

May, 25th, 2018

## Measuring the Concert Experience

### International research project “Experimental Concert Research” examines what constitutes a classical concert

Friedrichshafen/Frankfurt a.M./Berlin. For some years now, the controversial question of the viability of classical concerts in the future and of how to deal with our cultural heritage has been the topic of discussion. Particularly in Europe and the North America, numerous projects have been developed at festivals, in ensembles and at concert halls that have tested new approaches to classical music. Be it classical music in clubs, lunch concerts, moderated or staged concerts, the classical concert landscape has become more diverse.

But what defines the classical concert in the first place? What are its aesthetic qualities, and what is its appeal? Could they perhaps be enhanced even further? A new international and interdisciplinary research project under the leadership of the Zeppelin University (Martin Tröndle, WÜRTH Chair of Cultural Production) deals with such and other questions. Participants include the Max Planck Institute for Empirical Aesthetics in Frankfurt am Main (Melanie Wald-Fuhrmann), the University of Bern in Switzerland (Wolfgang Tschacher), the University of York in Great Britain (Hauke Egermann) and the Fraunhofer Institute for Integrated Circuits in Erlangen. The researchers of this project are planning something that has never been seen before: the measurement of the concert experience.

### The concert venue as a laboratory

To this end, the researchers will be focusing on the format of the concert. Current developments in the music business, commonly referred to as ‘experimental concert formats’, will become scientific experiments in this research project. Partners in practice are Radialsystem V and the Konzerthaus Berlin. Over the course of several evenings, the same musicians (the string quintet “Alban Gerhardt and friends”) will be performing the same musical program under different concert conditions while Folkert Uhde, co-founder of Radialsystem V in Berlin, will be changing the formal and artistic aspects of the performance from concert to concert. These aspects range from

EXPERIMENTAL ■ ■ ■  
CONCERT ■ ■ ■  
RESEARCH ■ ■ ■

moderation, lighting, setting, and changes in musical dramaturgy to more elaborate performances in which video art and other associative contexts are added to the music. The aesthetic musical experience within this specific framework will, among other things, be examined using detailed surveys before and after the performance, measurements of heart rate and skin conductance, movements, and emotional states. By comparing the individual evenings, it will then be possible to find out which aspects of the concert influence the musical experience as well as identify the different types of concert listeners, what predisposes listening, what interaction takes place between musicians and audience and much more.

The international research group has convened over the past two and a half years. With the help of sponsors, it was now possible to gather together a project team, which, according to Tröndle, possesses outstanding competence in researching aesthetic experience. The Volkswagen Foundation supports the project as part of its “Off the Beaten Track” program, and this project is extraordinary. According to Melanie Wald-Fuhrmann, Director of the Department of Music at the Max Planck Institute for Empirical Aesthetics in Frankfurt: “Our approach is exemplary. Never have concerts been experimentally manipulated in this way, never have such a wealth of experience and behavior data been collected in a realistic setting.” The technical and methodological challenges facing the research team are accordingly high.

The researchers are convinced that this effort is worthwhile. According to Tröndle: “It is important to find out how we experience music in concerts. Which factors are beneficial or detrimental to in-depth, emotional hearing? What could the results say about the future of the classical concert? These factors will not only be of interest for various scientific disciplines but also relevant for orchestras, conductors, directors of concert halls and music festivals”.

The research project is mainly supported by the Volkswagen Foundation, the Max Planck Society, and the WÜRTH Foundation. The Aventis Foundation supports the artistic part of the project.

Interviews are possible with:

Prof. Dr. Martin Tröndle [martin.troendle@zu.de](mailto:martin.troendle@zu.de)

Prof. Dr. Melanie Wald-Fuhrmann [melanie.wald-fuhrmann@ae.mpg.de](mailto:melanie.wald-fuhrmann@ae.mpg.de)

EXPERIMENTAL ■ ■ ■  
CONCERT ■ ■ ■  
RESEARCH ■ ■ ■

Main Supporter



Research Network

**zeppelin universität**



Max-Planck-Institut  
für empirische Ästhetik



UNIVERSITY  
*of York*



Supporters

Aventis *foundation*



STIFTUNG **WÜRTH**