings and intricacies of the central nervous system, particularly those relating to the encephalon. The second chapter is a comprehensive collection of neuroimaging and electrophysiological techniques which also includes the basic mechanisms and procedures underlying each one. The second half of the book (93 pages) bears the name '*Music, brain and wellbeing*' and its respective chapters are tagged as '*The musical brain*' and '*Music and wellbeing*'. The third chapter explores the building blocks of psychoacoustics, how the auditory system enables musical perception and the precise role of higher order brain regions involved in the emotional processing of musical stimuli. Finally, the fourth chapter succinctly chronicles the history of musical therapies throughout the ages, thoroughly reviews the cognitive and emotional implications currently ascribed to active and passive exposure to music and intensively inspects the different clinical settings in which music is making a difference today.

Overall, the book manages to successfully achieve its goal by administering a synthetic sketch of the brain's large-scale anatomy and derived functionality. However, the first half of the book risks being overly informative and unnecessarily technical due to its striving for completeness. Several brain structures and imaging techniques bearing little relation to musical processing are introduced and expanded upon in the book's first two chapters. Furthermore, explanations and details are often likely to go over the novice reader's head even despite the many interspersed example boxes and persistently casual tone. That said, the specific impact that music has on the many different parts of the brain is exquisitely well grounded on a solid and up-to-date pool of scientific literature. Nonetheless, the second half of the book can sometimes feel repetitive in its attempts to provide a wide display of evidence to support each and every claim in favor of music's healing features. Once again, plying through this encyclopedic array of data might prove arduous to those wishing to extract a more holistic framework. Yet, such a plethora of knowledge will surely grasp the attention of the studious reader aiming to harness an educated outlook on the subject matter. Whatever the case, learning will prove to be entirely unavoidable.

The author's intention is to reach all music and health professionals wishing to learn more about the neurophysiology that enables us humans to play and understand music. Still, the work's comparatively high amount of information on Spanish researchers and institutions indicates that the text is loosely geared towards professionals based in Spain. Far from stemming from an enclosed and inward-looking perspective, this approach is clearly intent on pushing the Spanish-speaking world closer to

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| COI statement: The author declared that no financial support was given for the writing of this article. The author has no conflict of interest to declare.

the spotlight of recent scientific incursions into musical cognition.

Those acquainted with Daniel J. Levitin's seminal work '*This is your brain on music*' will probably experience a sense of recognition on reading Jauset's title. Indeed, both books feed on extensive and methodical research and rely on a clear-cut and sequential style of writing in their common aspiration of reaching a broad audience. However, their respective angles on the brain-music conundrum differ quite noticeably in that Levitin's focal point runs along the 'cognitive psychology' axis whereas Jauset's themes are firmly anchored in experimental neuroscience. Moreover, Levitin's dissertation on the physical elements of sound and their psychoacoustic counterparts is replaced by a lengthy disquisition into the inherently salubrious nature of music in Jauset's title. The six-year gap between both books could potentially explain the first divergence, especially in a blossoming field like Music Cognition. The second disparity should be qualified by alluding to Jauset's 2010 publication '*Sonido, Música y Espiritualidad*' (Sound, Music and Spirituality), in which the sonic world is as deeply scrutinized as the musical one is in the work at hand.

I would wholeheartedly recommend this title to anyone within the spheres of Music Therapy, Music Cognition and Cognitive Psychology. I truly believe that people working in these three fields will be able to extract and absorb pertinent insights from the book, regardless of their familiarity with the topics contained inside it. Furthermore, I strongly suspect that readers coming from the areas of Neuroscience, Positive Psychology, Musical Composition and Musicology will find some sections of the work to be very enticing. As the author himself points out in many fragments, personalizing and tailoring one's intervention to fit the patient's needs is one of the true keys to a successful therapy. The same principle can be applied to the enjoyment of this book: discover what interests *you* about the topic and let it guide your reading. Whatever it may be, you will certainly find it hidden somewhere within these pages.

Biographical Statement

Oscar Bedford is a Psychology major currently undertaking the 'International Master's Program for Research on Behaviour and Cognition' (University of Barcelona) and the IL3's Music Therapy Master's degree (University of Barcelona); Member of the *Brainlab* group for auditory perception and musical processing; Assistant Researcher for the 'Music Therapy in Oncology' project led by the 'Parc de Salut MAR' hospital group (Barcelona).