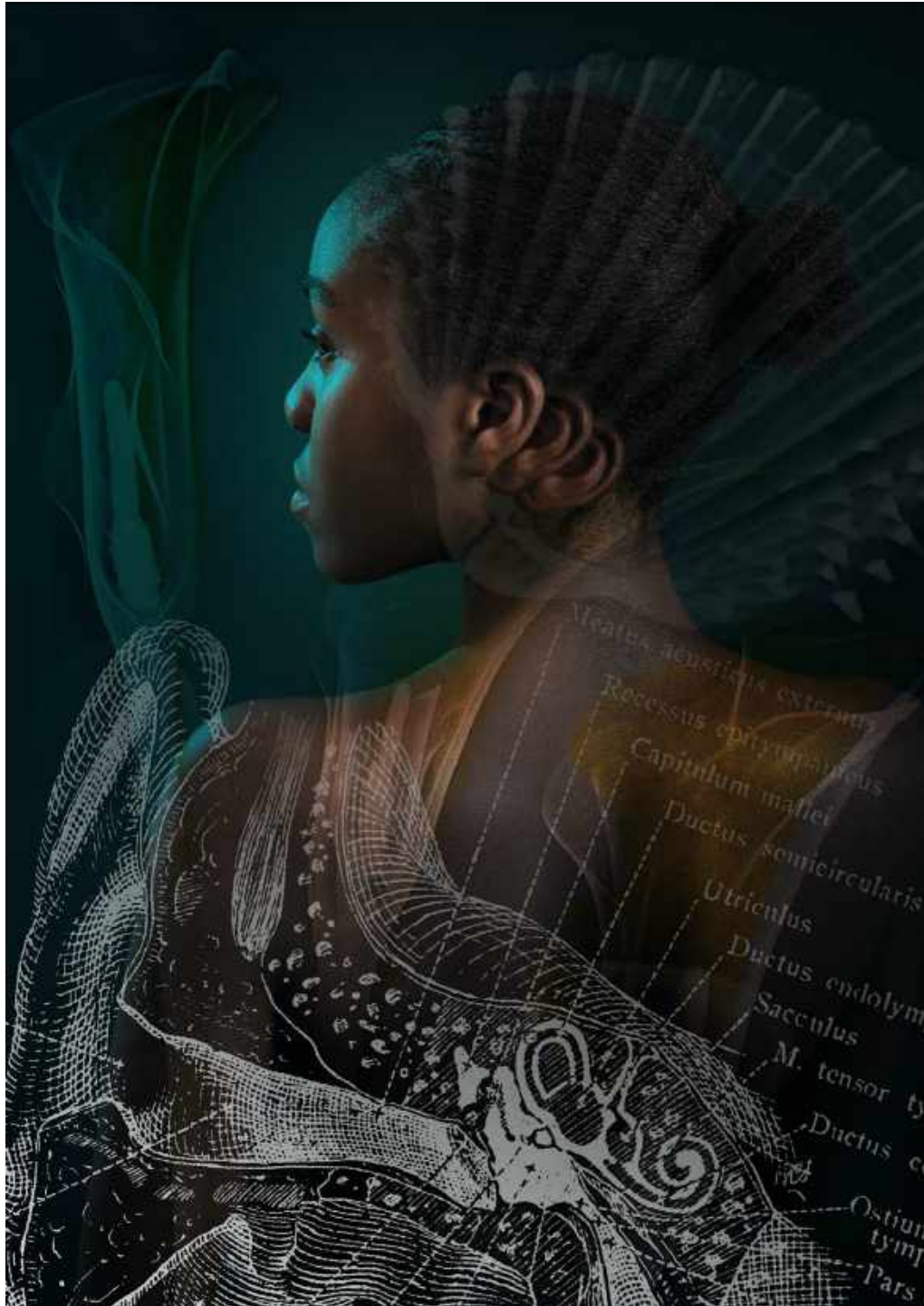


ARTISTIC RESEARCH REPORT GAMPSISS

by MICHA HAMEL and the GAMPSISS TEAM (2017-2021)

Codarts Rotterdam
Lectorate Performance Practice





GAMPSISS is a collaboration of Codarts University for Applied Sciences, Erasmus University Rotterdam, Delft University of Technology and the Willem de Kooning Academy



**Erasmus
University
Rotterdam**



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1. INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Why research on listening is necessary

1.1 GAMPSISS in a nutshell

The abbreviation GAMPSISS stands for GAMeful Music Performances for Smart, Inclusive and Sustainable Societies. The project was funded by NWO (Dutch Organisation for Scientific Research) and was part of its Smart Culture program. This program aims "*to further develop and strengthen the knowledge base for the creative industry. Research on the product or service level is linked to research on the sectoral and societal levels*".

In the GAMPSISS project, research on the impact of 'gameful music performances' was integrated with research about listening to classical music and (others in) society. The aim was to eventually provide the classical music sector with tools to establish a contemporary societal relevance, resulting in engaging new and inclusive audiences.

Four research institutions participated in the project: Codarts University for the Arts, Rotterdam; Erasmus University Rotterdam (EUR), Delft University of Technology (TU Delft), and the Willem de Kooning Academy, Rotterdam. Next to these knowledge institutions twenty-three public and private partners participated in the project. For the full list of partners, see below.

This artistic research report describes all the steps we took as researchers to provide tangible recommendations to the Dutch classical music sector. This report represents the embedded research as defined in the proposal. The other half of the research, the strategic research, has its separate outputs in the form of academic papers and conference papers.

This report covers the artistic research executed in this project by researchers Hamel and Luijten. Also, some additional research done by strategic researchers Michael, Erdbrink, and van Eijck are included. During the designing and building process of the game we worked as a team, merging and combining all our expertises in an interdisciplinary process.

To prevent unnecessary duplications in our collective theorizing, a number of extensive quotations from the paper '*Listening Space – An exploratory case study on a persuasive game designed to enrich the experience of classical music concerts*'¹ are inserted in this report. This paper was written by members of our team and their supervisors by means of an academic output (deliverable) of GAMPSISS, and was published in the Journal on Computing and Cultural Heritage, 2021, Volume 14, Issue number 4 (Special Issue Culture Games). Authors of this paper are, in this order: A. Erdbrink, J. Michael, R. Kortmann, M. Hamel, K. van Eijck, A. Verbraeck. To avoid any misunderstandings or misconceptions, these quotations are clearly indicated by them being presented in a text box. The integration of all these sources will give the reader an encompassing oversight of the whole.

This report is written by Micha Hamel unless indicated otherwise.

Research team



Micha Hamel, Codarts. Embedded researcher, project leader
Annebeth Erdbrink, TU Delft. PHD candidate
dr. Janna Michael, EUR, Post doc. Strategic researcher



dr. Rens Kortmann, TU Delft. Strategic researcher
Arlon Luijten, Codarts. Embedded researcher



As an additional strategic researcher Prof. dr. Koen van Eijck (EUR) conducted the Listening diaries research (sub-)project, see chapter 3.4

List of partners

01. Amsterdam Sinfonietta
02. Asko|Schoenberg Ensemble
03. Het Balletorkest
04. Calefax Reed Quintet
05. Concertzaal de Doelen Rotterdam
06. Doelen Ensemble
07. Het Gelders Orkest
08. Holland Baroque
09. Muziekgebouw aan het IJ, Amsterdam
10. Nederlands Blazers Ensemble
11. Nederlands Kamerkoor
12. Nederlands Philharmonisch Orkest
13. Nederlandse Bachvereniging
14. Nieuw Geneco
15. Noord Nederlands Orkest
16. Orkest van de 18e eeuw
17. Schouwburg & Philharmonie Haarlem
18. philharmonie zuidnederland
19. Stichting Omroep Muziek
20. Theaters Tilburg
21. Tivoli/Vredenburg
22. Donemus Publishing
23. Holland Festival (from 2020 to 2021)

1.2 The why of GAMPSSIS

We started with defining the issue, by means of observations out of real life practice (by the artistic researchers), that are supported and further theorized by several academic authors (as studied by the strategic researchers), as can be read in the opening of our published paper:

The search for new audiences

Classical or 'art' music, is often celebrated as one of the main achievements of Western civilization (see Bull², 2014, p. 15-18 for a collection of references and Small³, 1998 for further discussion). Associated with the emergence of civic society today, it is one of the most celebrated forms of cultural heritage. Most major cities in the world are home to large concert halls and orchestras, offering their citizens opportunities to enjoy music that offers potentially powerful affordances such as supporting individuals in self-reflection, identity building and mood management (DeNora⁴, 2000).

Attendance rates of classical music concerts have long been a concern: the representation of young cohorts and minorities in particular have been found to be in decline in the USA and the UK in the last decades (DiMaggio & Mukhtar⁵, 2004; Kolb⁶, 2001). However, more recently there are indications of relative stability of audience numbers at classical music concerts in Western Europe (Van Steen et al.⁷, 2015 (for Flanders), Van den Broek & Gieles⁸, 2018 (for the Netherlands) and Brachman⁹, 2018 (for Germany)). Young audiences, however, remain underrepresented at these concerts and there is little evidence that young people will start to attend classical music concerts by themselves once they turn older (De Haan & Knulst¹⁰, 2000; Van Steen et al., 2015; Zeit Online¹¹, 2011)). Despite the relatively stable audience numbers, there has been increasing financial pressure on the classical music sector in the Netherlands and elsewhere as governmental subsidies have decreased in recent years (Van Lent¹², 2016). Classical music in the Western world, considered to be one of the most highbrow of cultural forms, further shows a very limited reach among people with non-Western backgrounds or lower educational levels (see Tiessen-Raaphorst & van den Broek¹³: 2016:40f. for the Netherlands).

Cause of research in four observations

Without immediately speaking of a crisis in classical music, it is a form of art whose cultural indicators and values have to be reconsidered in the light of multiculturalism, cultural fragmentation, postmodernism and the issue of inclusiveness. In policy making, in her perceived cultural discourse and societal positioning, her leading role has weakened and her importance is challenged. In order to break down the gigantic issue to a workable scale, artistic researcher Hamel took five of his observations as a starting point. These observations are informed by his 24-year experience as an classical orchestra conductor (1992–2016) and composer (1990 – now) and artistic leader, concert programmer and lecturer. His professorship at Codarts that preceded GAMPSSIS was called 'Present Practice, Praxis of Presence', in which he studied future scenarios for the field of classical music. (2011–2015), resulting in the book 'Speelruimte voor klassieke muziek in de 21ste eeuw' ('New play spaces for classical music in the 21st century')

– Observation number one:

If someone not familiar with classical music would pass a concert hall, or encounter some publicity online, and he/she would definitely see a publicity statement roughly looking like this:

The Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra

plays

Rachmaninov

conducted by

David Jones

But what does all this actually communicate to this passer-by? The answer is: hardly anything. He won't recognize the name of the composer nor the conductor, and even maybe only vaguely know what an orchestra is, let alone that he will know the artistic identity of this particular orchestra. What this concert is, offers, could be, could mean, could bring, expresses, celebrates, et cetera is destined to remain in the dark. The passer-by will likely resume his stroll. However, more existential questions, one social – what is at stake at a classical music concert? – and one political – why is this classical music institution subsidized? – may rise anyway, and sooner or later need answering. Superfluous to mention here, is that our protagonist, the 'someone not familiar with classical music', is likely to be young, or of a background without this particular tradition. Exactly the one that is to care for this cultural heritage in a few year's time.

– Observation number two:

All art institutions are continuously and proactively looking for new audiences since it is their societal and cultural responsibility and obligation to pass on cultural heritage and to enrich the lives of the people through engaging with meaningful objects of art. Experiences that (may) lift the spirit, lead to bliss and understanding, cultural grounding and orientation, eventually leading to critical citizenship. Facing cultural diversity and fragmentation, many formerly leading art institutions whose make up, cultural identity and position evidently root in the past have to put in considerable effort to convince the younger and more diverse audiences to pass (and, metaphorically, overcome) their thresholds and enter their buildings. Good examples there might be, for classical music concert halls the issue of fossilization prevention – the process of slowly becoming a token of cultural stagnation and past values, leading to irrelevance – is pressing and is not going to ease any time soon.

But when the concert hall and the orchestra team up and convince – by which strategy is in this example of no importance – a new person to attend a concert, what do they do? What do they undertake to make the experience itself successful? Too little. This person might be given a free drink, a program booklet, sometimes a pre-concert talk, and that's it. Besides behavior protocols and social conventions that might alienate the visitor but are not essentially difficult to overcome, focusing solely on the core experience: does the new visitor know what to *do* in the concert hall? No. There is no insightful guideline in how to 'do' the 'experiencing'. The assumption that listening is a universal, natural skill, free of values and obligations is – strangely enough – ubiquitous. While the contrary is true: listening is a rich activity, an

adventure of the senses and cognition, an interplay of sensibilities, openness, concentration, sensuality, fantasy, problem solving, embodied knowledge, association, ecstasy, (self) discovery, drama, to name a few. Who will run a marathon without training? We will certainly drop out, and remain confused and disappointed. Our idea for tackling this problem, therefore, was twofold:

1. Reframe the concert hall. From the architecture of the concert hall one could tell: in this hall beautiful music is played. From a more outside perspective, what kind of music is being played is secondary, because in a culturally fragmented society we cannot expect everybody to know every genre and every artist from every cultural branch. In order to engage every passing person, the tacit logline of this hall can simply not be: 'come to listen to *this-and-this* beautiful music', since the *this-and-this* is not known, not connected to the knowledge and taste of everyone. Therefore, it might be better to go for a more encompassing definition of its identity: 'in this hall you can train your listening skills'. Doing so, the building (and its concert hall inside) can be understood by all people as a building that is important, that is something for everyone, being central in society, as a center for learning and enhancement. Listening, as absolutely everyone agrees with, is in itself pivotal in life. To take listening, and its variants 'the art of listening', 'the importance of listening', 'the wonder of listening' etc. as a starting point, every resident will recognize what the building is about, and can, at a basic level, relate to it.
2. Don't leave the visitor alone. Since he/she is new to the situation, why expect that he/she knows what to listen to, how to listen, how to appreciate the music? Listening isn't a passivity, or a 'natural activity' that flattens out all differences between people. Better would be to provide the new listener with a meaningful training in listening so that he/she will understand what 'the adventure of music listening' is or can be.

– Observation number three:

Every concert aims to engage its participants, but faces the autonomy of the audience. The tension between the expected fullness of the experience and the possibility of its disappointing hollowness is therefore immense and persistent, every single evening. Attempting to optimize the chances for success, concert organizers have a variety of strategies at their disposal:

1. Marketing efforts to get people who latently like this type of music to come in. Then there are as many 'potentially engageable people' in the auditorium as possible.
2. Additional educational elements are added to the concert in the form of a programme booklet and a lecture beforehand. Musician(s) can play a role in this, if it is within his/their capabilities.
3. Additional theatrical and event-oriented elements are added, like design lighting, drinks, greeters, presenters, special offers and the like.

– Observation number four:

Apart from all sorts of peripheral and strategic activities to draw *new audiences*, the concert organizer will take the accessibility of any regular programme itself into

account. And although there is always a group of listeners that seeks to be challenged and surprised, the core activity of a concert programmer in the field of western classical music is to keep his audience (the subscribers) and to convince new audiences (passers-by, in sociological terms) to join in. Of course, new audiences are hard to find, so the worst thing for an programme director would be to appall the newcomer with mediocre or incomprehensible music. The consequence is, that a music organisation quickly traps itself in the ideology that any music should convince and deliver immediately. When 'successful persuasion' is executed on the level of the music being played, one is limited to:

1. music everyone knows
2. music that has immediate emotional impact

The first can only be successful if there is actually music that everyone knows. But how should everyone know that music? It is either known from school – after all, the pipeline everyone has to go through – or it is known in the public domain, i.e. through radio and television, at manifestations, festivals, films etcetera. This sounds like a feast of possibilities but is, in a society where there are more choices than ever before but the centrality of public media cannot be taken for granted, an experience of entropy and aporia. One chooses what one likes and in it one's tastes are confirmed and the horizon turns inwards. How to count on a collective culture?

The second music, with its impact, consists of pieces that take short routes to strong emotions, emotions linked to previously lived musical experiences, cultural symbols and stories, making them 'spectacular', i.e. able to be deployed as an effect. In this context, let us not forget that the word 'impact' – a popular term with policymakers and funders – has a military origin: the single bomb blast, coming out of nowhere, that turns everything upside down and leaves everyone in a state of shock. It is unlikely to be the purpose of the art experience at all, of any art experience or of any *possible* art experience. In any case, if art is to express the entire human inner self, spectacular pieces of music are a sub-genre at the most.

In the guise of simplicity, immediacy thus manifests itself as a generator of bulk effect: an explosion of nonspecific triggers, luxuriated by a constellation of clichés. It is therefore typical of works that have immediate emotional impact that they can be used for any purpose: as advertising music, as a soccer stadium-song, or as accompanying music at a wedding or a campaign rally. That is the price of immediate public success in a mediatised society: the multiform is outstripped by the uniform, so that music, instead of becoming *more* meaningful to more listeners, becomes *less* meaningful to expert listeners and new listeners likewise. To win new audiences for their *musical* interest, therefore, is something still to be contemplated seriously, and with refinement.

– Observation number five:

One of the most devastating neo-capitalistic developments in today's society is that a judgment has become equal to a verdict. The reason some people find it scary to go to a concert is because they think they have to know about it, as well as because

they think they have to pay attention all the time. This is a widespread misconception: music is not a rebus, you don't have to solve it and there is no answer you have to look for. Nor do you have to be focused on the music all the time, like a cat lurking for a mouse hole. The beauty of listening is that you can fan out over the totality of the experience and enrich yourself with it in your own way. For this to be such an expansive and smooth process, first and foremost is the need to open up before, during and after the concert. Because the biggest obstacle is judgment, or rather, that which is thought to be judgment.

There are numerous audition programmes on television these days, and they are rightly very popular, because it is tremendously fun to see someone perform, doing something that is their passion: singing, magic tricks, dancing or whatever. And also the excitement, the hopes and expectations, the failures and tears give us the opportunity to connect with the would-like-to-be-professional-performers, or - more wickedly - reason to revel in schadenfreude. One thing, however, fizzles, because it creates the wrong image for the viewing audience, and that is the method of judging: with a button that says yes or no. Of course, for the programme itself, this is a quick and clear way of judging candidates, but unfortunately, in my conversations with (prospective) listeners, I often encounter that people think their (main) job is to judge what they hear with a yes or no. As if the whole world is continuously auditioning for you, and all you have to do is stick your thumb up or down. A ridiculous view of what life is (and has in store for us) and a dangerous attitude towards the outside world. Dangerous because it is narcissistic, haughty, and above all consumerist – as if we only have the role of customers to fulfill. Good listening requires clearing up the following three misconceptions:

1. That you must necessarily or always judge
2. That judgements are binary in nature
3. That judging and condemning (sentencing) are identical

The best way is to imagine that the music (or in other circumstances: a book, a film etc) is another human being. After all, the music you love 'lives', or at least 'lives for you', just like a human being. Suppose you were to deal with a human like that: judging everything with your thumb, without interacting with that other person, that would be heartless. And so, judging properly is a process of weighing things up, of wondering about things, of comparing details with the whole, of examining what effects it has on you, of a thousand and one conversations with oneself during which one also question one's own vision. The latter is important: judging is inseparable from judging oneself, one's own categories with which one judges. A critique of music is therefore always personal, not in the sense that it *contains* a personal opinion, but in the sense that it *challenges* a personal view.

In all, judging is not necessary either: one can calmly leave the concert hall with a question mark over one's head, in a strange reverie that lingers for days. Judging is never binary, at most a final judgment can be translated binary if one is forced to choose. But who asks the listener to choose something at all? And between what?

Genuine judging is piling up everything that has presented itself in experience, and then weighing the positive and negative aspects against each other to arrive at a judgment. To get beyond the concept of judging, it is therefore better to conceive of judging as a process that is qualitative as a process itself, and validates itself in it. By applying our memory, we can compare the music with, say, the recording we have of it at home, or how we remember this musician's previous performance. Nothing short of a miracle: we can listen to something else while listening, superimpose those two musics – real and remembered. So we have two listeners in us, and note: these two musics with its two respective listeners thus actually produce a third listener, the total listener who is intensely in dialogue with herself and with the music. That is the listener we are looking for, that is the one who is entitled to judge.

Towards an idea

Weaving these ideas together, whilst looking for a solution that would be based on accessibility on the one side, and going for esthetic refinement on the other side, we thought that serious games could deliver what we wanted.

Throughout the last decades, several attempts to include more diverse, younger audiences have been undertaken by the sector and the search for innovation to revitalize classical music by making it more relevant for new audiences continues (Melenhorst & Liem¹⁴, 2015). Contributing to this quest, the GAMPSISS research project focused on how to broaden the needed knowledge on 'how to listen to classical music' from a new perspective, namely with the use of gaming. The focus on this somewhat underexposed medium in the field of classical music seems promising; it seems to both match the educational and promotional goals, as well as the target group of potential new visitors.

Persuasive gaming to enrich the experience of classical music

During the last decade, gaming has increased in popularity within the arts and culture sector. Games are deployed for a variety of purposes addressing both tangible and intangible cultural phenomena (*e.g.*, paintings and theater performances, respectively). Examples include educational games in museums (Paliokas & Sylaiou¹⁵, 2016) and games that create cultural awareness including the language, beliefs, and rules of behavior in a society (Mortara¹⁶, 2014). Just like other media, games can express certain values (Flanagan & Nissenbaum¹⁷, 2015). Their interactive character, however, makes them unique, because it allows people to experience choice (Jacobs¹⁸, 2017). These choices can generate feedback and thus reflection, allowing for personal experiences and resulting in interactive learning environments (Klabbers¹⁹, 2018). When games are explicitly designed to shape, reinforce or change players' attitudes and behavior in a certain way that exists beyond the gaming session, they are often referred to as 'persuasive games' (De la Hera²⁰, 2013). They aim to convey a certain message that should motivate people to think differently about a certain topic. Persuasive games are applied in many different fields such as education, health, advertising and politics (De la Hera, 2013). Within the field of classical music, however, their promising application does not seem to be investigated yet.

Persuasive games seem to be a suitable tool to make new, potentially interested audiences of classical concerts experience a variety of ways in which they could listen to classical

music, in order to be able to enjoy this type of music more. Through the interactive learning environment that the game creates, players can have the opportunity to broaden their knowledge and experience different ways of listening to classical music. At the same time, the game can convey the message that there are different ways of listening to classical music and that applying them might enrich the experience of classical music. As such, a persuasive game can positively influence the attitude of its players towards listening to classical music and ultimately stimulate classical concert attendance.

It is crucial to notice, however, that while persuasive games generally promote quite straightforward persuasive messages, the message of the games used within GAMPSSIS project is somewhat more complex. Instead of '*this is the (only) way to listen to classical music*' the interventions of GAMPSSIS aimed to open up the possibilities for listeners by taking away their preconception that there is one 'right way' of listening. They rather promote suggestions and encouragement to experiment with various ways of listening. Due to this general persuasive goal we still categorize them as 'persuasive games'. Apart from opening up the realm of possibilities with respect to listening in general and the classical music concert experience in particular, we intended to explore the social dimension of listening and the relations between musical listening and listening to others. To achieve this, we integrated academic research with artistic creation.

1.3 Research outline

Research questions

The trajectory of thinking as described above led to the following research question:

How could western classical music be recharged, and redefined through games and gamification, so it may contribute to a smart, inclusive, and sustainable society?

With its sub-questions:

- *Could a serious listening culture be of importance for contemporary citizenship?*
- *Can classical music recover its societal positioning as an urgent form of art?*
- *Can gamification open up classical music for new diversified audiences?*

Research overview

For this enterprise, we needed four different fields of knowledge, grounded in the embodied knowledge of the artistic researcher Hamel's 25 year experience as a composer, artistic leader and orchestra conductor in the field of classical music. Furthermore, we needed:

– knowledge about listening.

This was provided by Micha Hamel, through desk research, bringing a philosophical and a practical perspective.

– knowledge about how people listen in society and during concerts.

This was provided by Janna Michael, from her cultural sociology perspective.

– knowledge about game mechanics for a persuasive game.

This was provided by Annebeth Erdbrink, from her technology and psychology perspective.

– knowledge about game design.

This was provided by artistic researcher Arlon Luijten, on the basis of his experience with performance arts, interactive theater arts and installation art.

Time schedule

YEAR 1

- desk research on listening
- researching game principles and mechanics
- interviews with classical musicians and composers
- listening sessions with mixed groups

YEAR 2

- desk research on listening (continued)
- researching game principles and mechanics (continued)
- Interviews with classical musicians and composers (continued)
- designing and building game no.1: *Listening Space* (entire team)
- setting up a listening diary study

YEAR 3

- testing and analyzing data from game no. 1.
- designing, building and testing (performing) the game no. 2 (the gamified performance): *Luistermutant 2021* (Listening Mutant) (entire team)

YEAR 4

- analyzing data from game no. 2
- writing report and other publications

Due to the Covid pandemic, the schedule was subject to delay, change and prolongation, all in all leading to a one year delay of the final performance *Luistermutant 2021* (Listening Mutant), but the general order of things remained as above.

The game *Listening Space* should be considered as the deliverable ‘Ludic Performance 1’ and *Luistermutant 2021* (Listening Mutant) should be considered as deliverable ‘Ludic Performance 2’, like they were mentioned in the original research proposal.

Approach

Refining the research tasks into a distribution of work packages, we operated as follows:

Stage 1: theorizing and preproduction of the ludic performances

- a. in order to maintain the pace, all researchers did the part of the research that was their unique expertise (and so his/her valuable contribution) alone.

Hamel	- desk research about listening, interviews with musicians, listening sessions
Michael	- literature research about listening behavior and listening in society, changes in classical music audiences
Erdbrink	- literature about serious games, persuasive games and game principles
Kortmann	- supervising Erdbrink and sharing expertise

- b. we formed smaller groups to do local research

Hamel & Michael	- interviews with composers
Michael & van Eijck	- subproject: listening diaries
Erdbrink & Kortmann	- modelling various serious games
Erdbrink & Michael & Hamel	- research designs Listening space & Luistermutant 2021 (Listening Mutant)
Hamel & Luijten	- conceptualizing ludic performances

- c. we held plenary meetings in order
- to inform one another
 - to integrate knowledges
 - to design the game

Stage 2: producing the ludic performances

- a. we worked as a team on all aspects on a weekly basis
- b. personal tasks were performed individually as to be efficient with time
 - Hamel - production, contact with partners
 - Erdbrink, Kortmann - refining game mechanics
 - Luijten - developing performative aspects

→ For the discussion on the interdisciplinary process see **6.3 Reflection on potentials and pitfalls**

- c. additional team members were asked at the table and given a role in the process, corresponding to their expertise.

– In case of *Listening Space*: Game Lab TUD professionals Simon Tiemersma and Nathan van Ofwegen.

– In case of *Luistermutant 2021* (Listening Mutant): Supervisor Henk Fakkeldij (Hogeschool Utrecht) and his students; supervisor Esther Viersen (MBO Theaterschool Rotterdam) and her co-supervisors and students; supervisor Nina Haanappel (Jeugd Theaterschool Zuid Oost) and her students.

→ For full credits on *Luistermutant 2021* (Listening Mutant), see **5.3 Dramaturgical framework** - Credits

The Willem de Kooning Academie

Our fourth consortium partner, the Willem de Kooning Academie, participated in GAMPSISS in the dimension of education. For the first semesters of both 2018 (9 students) and 2019 (7 students), we created a course in the context of GAMPSIS, an honors programme for the third year's students, for two cohorts of students in total. This honors programme was realized under the umbrella of the so called 'Hybrid Lab', an educational track that focuses on the hybridisation of the arts and sciences.

The main teachers were Levien Nordemann (theory and practice) and Bruno Setola (practice). Three GAMPSISS-researchers (Hamel, Erdbrink, Luijten) were guest teachers, giving lectures, leading feed-back sessions and doing workshops, as well as were also involved in the assessment.

This Lab is given direction through alternating multi-year research projects conceived within the context of WdKA's ongoing collaborative endeavors with various partner institutes, in this case RASL. Emphasis is made on transdisciplinary collaboration and knowledge creation. In Hybrid Lab, the student learns how to appropriate the problem definition as formulated within the overarching research framework, and learns how to develop a creative practice on the intersection of different disciplines within the context of a collaborative, multidisciplinary, and multi-year research project.

The central question in this particular Hybrid Lab was: How can we transform the current meager listening culture into a rich and active listening culture, to cultivate listening towards a tactile quality and strength that is able to connect people? To this purpose it uses

gamification as the central methodology for creating 'ludic performances'. This provided the students with the possibility to either collaborate within the specific application context of the classical music concert, or to work on a self-formulated problem within the overarching research framework. Over the course of the first semester the students worked on games and gamified installations in self-formulated, research-based projects that engaged with active listening, audience participation (classical) music and interaction, methodologically shaped as an iterative process of prototyping and theoretical reflections. The final projects were presented as stand-alone presentations that were either fully operational during the presentation, or were a well thought out and thoroughly tested prototype. The forms were free: performance, audio-visual work, interactive installation, the form of the project was not bound to any disciplinary media.

Supporting the stand-alone presentation, the students had to make a visual research document (containing, visual art, images, videoclips etc) in which the subject matter was reflect upon in an analytical way, using relevant theories, making an intelligible connection between the found images, theoretical reflections, and the stand-alone presentations. Also the implications of their theoretical research for their visual practice, and vice versa, were addressed. Learning goals were:

- working on innovations
- working in demand driven settings
- collaborative working
- interactive learning
- knowledge creation

The interaction with the students influenced the design process of deliverable no. 2 (*Luistermutant 2021* (Listening Mutant)) in many ways, but it is impossible to pinpoint exactly how and where, because we took all ideas further, converging into the 'set of laws' for a succesful performance. The same goes for their final stand-alone presentations/prototypes, that left their traces in the final performance absolutely, for which we are grateful.

Below, a photo of one of our students, Romy Hoolwerf, presenting her listening exercise on the festival 'Pan', organized by one of our partners, Calefax wind ensemble. The listening exercise investigated the effect of different physical listening attitudes on the perception of music.



2. THEORIES OF LISTENING

Summary of desk research on listening

Introduction

The following chapter is a condensation of many readings on listening. There are many theories and philosophies of listening in the world, since listening taps into the fields of cognition, psychology, philosophy, biology, sociology, anthropology, religion, communication theory, common sense, and their histories. For music, it is no different. There are as many understandings of music as souls in the heavens. Many theories overlap partly, and of course they also contradict. As an artistic researcher, it was my task to ground the making of the games on a practical understanding of what listening is. I therefore had to choose and combine, to assemble and invent theories that eventually converged into a coherent body of theory. Due to the design cycle of the project I had to simplify a lot. But above all I mobilized my embodied knowledge as a musician in favor of the depth of the artistic understanding of listening to music. All books that I have consulted and that in some way were a source or an influence for my theorizing are listed in the back of this report, see **7.2 References**.

Active or passive?

Listening is both active and passive, and while listening we shift back and forth between these two modes. Just as our eyes have eyelids, we cannot cover our ears, except when we very demonstratively hold our hands over our ears, but that has the disadvantage that we can't do anything with those hands anymore, so we will never keep that up for long. Our ears are always open, day and night, no matter how inconvenient that is.

Always being open to sound is called the passive component of listening, and it ensures that we are always in touch with our surroundings, which has both advantages and disadvantages. It allows you to hear a car approaching, the very car that would have hit you if you had crossed with your ears closed. Rather handy, were it not that this passive listening also continues at night. Who does not know the horrible situation of being kept from sleep by a party at a neighbor's house or a buzzing mosquito, so that in desperation you bury your head under your pillow or look for earplugs in the bathroom. If we look at the above examples a little more precisely, we see that this particular passive mode of listening is always present, but always before the moment active listening takes place. As soon as the car pulls up, or the mosquito starts buzzing, passive listening flips to active listening: listening with attention.

One can decide to actively listen, like 'how lovely that bird sings, I'm in to enjoy that', or it can be decided by the automatic reflexes in your brain, like when the letterbox rattles and you get up to see what's on the mat.

But it's more sophisticated: the active component not only allows you to focus your attention on something, but also to partially filter out or even ignore your surroundings. You can separate far and near, and even focus your attention entirely on a sound amid thousands of other sounds. How else would soccer players in a full stadium be able to hear their coaches' (shouted) instructions, other than knowing exactly which direction to listen for which tone of voice?

Even in the intimate sphere, for example, a good conversation pushes irrelevant sounds into the background in favor of the conversation partner in whom you are interested. You don't hear the rain on the roof and the tapping of the cutlery, the conversations at the other tables become a foggy sound decor, and you no longer even hear your own breathing; only your lover's voice slips into your ears. What happens in the above example is this: *within* the activity of active listening, passive listening takes its place. After all, your lover's voice is in focus, while the rest of the sounds have been relegated to the background. They come back into focus only when they produce an auditory event, such as a falling glass or the gurgling laughter of a couple at the bar. These sounds intrude your attention boldly, they are immediately present. Active listening is therefore always at the expense of the sounds that are not being listened to, consciously or unconsciously. Within the activity of active listening, focusing and pushing away are two sides of the same coin.

There are a couple of things to say about the transition from passive listening to active listening. First, passive is not the right word. In fact, passive listening is not so passive. In fact, passivity is lurking like a trap, ready to elevate a sound into one that needs to come to one's attention. There are all these little active elements lying awake in the receptacle of passivity, as it were, like sentinels on guard. It is better, therefore, to say that the passive listening mode is a 'proreactive' listening mode, namely one charged with responsiveness.

So the two listening modes – active and proreactive – are not strictly complementary, but change shape and function as the balance tilts from one to the other. For although the active mode pushes the reactive mode into the background, it can never disappear completely, since unmixed full attention is humanly impossible, and within attention itself, moments and zones of passivity always remain. We have seen this in the example of filtering and pushing away, in it the sounds filtered away are listened to passively (proreactively), within the activity of passive listening.

Sounds can come from the background to the foreground of our listening. They dwell in the reactive domain as half-perceived or pushed away auditory information, until the listener draws them into the limelight of active listening, be it because the listener focuses his attention on the sound, or that the sound itself makes such a high profile that it forces the listener into active listening. This is, roughly speaking, how a sound shifts from being heard to being listened to, its transition made by concentration's focus, whether intended or unintended.

Without components of passivity/proreactivity, contact and communication would be impossible because the information that appears in the bundle of attention focus also needs to be processed. How would one ever have time and brain space to process what one is listening to if he cannot alternate his active listening with more passive listening at lightning speed? Active listening is uninterruptedly punctuated, surrounded, interspersed, and shaped by proreactive listening. Listening activity as such cannot be defined as totally active, focused listening, but rather as an activity that alternates between activity and proreactivity. In any case, during a listening activity in which we are at the helm, wherein we are able to alternate and integrate active and reactive modes, we can live a multitude of adventures: appreciating music, eavesdropping on crooks or hearing what someone says between the lines.

The radar function

Why do we have ears? Our pair of ears is a kind of radar, a device that can scan the environment around us, in 360 degrees, and detect what is going on in it. You could say that

animals and humans have ears *to see* behind them, and in the dark. After all, danger lurks everywhere. We can be attacked by wild animals or a falling tree, and we need to be able to spot them in time, especially when they come from behind – where we don't have eyes – and especially in the dark, where our eyes do not work. This is also the reason why we have no 'ear lids': this radar is 24/7, otherwise the enemy would only have to wait for night to fall. Besides, of course, not every phenomenon reveals itself to us visually. The proximity of a river or the approach of a thunderstorm are phenomena we need to perceive to increase our chances of survival. In short: our ears are there to orient us in space, and to be able to determine our relationship to the various actors and phenomena in that space.

Looking more closely at that radar function of listening, we see that - from the moment reactive receptivity turns into active listening - it consists of a number of steps. First, there is the perception of the sound itself:

1. The moment the sound waves hit the eardrum
2. The classification of sound: what is this sound?
3. (After a lightning-fast brain search process) The answer: it's a cave bear approaching.
4. The evaluation: what to do with this noise?
5. The conclusion: run away.

Writing this out step by step in this way allows us to understand what listening is. The issue that arises here is that if we conceive of the biological function of the ears as a radar function, we must conclude that this function always involves potential consequences of action. Unlike the eyes, for which perceiving is a choice, firstly because you can close your eyes, and secondly because your angle of vision is only 140 degrees, the ears are presented with everything unsolicited. As a result, they are engaged in a constant process of choosing, selecting, ranking and judging at its core. Day and night, the ears are asked what to do with the information they have acquired, investigating: what is the meaning of the sounds and whether to act on them? Each sound is weighed whether it is beneficial to the listener's concrete existence, or not. Its purely biological function as a ground detector ensures that listening connects radically to the individual's life truth: what consequences does this sound have for me?

Not surprisingly, then, it is precisely music that is the art form to which people fully commit - because it affects them deeply. Within the limited, artfully composed playing field of a sound game (a musical composition), it is possible to experience the stresses and dangers of life itself through listening, but then simulated. Listening to music is therefore an adventure, a thrilling journey that is maximally exhilarating, but never causes life's dangers in real life. In this realm of fantasy, you can of course experience more and live more intensely than in real life, but at the same time experience it as a playground of existence itself. The fact that music touches our inner self, attaches itself to this inner self and can form the core of our emotional world there, is then actually not so surprising. In both social and personal terms, music forms the core to which we return when we have, want or want to work up great emotions, such as in rituals and celebrations of death and of life. We affirm our existence with the tools that saved us: our ears, so with music.

Forms of listening

Most people know the difference between hearing and listening. This is easy to imagine: hearing seems less intense than listening, but we have seen in the above that they both involve a different balance between active and reactive listening, where listening as an activity presents itself as intensity that is a higher stage of and than hearing. No wonder, active listening seems more intense than hearing, yet that more intense is preliminarily limited to that which is under our immediate attention. Hearing, on the other side, distributes attention over a wider range of impulses. This is how you *hear* traffic, and *listen to* a guitar concert. Still, it is insightful to categorize the different forms of listening by intensity. *Attention* intensity, to be precise. Such a division into steps looks like this:

1. Sensing
2. Noticing
3. Hearing
4. Listening
5. Listening into
6. Trancing
7. Hallucinating

1. Sensing is the weakest form of listening. It is an awareness in which one notices – but actually rather 'knows' – that you are breathing, for instance, or that your footsteps sound. One is never aware of it – except in a yoga session, perhaps – but if the sound were to suddenly fall away, one would notice it immediately, proving anyway that the gap between sensing and silence is immense. We should therefore be well aware that sound is a permanent part of the world, if only because we produce it ourselves. There is therefore no zero point in our 'sense-making the sensing': we are always perceiving, even when we are not perceiving. Unconsciously, one registers his environment, and immediately incorporates its acoustic properties into one's logical overall image of it. If you were walking on a forest path and your footsteps suddenly reverberated as if you were walking through a cathedral, you would be startled. This is because you automatically have installed the acoustics of the forest in your comprehension system.
2. Noticing is already a bit more intense. Noticing is being aware of a sound, even if you don't pay attention to it. It is there, but it does not arouse interest. It has too low a profile to claim a role within the field of attention or elicit judgment from the listener. Such a sound could be a passing bus, or the hissing of an espresso machine in the company canteen. The sounds you notice tickle the sensory components of the 'passive' (proreactive) listening mode, but not enough to flip the mode and awaken the active listening mode. These sounds leave no trace, you don't remember them, they disappear from your attention. Note: every sound we hear always begins in the domain of noticing.
3. Hearing, as mentioned, is that the sounds are under your attention. You hear your dog's bark when you open the front door, you hear the stadium cheering at a goal, you hear the beep of the oven when the cake is ready. Hearing is a tool for communicating and capturing and decoding the auditory signals of the world. A characteristic of hearing is that the classification of the sound is already accomplished. When a dog starts barking, no question arises. Not the question:

'what is this sound'? Because at that moment one is already listening. Instead, hearing is an activity that taps into the reservoir of knowledge and memories we have within us. Hearing itself takes place entirely in the 'now', in the presence, as a purely direct hearing-in-action. The sounds you hear are worthy of being heard as they have detached themselves from the merely noticed sounds. They have landed under one's attention in the 'now', manifesting as lumps of aural information with which he can (or should) do something, but are not important enough to be listened to. In hearing, humans are operationalised as acting beings. Hearing is a functional process, built into the organism's system for being in the world.

4. Listening is hearing, but more directed and more intense. As mentioned, listening is distinguished from hearing by the addition of concentration. By focusing on the sound, the listener seeks to derive something from it. This could be information or meaning – for example – or pleasure. But focusing is not only something physical. Listening also means turning towards the sound. The beam of one's attention is not the only cognitive tool that focuses on the sound object, it is also a business of the psyche. In listening, the listener turns towards a sound psychically. Focusing involves processes of alignment and regulation, getting into sharp focus, determining one's own position and the position of the object. Movable as man's mind is, susceptible as it is to touch, focusing will therefore involve probing, palpating, tasting, flattening out. Here also comes to light the reason why we prefer listening to music and people to leaf blowers and hedge trimmers: when the sound is alive, we are tempted by ourselves – namely by the mechanism of focusing – to come out of our shell and give our own liveliness to that sound. An invitation to respond. A focus that encounters an amorphous sound quickly shifts away, because there is nothing to get there. Listening is then at best a way to gain information, but nothing more. By listening to something dead, the listener cancels himself as a person, and his focus will automatically slacken, only to drop out. By focusing and turning towards the sound, the listener opens himself up to all its possibilities, meanings and expressions. A route is created along which the information and expression of the sound can be exchanged with the listener's identity and expression, creating a possibility of being personally touched. That happens automatically. One engages oneself, connects with the sound to allow something from the sound to flow through that connection. This is why listening can be emotional, because the activity of focusing is structured in such a way that it initiates engagement, from which the possibility arises that expressions can be exchanged between sound and listener. Listening is ideally suited for this, because sound is invisible and everywhere. Sound by itself demands the listener to focus – one can maybe say 'traps' him – and secondly because precisely its invisible ubiquity invites us to engage with it, because our inner world, our inhospitable inner self, is likewise invisible and boundless. That is the parallel. Of course, commitment can also precede listening. One can also look forward to a concert, or be attracted by the appearance of the person walking towards you and with whom you will strike up a conversation. Then your focus is a decision, a willingness to fall into the trap.
5. 'Listening into' is even more intense than listening. In 'listening into', one goes even deeper into the sound itself, and does his best to get in there and discover more. This is important: whereas in listening, the sound can still be characterized as a signal (with or without a message, to be investigated by the listener), in 'listening into' the

sound has become a spatial notion. Beyond its function as a signal, sound has become three-dimensional. In a metaphor: the listener wanders through sound like a building, and has become an adventurer discovering new worlds. He wanders around in the sound and may be able to hear things that elude others: the character of the composer or the presence of gods, souls, himself. In 'Listening into', the listener longs to get something out of the sounds.

6. Trancing is the next stage. In trance, the inner conversation you have with yourself (your nattering train of thought) stops, and sound takes over your entire inner world. The less rational realms inside yourself fold open: your memory, your imagination and your undiluted emotions. These mingle into a plenum in which you swim delightfully, or nightmarishly, for that matter. This disappearing is what we call ekstasis (extacy): being outside yourself. Many people go for trancing as the ideal state for listening to music.
7. Taking this trancing further, there is hallucination. By listening very intently and surrendering completely, one can evoke experiences that cannot be explained within existing reality. For instance, while intensely listening, one can become another person, like in a deep empathetic conversation one can feel the other person's feelings. And music, for instance, can make someone become someone else entirely, a heroine, a dandy, a flamboyant witch or a horny gnome. And then not as a factor of a cognitive fantasy game ('I imagine I am a witch'), but as an incarnation of something outside you from the music installing itself in you. When you come out of a fantastic concert and stand outside again, it feels like you have fought, made love and showered, and the real world feels weird and raw. Now that's ultimate!

For the sake of clarity, I have listed the listening activity in these seven steps. Nevertheless, I would like to add that the steps listening, listening into, trancing and hallucinating are not hierarchical. In the sequence of seven steps, it seems that a self-loss is the highest form of listening, but that is not correct, because that would mean that the dimension of the erotic (ecstasy, being absorbed in something) is more important than the pleasure of knowing and understanding, which can equally lead to an intensity that is essential to the musical experience. That this knowing and understanding also has an erotic dimension is evident but not immediately evident. However, 'listening into' (number 5 in the list) can become an activity of its own nature, if it is intensified by the process of wanting to understand (an erotic force on its own) ultimately leading to lucidity. Listening into, trancing and hallucinating can all be possible end points (end goals) for the listener, but not every listener listens in the same way, nor wants to get the same out of the listening experience. It depends on one's mood, temperament and character.

Finally, the seven steps are not to be interpreted as normatively connected to sounds. The sliding scale from dull (monotonous traffic noise) to profiled (dynamic pieces of music) sounds may seem to parallel the stages of listening as, but it does not. It is not the case that a Hoover can only be noticed and heard, but not listened to. There is a whole music movement (though not very broad): noise art, which consists entirely of refined sound experiences with nondescript sounds. The very act of listening to the seemingly uninteresting is the beautiful commitment that leads to a very precise musical experience. Also, composer John Cage taught many experienced music audiences to listen to silence *as if it were music*, as well as to conceive of all kinds of concrete, everyday sounds as elements of a music in which chance claims its role, resulting in a listenable landscape, mobilizing vast

playing fields of openness and appreciation. In an era in which people are looking for inclusiveness in all sorts of areas, it is actually questionable that the music we hear around us (and which is also adored by people who advocate inclusiveness) consists of a very limited arsenal of sounds and trivial, industry-dictated gestures and ideal types.

Furthermore, complicated, varied and sound-rich music is no more suitable to put one into trance than simple music. Let us not forget that a single hand drum is enough to put an entire community into a state of bliss. Also, carefully composed art music is more than once used to simmer quietly beyond the horizon of hearing, functioning greatly in restaurants, elevators and shops. So, no sound or music is automatically linked to any particular form of listening. Besides, ears compete with the other senses. But because every sound appears on the radar as a potential danger, sounds are at an advantage: music always sucks you in because it is designed to attract attention. Music, as designed for your ears, is apt to beguile you.

The inner world

In our inner world, abstract things like feelings happen, but you can also experience spatial things. If I ask you to think of a giraffe, a giraffe will flash onto your retina – or rather, not onto your retina at all, but into your visual imagination, as a mental representation. The spatiality of your inner world is so realistic that you can walk around the giraffe, or underneath it. You can also color it green or put on a pointy hat, or both. Your inner world is much bigger than the real world. That's called fantasy.

Feeling one's feelings is, of course, a physical and therefore sensory experience, and the interesting thing is that those feelings can be translated into concrete sensory forms. There are people who experience anger as a purple swirl, and visualize peace as a tender spring rain. Boredom usually has a grayish color, and heartbreak feels like a sword through the heart. These are just examples, examples that show that every human being lives in two worlds at the same time: the real world and the inner world.

One might think one listens with just the ears, but that's not true. Because all organisms also hear with their skin. The sound waves collide with the whole body, setting it in vibration. The best example of this is that when you are at a party, you can feel the loud music thumping through you. Our body is mainly composed of water, held together by cell walls. A cell wall is like a drumhead: the sound wave makes a poke in the skin, and the skin pushes itself back in place, like a trampoline, displacing air and thus producing sound. It is therefore safe to say that it is not only that the musician makes music, but also that the audience 'responds music'. The feeling that listening to music gives is therefore literally a feeling, something that is *felt*, namely undergone with the body. In this sense, listening to a concert is also really participating, experiencing, taking part: the listener is a musical instrument being played.

Parallel to the radar function in the real world, we also have a radar function in our inner world. It is the 3D world in which the giraffe resides, and in which we can see ourselves too. It shows in everyday language: we can ask ourselves *where we are* in our lives, or *what position* we are *in relation to* others. We constantly monitor ourselves in a three dimensional space: where am I, where should I go, how should we proceed from this point? We are constantly listening to ourselves, talking about 'our inner compass'. This is simply because in the real world we are spatial beings, bodies, and so our inner world likewise employs these kinds of spatial notions.

This phenomena clarifies why music can move us so intensely. The radar function

(the ears) parallels the radar function in our inner world. The spatial, orientational question 'where am I?' is a question that can also be asked in our inner world, in the form of an existential question. Purely because music comes to us through the functionality of our ears, music raises a question about the self. A question about who you are, where your soul is, where you stand and what your feelings are. Music touches all these places, setting them in motion. The listener's inner self must automatically search for answers, which is the compelling power of music. The pleasant but sometimes disturbing realization that music can influence or even alter you by its intensity are its main characteristics.

As a catalyst of self-talk, music offers enormous opportunities to identify with and lose yourself in. When you listen to music, you hear your own inner self moving, as it were, and this same inner self searches for answers. While searching, it takes new directions, exploring, widening. Listening thus reaches our deepest inner world, wanders around in it and asks us existential questions. Very many people have been moved to tears by a piece of music, very few by a painting.

Inner space as inner time

Let us imagine our mental and emotional imagination – the inner space in which our inner life takes place - as a concrete space: an empty hangar, a mountain landscape or a square in a city. You can imagine that in this hangar you can walk around to the front and back. You can also roller-skate there, as well as walk up the walls. After all, it is a fantasy space - think of the green giraffe with the pointy hat on. Let's do an experiment, and put in earplugs, close our eyes and pinch our noses. What will our inner world look like then? All the senses still work! We can see, hear, smell and feel things. We can imagine everything so well that it is as real as real. You know, even if you don't touch them, even if they are untouched by clothing or by a stream of air brushing past them, where your knee and shoulder blade are: you can feel and locate your whole body. This is because all your experiences, physical and psychological, all that you have gone through in your life, have established in you a parallel person, a virtual being that inhabits you and employs a system of virtual sensoriality on its own. The funny thing is, from the example of rollerblading: who is rollerblading there? That's you yourself. So your own inner space is not just a space where all kinds of crazy objects float around and performances can be seen, you yourself can walk around in it, experience things and stay in it. When we fantasize, we control an avatar in the inner world, in any direction we like.

But all that 'walking around', that experimenting with the possibilities of space takes time. Because where there is space, there is also time, time to process what impressions come in. You can quickly reflect back the impressions coming from outside in the form of an immediate reaction, or you can take the time to formulate a response. A response that you tell yourself. By the word 'answer', it is not coming up with a concluding response that seals the issue. 'Answer' means more that you respond to the impression. That you at least allow the impression to have an effect on you. You can use the impression as a spur to think further and feel deeper. Further and deeper, both spatial notions, again.

In an indoor space, you can let thoughts flow, collide or merge with each other. You can create a bubbling fountain of associations or sink all the way into contemplation on a single subject. And because it is a space, time is anyway to dwell on what you are experiencing or have experienced. Once you have entered the inner space, and you have stretched the space wide enough with your imagination to give you time to walk around in it, the dialogue

with yourself automatically arises. With your thoughts, but also with your memories and feelings.

But also reason dwells in the time-space: from all inner dialogues can it form a conclusion, a conclusion that provides possible answers to the question: what does this mean to me? Put more simply, we develop an opinion, and opinion that does not consist of a single conclusion, but that appears as a precursor in an ongoing process of exchange between experience and the monitoring of that experience.

Summarised:

- Listening causes interior space to fold open
- This space makes time
- Time for a reaction
- Time for a thought
- Time for a rethink
- Time for further investigation
- Time for an inner dialogue
- Time for nuance therein
- leading to possible answers
- leading to an interplay of opinions
- leading to a process of criticism

We see here that attentive listening – listening – leads not only to more intense listening, but also to the careful formation of a careful opinion. Because you are immersed in the spaciousness of your inner self, you get the time to engage in more intense thought processes for free, so to speak. To train your listening skills is a good way to develop the nuances in your world views.

The phenomena of music

Music is a strange phenomenon. We don't actually know what it is. Is structured sound, waves sent out in a controlled way. Evolutionary origins are often brought up to explain why we have music. In the womb you are the first to perceive sound, and our heartbeat is itself a rhythm with a tension and a relaxation, just as day and night and the four formerly seasons are. Our vocal cords could sing rather than speak and primordial humans would claim the spirit world by imitating animal sounds. Further, man wants to express himself, and uses all the capabilities of his body to do so, his voice, his hands to drum and his feet to stomp. Music is found in all cultures, and that makes it special. Only between five per cent of mankind doesn't feel anything at all about any music.

Music stands alone and stays with itself. It comes at the listener as a proposition against which there is nothing to argue. It is like someone walking into the room and saying that one plus one is two. One can like that or find it irritating, but there is no way to refute it. Music occupies its own country, as it were, with its own rules and laws that escape your control. In this respect, music is immensely self-confident. It draws this self-confidence from the fact that it can occupy and dominate you at all times, because people's ears are always open. Putting on music in the room means no less than occupying the space, which in that respect means that music is dictatorial. So, on the music side, this also brings with it a great responsibility.

Music is a cloud that emerges in the 'hangar' (our inner space, see above) and soon fills the entire space. The hangar walls slowly disappear, until the cloud has completely replaced the hangar. Maybe the hangar is still there, maybe not. One cannot know, because the cloud is all around the listener, who is in another space now, a place that is boundless. He is absorbed in the white, fluffy mass and can't even see his feet anymore.

This 'listening space' (the cloud) is three-dimensional. Music can come from all sides. The space has a 'top' and a 'bottom', because the listener can distinguish high and low tones, and also can hover above the music with his attention (consider it from a bird's-eye view) or lurk below it, or even dig into it, deeper and deeper. Many people hear music moving from left to right, as if reading written lines. Many people compare listening to music to a train journey through a landscape, during which the landscape moves from right to left, at least if you have been able to get a seat in the direction of travel. Anyway, the listening space also has, even if the space is unlimited, a 'left' and a 'right'. The wonderful thing is that you can never get next to, above or below the totality of the music. Wherever you are, you are always in the middle of the music, as well as in the boundlessness of that same music. Sounds are *always completely* there: listening is an integral experience.

The best example to illustrate this is: suppose you are mopping the hallway, and your partner is in the kitchen cutting a leek for dinner. On the kitchen counter is a radio you inherited from your grandmother, playing a popular song. It makes you happy, and lightens up your boring task. Add up the factors: the music sounds from a single speaker, from a noisy little radio, at moderate strength, from another room, and on top of that you can hear the chopping of the knife through it. Yet at the end of this song, you will never say you didn't hear the song. At most, you will ask if the radio could be a bit louder, that the chopping is disturbing, or make plans to buy a better sound system. Despite all the cackles, you have still been in the midst of the music, allowed the music to flow through you and made you happy. The listening space erected in you has filled you out, making it possible to undergo the entire music *as entire music*.

The paradox, at this point, is that music remains whole while being broken. She is indivisible, but things can pass through her. She is the woman in the circus box who is stabbed with swords but still lives on. How and where, when the music fills everything out, does the mincing of the leek take place? What is the trick? Physically, the music does not occupy all frequencies. That would only be so if the music were white noise, the noise that covers all frequencies equally. Thus, you can also fly through the cloud with an object, or in this case, stab through the cloud with the kitchen knife. Room enough for the chop-chop of mincing. Since music is always a whole, you can't argue with the music either. At most, you can argue with yourself, establish or question your own judgment.

How music is perceived

Being asked how they perceived music in their mental listening space, five basic forms emerged for our research population.

1. A space

For some, music appears as a spatial thing, a space to wander around in, for example. This space is never as concrete as an ordinary building. Usually it is a space as experienced in a dream, with wondrous doors, endless corridors through which you run but do not move forward. M.C. Escher's etchings are vivid examples: spaces in which the dimensions are illogically knotted together. Moreover, these dream spaces are fluid: they grow and change

shape, the imagination giving them new elements, colors and shapes every second, usually morphing with the music.

2. A film

Of course, there is no such thing as a film without space – after all, running through an endless corridor is also a kind of film scene – , yet here we see a distinction between those people who experience music as a spatial thing and those who experience music *as a film*. The latter are people who experience music as a particular sequence of images, condensing into ‘events’, leading to the experience of a kind of ‘scenes’. Just as the previous, spatial, appearance they talk of a dream space, this ‘film’ not being a concrete story that runs from A to Z either. There are mostly just vague gestalts, situations and landscapes. The manifestation of music is more like a sequence of events that play out a stretch of narrative tension, expressing the underlying elements of an anecdote – such as conflict, tension, romance, struggle, etc. – than anything else. Altogether they (the underlying elements) give an impression of a visual narrative, rather than the music providing real story content.

3. A movement

Everyone who listens to music experiences movement. Not surprisingly, because sounds are sound waves that sway through space. The listener who experiences music primarily as movement hears music as something like a graphic screensaver making endless spirals and curls. But the movement can also have a more of an embodied character, like the swaying tentacles or the pulsating organs of an alien. There are a lot of people who dance inwardly when listening. Where the real body can no longer do it, or not being in the position to perform, music is the medium par excellence to experience it. Many listeners also talk of experiencing waves and being rocked (on these waves perhaps).

4. A concept

For some listeners, music appears in the mental domain where abstract concepts are stored. Those people experience music as something mathematical, as the place where processes are accomplished, cause-and-effect relationships are held up to the light, and where we can catch a glimpse of the essence of the universe, unspeakable but suddenly accessible in music. Also, concepts from the humanities appear to manifest themselves through music, as we learned from our respondents, who mentioned concepts like 'justice', 'humanity', 'humility', as capital experiential results of listening.

5. Language

Intentionally, I end with language because we have to emphasize that music is not a language but rather a channeling device capable of completely other things and conveying completely other ‘messages’ than language ever can. Still, respondents experience music as something that is said to them. Something discursive, that explains itself, that makes use of phrases, syllables and, ultimately, a message, one that is polymorph and polysemic.

To summarize the above:

1. *space*
 - a. that you see
 - b. where you are → becomes cinematic
2. *film*
 - a. that you see
 - b. in which you play
3. *movement*
 - a. that you (fictitiously) act out
 - b. that you behold

- c. that you undergo
- 4. *concepts*
 - a. mathematical
 - b. humanities
- 5. *language*
 - a. syntax
 - b. meanings/messages

In all five dimensions mentioned above, listeners all agree that something is being communicated to them, that some kind of 'message' (although not necessarily always a so-called 'deeper message') is being communicated. Something that happens through the interconnected sound elements. And even if someone doesn't know a thing about the music in question, he can still distinguish some building blocks that are phenomenologically akin to ordinary language: there are single, rounded elements - 'words' -, short and long.

Furthermore, there are bigger chunks of elements - 'phrases'. These can be melodies, or rhythms; everyone can distinguish some basic elements. In songs, for instance, verse and chorus are such elements, but in them it is made easy by the recurring lyrics as well as by the easy-to-remember tune. But although instrumental music employs some kind of *near-language elements*, it is irrelevant what this language literally says. So, however much the music bombards the listener with its so-called communication with great conviction and self confidence: every listener hears something different in it. If music had to be communication, its communication officer would most likely be fired. Nevertheless, there is plenty of social structuring of our interpretations that directs us towards 'understanding'/ interpreting the music in certain ways.

Perhaps this is why it is better to compare music to a performative magic spell. After all, when a magician says 'abracadabra', the listeners are not at all meant to puzzle out what this word means. It could be that abracadabra means something, but it could also be that it doesn't. What the audience gets to experience, however, is that the word functions as a formula for calling forward something that lies behind ordinary reality. It makes, as it were, a mysterious incision in reality through which something wonderful can flow from the hidden into our ordinary existence. Say 'abracadabra' and a boulder becomes gold, a dove emerges from a hat, or a lovely assistant disappears in the smoke without a trace. Therefore, what matters to the audience is not the spell itself, but the effect the spell has on reality. The audience marvels and wonders at the event, and in doing so, gains a marvelous experience. The spell must be pronounced precisely, together with the also very precisely executed series of actions, just as a concert is an intricate and detailed composition of actions. One wrong note and the spell is broken. This is why musicians practice so much: every ritual requires extreme precision.

Although music employs linguistic elements, and mainly aims to produce effects with them rather than to communicate information, we must beware that the purpose of the art world is purely effect-oriented. An effect namely happens to you, flows over you like a wave and drags you along the extremes of your imagination in a delightful way. An art experience however aims for a more indepth and integral experience that reaches beyond the spectacle.

To go from the performative dimension into the more artful dimension, the next comparison, that of the oracle, might clarify something. In almost every culture, the oracle occurs in some form. Logically, the phenomenon is so widespread because all people

sometimes wonder whether they are doing the right thing, or when they are faced with a life-changing choice, would like to see how things will turn out in the future. These are very valid reasons to invent and organize something for, and indeed: everywhere we see rituals to satisfy these curiosities. Some throw dice or shuffle cards, others read turtle shells or twigs, the forms are all sorts. What all these oracle forms are basically about is that a question is asked and the oracle answers through the media in question. For example, the dice indicates a 5 or the branches are crossed. The person who asked for advice reads this outcome and takes it as an answer.

However, two words from the previous sentence need to be considered. The first word is 'reads'. In the old meaning of the word, 'reads' means 'to choose'. The inquirer is not only decoding something, but also interpreting it. He is trying to derive meanings from the random results. So he not only sees something, he also makes something of it. Something in which his own person is at least a factor, and has a stake. The second word is the word 'answer'. For the question is whether the oracle answers, or whether the questioner himself answers himself. That, of course, is not a bad thing at all. Nor would I call it cheating; rather, I think this form is suitable for getting close to your own questions, or close to yourself if you like.

Ultimately, the oracle has a purpose. After all, you not only have to undergo and interpret something, you also have to act upon it. Good advice is worthless if nothing is done with it. Based on the oracle's statement, one has to do things differently, change his behavior or adjust one's vision. The experience in the moment itself - the ritual, often performed with bells and whistles, and the subsequent pronouncement - is only half the story. It is ultimately about that other half: the transformation someone goes through to be able to stand renewed in life.

Listening to music

Returning to the active and passive components of listening, the active part consists of pricking up the ears, concentrating and focusing, and following and experiencing the music, with the processes of assessment during or after. The passive part consists of opening up, undergoing and suspending the process of determining, categorizing and judging. One cannot exist without the other. If listening were only an active process, it would have the character of following a tennis match. In a match of top tennis, every stroke is exciting, so you are there as a spectator and fully and completely involved. This is sustained because there is also a goal in play: winning the game. Great then is the release when all that built-up tension discharges in the final point, and the tension extends into cheers or boo-s. This also happens when actively listening to music, because how exciting it is, to follow the story of a symphony all the way through, experiencing its peaks and valleys all the way through to finally arrive at the final chord after many wanderings. Yet listening to music is more than that, because the passive component is equally important. The passive component namely ensures that the music also influences your personality. Moreover, merely active listening is not useful anyway, because the music lacks a real purpose. There is no need to win, because the essence lies in being "in the midst", in that you experience something, something happening to you. And of course you also experience a lot during an exciting tennis match, but nobody would go to watch if the result didn't matter.

In passivity, the listener shows himself vulnerable. He surrenders himself to his ears, making the membrane separating him from the world as thin as possible. He as a listening human being can be surprised, but also attacked and wounded. By making himself

susceptible to the effect of music, he also makes himself more likely to be profoundly affected. In short, listening to music cannot be done without these two components that not only feed each other, but can also merge with each other.

Switching back and forth between activity and passivity creates an instability, a mobility of the inner world. As the single perspective is abandoned, distance is created from that perspective, and a new space is created, room for a second listening mode. The quality of listening therefore arises in the alternation of these modes. This space, where both the active and passive modes are both present is a zone where, for example, intellectual thoughts can mingle with abyssal feelings. Wherein scintillating worlds of ideas combine with lustful fantasies. Or where joy for bassoon antics mixes with feelings of redemption and coming home. I would even say that it is not the constant switching between modes that brings the quality – because it does sound like a very busy mess, there in the listener's head – but that it is the vibration created by the process of alternation that makes the listening. Perhaps because connecting as well as curbing the Apollonian and the Dionysian is man's highest mission, and because the music itself carries all these dimensions, the listener would want to touch, mirror or even merge into this experience as a totality.

Furthermore, listening is not an activity in which you have to focus on the music in a single way. While listening, the listener alternates between and integrates different listening modes, attitudes and positions. All are set in motion by an elastic and free flowing process of dialoguing: the activity of internally responding (feelings and thoughts) to what the listener listens to.

On the one hand, the listener tries to make emotional contact with the music by letting himself be taken in by the music. By trying to align with it, so to speak, to connect with its charge and get something out of her, like excitement, pleasure, satisfaction, or fulfillment. This listening mode emphatically does not go against the music, but 'with it'. On the other hand, the listener can involve himself by focusing on the music itself. During this activity, the listener enjoys a cerebral contemplation through reflecting, contextualizing, analyzing and interpreting. The discovery of layers in the music and traveling through them are the central activity, the music being less of an affective, but rather an hermeneutical object.

Hermeneutical listening

Each piece of music offers different points of entry for the listener. After all, the listener is free, and can choose how to connect with the music. One of these entry points is to discern and experience different layers in the music.

To clarify this issue, I suggest, for a moment, conceiving of a piece of music as a landscape that the listener investigates. In the foreground, for example, he sees some heather bushes, further on some trees, and finally in the distance the hills. In painting, such a thing is called a *coulisse* landscape: an attractive division of space that allows you to enjoy both the wide distances and the details right in front of you, but above all the combination of both and everything in between, resulting in the overarching quality: the experience of spaciousness. I hold this image, and imagine that a piece of music is such a landscape of layers.

What would be the foreground of the music, the outer shell, that which comes first to the listener? Simple: the sound itself. Without knowing what kind of music it is, what it means or what the names of the instruments are: what we experience anyway is the pure

sound, the specific manifestation of sound that testifies to the fact that music is an aural event. Right in front of you, close as a heather bush.

If we then try to discern what lies behind that pure sound, we come a layer deeper and see that those musical sounds are organized in all sorts of ways: they have forms, there are (musical) elements, gestures, rhythms, melodies, all of which have their own function. The inside of music is an intricate system of interrelated and interlocking elements, artfully intertwined, beautifully put together. That is the middle layer, the place where everything fits together.

When we want to get even deeper, we literally have to look at the 'bigger picture', where we get to see that the piece of music *is* not just something, but also *means* something. It was created by a person, there are ideas in it, ideals perhaps, and what's more. The work comes from a particular period, from a particular culture, from a tradition in which a lot of other artifacts come from. Music from the Louis XIV era sounds different from music from the tumultuous 1920s, for good reason, and rather obviously, so one can hear that in the music itself and in what the music radiates. This third and final layer is therefore the background to the landscape. Put in another metaphor: in layer 1 one drives a car (as a direct experience), in layer 2 one looks under the hood (to see its workings) and in layer 3 one wonders who constructed it and why it was designed that way (seeing its histories and contexts).

In a simple diagram:

- | | |
|------------------|-------------|
| 1. Foreground | - Sound |
| 2. Middle Ground | - Structure |
| 3. Background | - Meaning |

The question then arises: how are these three connected, and how does the transition from one layer to the other occur? The beauty is, when we look in more detail that we discover a multiplying effect. In fact, each layer can be divided into new three layers, each of which in turn has a foreground, middle, and background character. For main layer number 1 (the foreground), the subdivision then looks like this:

1. Foreground (Sound)
 - 1.1. Frequencies
 - 1.2. Sound structure
 - 1.3. Depth effects

Frequencies are the outer shell of music, the naked physical fact of sound waves being sent to the listener (1.1). Movements of air molecules. One can admire them in graphic form on an oscillograph, but they are not significant in that form. No one will come home from a concert saying 'Honey, I heard such ravishing frequencies!'. Music is physics, but physics is not music.

If we take a closer look at those sound waves, we see that they are diverse, multicolored and changeable. They are not just rigid sinus tones, they have profiles and are rich in structure. The tone of an oboe is clear and warm at the same time. Combined with other instruments a jumble of sound waves that wind around each other arises, waves that reinforce each other or rub against each other. This complexity of sound is meant at 1.2. \ If we take a next step, we can distinguish depth effects in these sounds: different sounds come from different directions, or there is a difference in the sound between what is in

front and what is in the background, just as a droning organ can be a canvas for a wild trombone solo (1.3).

The foregrounds and backgrounds in the sound thus have a relationship to each other, and because this is so, we smoothly tilt into the next main layer, namely the middle ground. Again, this can be divided into three sub-layers, each with a foreground, middle ground, and background character:

2. Middle ground (Structure)

2.1. Melody, rhythm, flow

2.2. Chords, chord sequences, phrases, characters

2.3. Appearance, architecture, style

Layer 2.1 consists of sound elements that are directly perceptible to everyone. For example, a clear melody can be heard, or a rhythmic accompaniment. Or it's a trumpet, for instance, that plays the ringing solo, or the mighty hundred-piece choir starts blaring. No one can fail to notice. Sometimes the melodies are familiar, then listeners have it easy. If the melody is a little less familiar, listeners can choose to follow the melody, and try to discover a little of what this melody has in store for them, or let themselves glide along with the course of the music, because after all, the general course of musical events in the most basic sense, such as perceiving slow or fast music, is something everyone can follow. So much for sublayer 2.1.

It gets more complicated – the hood opens further – when we go to the middle ground of the middle ground (2.2). There, music is in full operation: there are chords that are interrelated and succeed each other in logical yet surprising ways, there are motifs, countermelodies, voicings, scale types, concert keys, instrument combinations, rhythmic cells, the whole repertoire and vocabulary of music theory passes by. To completely follow (and completely recount) what happens here, you have to have studied music, so much expert knowledge is required to unlock this sublayer through listening.

The next sublayer is already inclining towards the big picture that will soon appear in main layer 3, which is interesting because, after all this technical jumble, it appeals to a different kind of listening. Until now, we have only zoomed in, from frequencies to music-technical operations; from now on, we will zoom out, moving towards a wide perspective. To arrive at this perspective, more listener knowledge (or curiosity) is required. In 2.3, the listener may be able to discover and name what manifestation the music has: is it a waltz or a march, a sonata or a bagatelle? Determining the architecture of the music also requires some knowledge, complemented by ears that – rising above momentary experience – can follow its formal outlines: is it a sonata form or a rondo form? Finally, this sublayer appeals to a deeper knowledge of musical characteristics, connecting them to the broader repertoire: is this baroque or rococo? A question that not everyone is able to answer, but – funnily enough – surely can be answered by someone who cannot read notes but is an experienced concert-goer. Education has its ways.

Main layer 3 leaves the direct experience of the sounding music, and sees music more in an encompassing perspective. Artistic, philosophical, sociological and biographical dimensions are unlocked here, in an attempt to understand music even more deeply. However, we should not think that all these interpretations, scientific and quasi-scientific, are objective. For instance, what one heard in Beethoven has changed a lot over the centuries, and also the psychiatrization of Mahler, the yoga-isation of Simeon ten Holt are fashions that easily attach themselves to the music, but fortunately do not define it.

Anyway, main layer 3, again divided into three sub-layers, each with a fore, middle, and background character, looks like this:

3. Background (Meaning)

3.1. Genre

3.2. Artistic ideas, composer's intentions

3.3. Cultural and historical embedding

If a listener can identify the style period of a piece of music, he is quite a pecker. Then he has successfully completed main layer 2. In main layer 3, he then encounters again the people he had lost in layer 2: the people who have no understanding of music. For both groups, defining a genre (3.1) is easy to do: the distinction between opera and musical won't escape anyone's attention, just as the difference between passion music and carnival music, in terms of their basic effects, is not very hard to define. Bickering about exactly what genre something is can be done in both highly scientific and practical tones. Sub-layer 3.2 closes off the sounding music itself, and focuses on the ideas behind the music. It acknowledges the existence of a person – a composer – who conceptualized the sounding music. Trying to trace meaningful connections that could deepen the understanding of the crafted artifact is the joy of a profound listening activity. The music being a product of its composer, the composer herself on her turn is a product of her culture. In layer 3.3, the listener deeply investigates the factors that permeate the sounding music. Again, this layer has an immediate and an indirect side, both relying on general cultural upbringing or even subconscious knowledge. For a non-concert goer, it is easy to discern flamenco music as Spanish music, whereas to pinpoint the french influence on the jazzy music of George Gershwin requires expert knowledge and perception.

Layers and accesses

The metaphor of the landscape is correct insofar that one can have experiences of foreground and background events, as described above. Where the metaphor fails, is that foreground and background would necessarily or always be understood as something near or far. As if you would have to travel a long way to get to the mountains. The special thing about the listening space, is that you can move freely in it, freely in all respects, i.e. without limits and moreover as fast as you want. Just as you flash across the surface of a painting with your eyes, you can travel over, in and through the music. Like a superhero, you can be in the mountains in a split of a second, and back at the bushes the next.

But not only can one travel *between* the nine sublayers, one can also combine or skip them, if only because listening to exactly one sublayer is not possible at all. One can, to retake the other metaphor, simultaneously sit behind the wheel and look under the hood, and enjoy the information and sensations this dual experience gives you.

This perhaps explains why different people hear different things in the same music. For example, listener A enjoys a melody and hears the composer's love of nature in it, while listener B listens to the timbre of the oboe and is amazed at how different it sounds compared to a baroque oboe. Both are very right, both listen attentively and in an engaged way. They combine different layers, and this is probably why some confusion arises when they exchange their experiences over a drink after the concert.

In what manner one listens, one always combines several layers. Transparent layers, since one can easily superimpose them on top of each other while continuing to distinguish them separately. A good listener, therefore, is not the one who knows the most about the

music, but the one who can travel and combine the layers most smoothly in his listening activity. Serious listening, then, is:

- an experience of perspectives
- an elastic experience

Yet there is indeed a difference in importance between the layers. No one goes to a concert to listen to sound frequencies, nor to find out about the situation of the Habsburg monarchy in 1740. These are clearly the extreme poles of listening. If we summarize the above and define the model in more abstract terms, we see this:

- | | |
|------------------|--------------|
| 1. Foreground | – Physics |
| 2. Middle ground | – Music |
| 3. Background | – Philosophy |

This interpretation shows that 'the event of what music is' , is indeed at the center, and that that center is flanked by an alpha and a beta science, both of which can act as a kind of access to get to the center. The center: where the *music as music* takes place. After all, someone who knows nothing about music can approach music through pure, uninformed listening – plunging into layer 2 – and discover the rich potential of aural effects, or he can try to approach music by informing himself, be it through concrete foreground information, or through more cerebral background information.

Compressed and unfolded listening

Music itself seems to be understood as a beta or alpha scientific phenomenon, or even as a convergence between them, but also eludes them. Music is neither a philosophy of sound, nor an expressive distribution of sound phenomena. Both of these are too limited, and the addition of both does not at all penetrate the middle ground, with its practical, technical and sensual dimensions. After all, what good is philosophy and physics if you want to unravel Schubert's sensual harmonies? But even the middle ground itself, the place where the music most clearly articulates itself as music, is not equipped to take a full view of the music. The great thing is, after all, that music transcends its techniques. No matter how much you know about music, how much the knowing of chords, rhetoric, forms, stylistic features and whatnot, the music is never totally explained by it. Which also would be sad, because it would mean that only music theorists could fathom music, and that is obviously not the case. Music theorists are the experts of the middle ground, but music slips through their fingers just as much. Although the philosophical as the physical lead to the middle, the middle remains strangely empty, as it refuses to find an essence. Somehow music resists any essentialization. No hermeneutical enterprise seems to ever arrive at its core. All the tools and approaches to get closer to the music fail substantially to get closer. Not only does the music make the listener disappear – as we saw above – also the music itself eclipses precisely in the zone in which it presents itself in its splendor, resisting every knowledge that objectifies it. The theory of layered listening suffices as a way of understanding how listeners can differ from each other without being less good listeners. It also shows the two cognitive, self-informing ways in which music listening can be intensified. Yet this model still doesn't completely cover the phenomenon of music, as it does not include subjective emotion.

We noted at the beginning that we have ears to hear danger coming, as well as that the dimensions of the sublime, the erotic and the violent are connected to danger (concrete or potential), or even spring from it. Music therefore appears as something "radically total", realizing an integral potential of experience, in a position to make an indivisible experience happen to the listener. The model of the three layers does not provide for that.

A concept that describes listening as an indivisible experience is called 'tuning'. The best way to visualize this is to imagine yourself taking a nice walk in the woods on a Sunday morning. It is still early and you are enjoying the peace of the forest, the dewdrops on the blades of grass and the sun getting warmer every minute. What you don't know is that a tiger has broken out in the nearby zoo that night. This tiger approached you from behind, inaudible as this big cat can. Suddenly he roars! So what happens to you, as a listener? Well, what doesn't happen anyway is that you listen in layers. Your listening process is not something like this: 'Hey, I hear a low sound, and what a complex sound, what shape does it have, how is it connected to all the other sounds around me, what could the sound mean, and what could it stand for?' If your listening activity is designed in this way, you will have little chance of survival; listening this way is far too slow, asks questions that are irrelevant given the situation, and is too focused on cognition and hermeneutics (wanting to know something). Luckily, when the tiger roars, the entirety of your listening is compressed into one experience, which allows you to run for your life.

The beauty of this last example is that it shows how fluid and malleable our listening is. The sophistication in listening evades time, because we can process as much auditory information in a millisecond as in a longer moment. Given time, we can navigate through our listening experience, walk around the 'listening space' finely and live through and feel everything. Still, a flash of sound can have the same impact.

Through all of the above, we see how music presents itself to the listener. But where is that listener himself at the moment of listening? This is one of the most telling paradoxes of music: the mysterious disappearance of the listener.

The lights dim, the audience applauds, the conductor raises her baton and waits for silence. The orchestra begins to play. The listener in the hall is immersed in the sound, the music is all around her, as we saw above: the listening space is completely taken up by the music, its edges no longer discernible. Indeed, the music extends into the infinity of her inner world. At the same time, for herself, the experience is likewise that she is completely "in" the music, absorbed by the drama of sounds. A strange thing, because on the one hand, the music is all around her, and on the other, she is all in the music with her entire inner world. Where is she? It appears so that not much is left of her, since both inside and outside her there is nothing but music. It is as if, while listening, she has turned from a person to a silhouette, a thin outline of a former individual now occupied by the music, overwhelming as it is. Or even further: maybe this silhouette is no longer even a line but a dotted line, music has perforated her, and now freely flowing in and out of her. In this experience, the listener is a time traveler, an agency of swift experiential and ubiquitous subjectivity.

The listening experience and its effects

All that listening to music hopefully moves the listener. Indeed: that is what music is for. Music evokes emotions, and guides our feelings. But what exactly is that experience like?

Human beings have experiences evoked by the outside world and experiences produced by the inner world. The two are not entirely separate, as our perceptions are deeply influenced by how we are in life and what our state of mind is like at the time. When you are gloomy, the ringing of your phone sounds shrill, and when your lover calls it sounds jubilant. Similarly, some see a football match as a pointless and farcical affair in which players perform crazy techniques to avoid using their hands, while others would have their little finger chopped off to get a ticket to this same spectacle. With this last example, one can say of the first one that he is watching with unnecessary disdain something that in a general human sense – humans are, after all, competitive creatures – can be quite entertaining (if only because it is no less pointless than all the other things humans do) – whereas of the other person one can say that she rather exaggerates the importance of whether or not an inflated piece of artificial leather will end up between two posts. Which, by the way, doesn't mean at all that the average position is the best option. People who represent and live through the extremes of human possibilities make fascinating company.

Throughout the day, impressions come in and reactions to those impressions arise. Other impressions sprout from within ourselves and merge with or collide with the incoming impressions. We are very busy, firstly living with ourselves, and secondly living in the world. We process impressions continuously, and everything that is not properly processed during daytime, we catch up by dreaming in the night.

The noise inside us, however, is not chaos without more. We have all kinds of structures, filters, editing and evaluation processes to organize everything we perceive and feel. Suppose emotions were coming from the heart (no one can prove that, but it is popularly put that way), then fortunately we have the brain to grasp all those inflowing and bottled-up impressions. With our rational thoughts, we can address ourselves. Control emotions, correct them, evaluate them, and concoct the right next steps. The problem, however, is that it's not like that.

This is because these supposedly rational brain processes are unceasingly governed by emotions, and these emotions can only exist by the grace of the brain's reflexes and conditions. It is as if they both inject their venom into the other's process, in order to lewdly control this other. Our inner self is an impure system, because nowhere is there a completely objective, independent, authority influenced by nothing or no one that can say exactly how we are put together, what is real and unreal, and what precise relationship between thoughts and emotions is best for us.

Does an authority in the form of an 'I' exist? Does the grandiose circus of thought and feeling processes have a circus director? All people at least *feel* that there is an I, which is expressed in the first instance by a name and a passport. Also, in court and in the bedroom, no one would rather be mistaken for someone else. Also, all sorts of sequences of words and actions emerge from me that another person could not produce in exactly that way. All this makes us believe that these spring from a unique source: the self.

Unfortunately, the self is nowhere to be found, in however many slices the brain is scanned, with how many blades the heart is dissected. A lame argument, because the fact that it is nowhere to be found does not refute the fact that it exists. It rather should invite us to think differently about what 'existence' is. According to some, the 'I' would be something intangible, like an abstract concept, like a concept, like 'justice', for instance. Nowhere in the world one can find the object 'justice' (what would that look like? A green cube, a hairy pebble?), but one can find 'justice' anywhere, or rather: one can find *manifestations* of justice. So justice is not a thing, but something that appears in actions and

situations. Similarly, one could say of 'the I' that it does not exist as a 'kernel', but appears in actions movements, in the sense that the whole circus, the bustle, the constant pumping around of thoughts, emotions and feelings that also influence each other and get in the way, give birth to the 'I'. Just as a hologram is not a tangible object, but something that appears when all the surrounding factors (rays of light) become active. Seen this way, the 'I' is represented as experience, and thus it is detached from the question of whether or not it exists in a material sense. After all, it doesn't really matter much, because if the 'I' exists as experience, it exists for me, because I experience it, and I experience it that way, so it is there. Music offers us access to all kinds of experiences. Experiences that alter the sense of the 'I', that show the malleability of it, catering movement, growth, development, change, and transformation.

While listening we can:

- Expand our world of experience
- Enrich our experience with new worlds of experience
- Try out new experiences
- Shift, alternate and exchange experiences
- Replace our experience in its entirety with another world of experience

And since our ears are to orient ourselves, a function that is paralleled in our inside world, as well as because the listening space is an inner time-space that is generating responses, all listening intermingles with the 'I'. While listening to music, we incite the experiences in our inner world to an excess that gives our lives the innately desired intensity, with on top of that the possibility of escaping our bodies and identities. We can feel more heroic than we ever are in real life, we can just whiz through a 19th-century ballroom, we can encounter the intimate world of a composer, and we can also just be completely wiped out and gone. All that music can do to the experience, it ultimately imposes on the 'I'. Closer to ourselves, infinitely far away from ourselves, for a few tens and with no harmful side effects, what more to wish for?

3. RESEARCHING LISTENING

Five different researches on listening

3.1 The listening sessions

As to test all the knowledge about radars, time, space, layers, perception, hermeneutics, experience and the subject, we organized five 'listening sessions' that were to inquire about the nature of listening in practice, because, for a successful game, we didn't only need theoretical, but also practical knowledge. The combination of both disciplines of knowledge would then result in relevant working material to be applied in the design of our game prototype-to-be.

The sessions contained mixed populations of musicians (professional musicians, conservatoire students of different music disciplines: classical, pop, jazz, musical) and non-musicians (people working in administrative jobs, municipality, entrepreneurs, policy makers, educators, artists, consultants, personal coaches a.o.). The groups contained 9-15 people. Our aim was to acquire first hand knowledge about the listening experience of western classical music.



Since GAMPISS is about intensifying and unlocking the concert experience, we of course chose to work with live music. Three times a duo (piano + flute; piano + cello; piano + violin) played for us, two times a solo performer (once a piano, once a cello solo) was there to play

live music. The repertoire they played was music that can be identified as classical music, even for laymen.

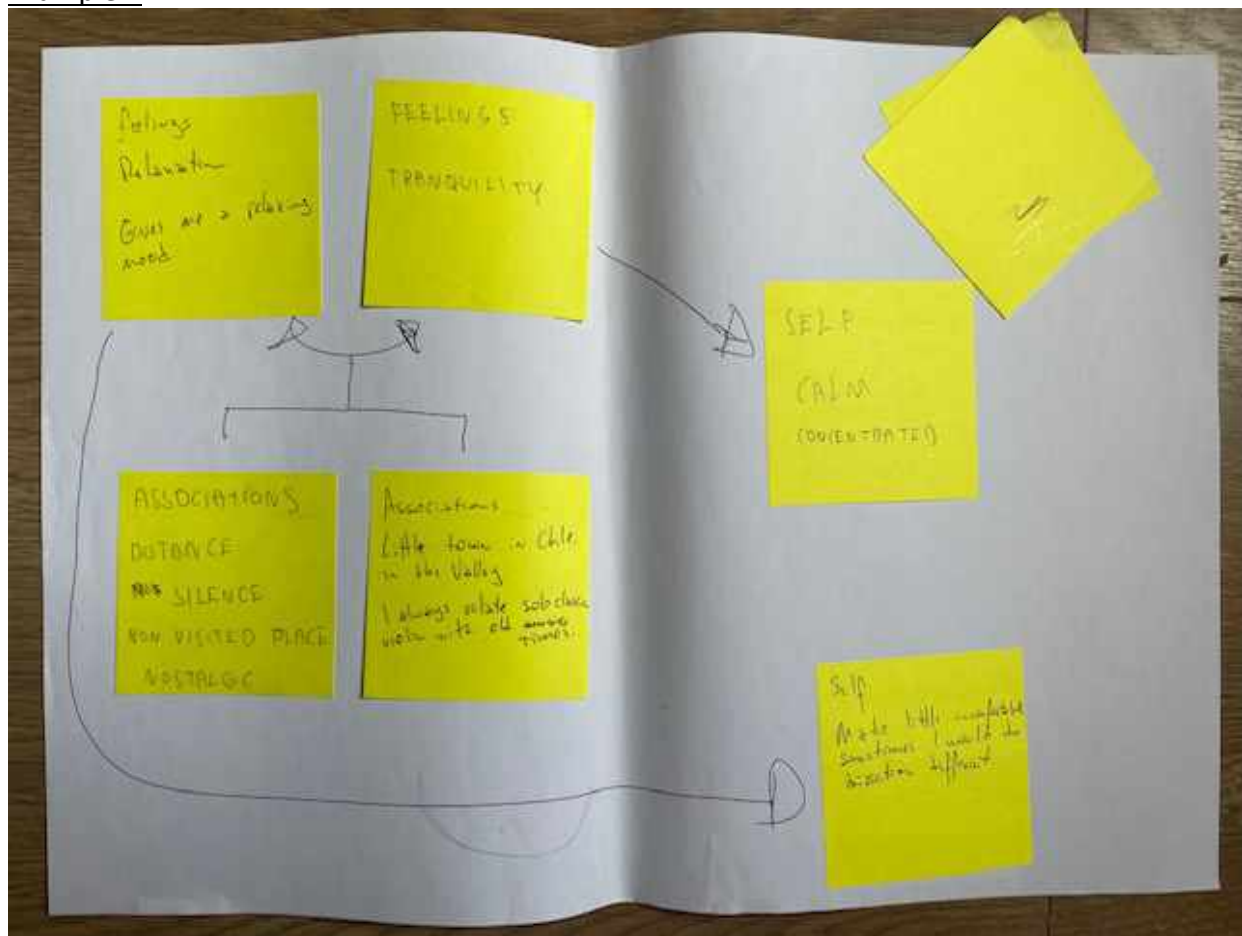
The participants sat at tables and were given a stack of Post-its, a pen and a large piece of paper. The session contained two assignments, each lasting about 45 minutes, including its reflections and evaluations.

Session 1

As an instruction, we asked them – from the moment the music started playing – to write their associations, feelings and the (likely) transformations on the 'self' on Post-its, using one Post-it per association. This resulted in a pile of Post-its. Having done that, they were assigned in groups of 2 or 3 persons to stick the Post-its on the large sheet, aggregating Post-its that were similar to their taste. Connections, orders and hierarchies could be articulated by drawing arrows or connecting lines between (groups of) Post-its. After that, all groups presented their sheets in front of the group and explained how they had structured their associations. The artistic researcher (Hamel) assisted them by asking questions and helping to interpret. For each group, each time, he drew/wrote a condensation of the presentation, resulting in what can be called a collective map of listening experience.

Here are three of the results, all test persons listening to the same music (violin and piano):

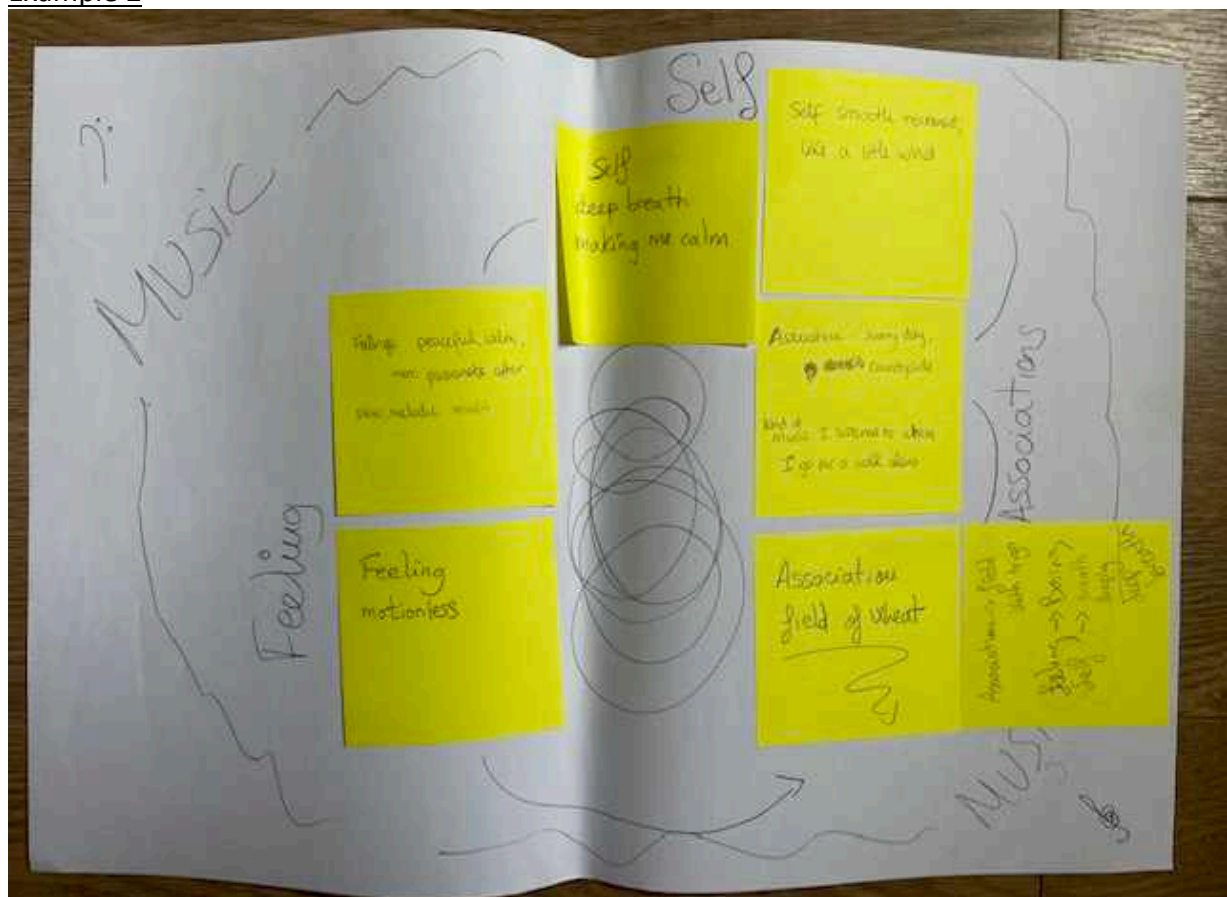
Example 1



These test persons start with associations as the first triggers. A concrete memory seems to pop up with test person no. 1: 'little town in Chile, in the Valley', followed by a comment: 'I always relate solo classic viola [she is wrong here, it was actually a violin in our session] with old times', leading to 'gives me a relaxing mood', that syncs with 'tranquility' of test person no. 2, who started out with a more general, associative flow of words: 'distance / silence / non visited place / nostalgic', leading to 'tranquility'. However, for test person no. 2, this leads to (follow the arrow): 'Made little uncomfortable, sometimes I would do dissection different' as to describe what happens to the self, whereas for no. 1, the tranquility leads to 'calm / concentrated'. In this example there is a first order of experience that is incongruent between the two test persons, a second order of experience that is alike, and a third order experience that differs.

Furthermore, it is interesting that both test persons perceive the music as something that *has* a place, that *produces* a place or *manifests itself* as a place, due to their descriptions as 'Chile', 'Valley' and 'non visited place'.

Example 2

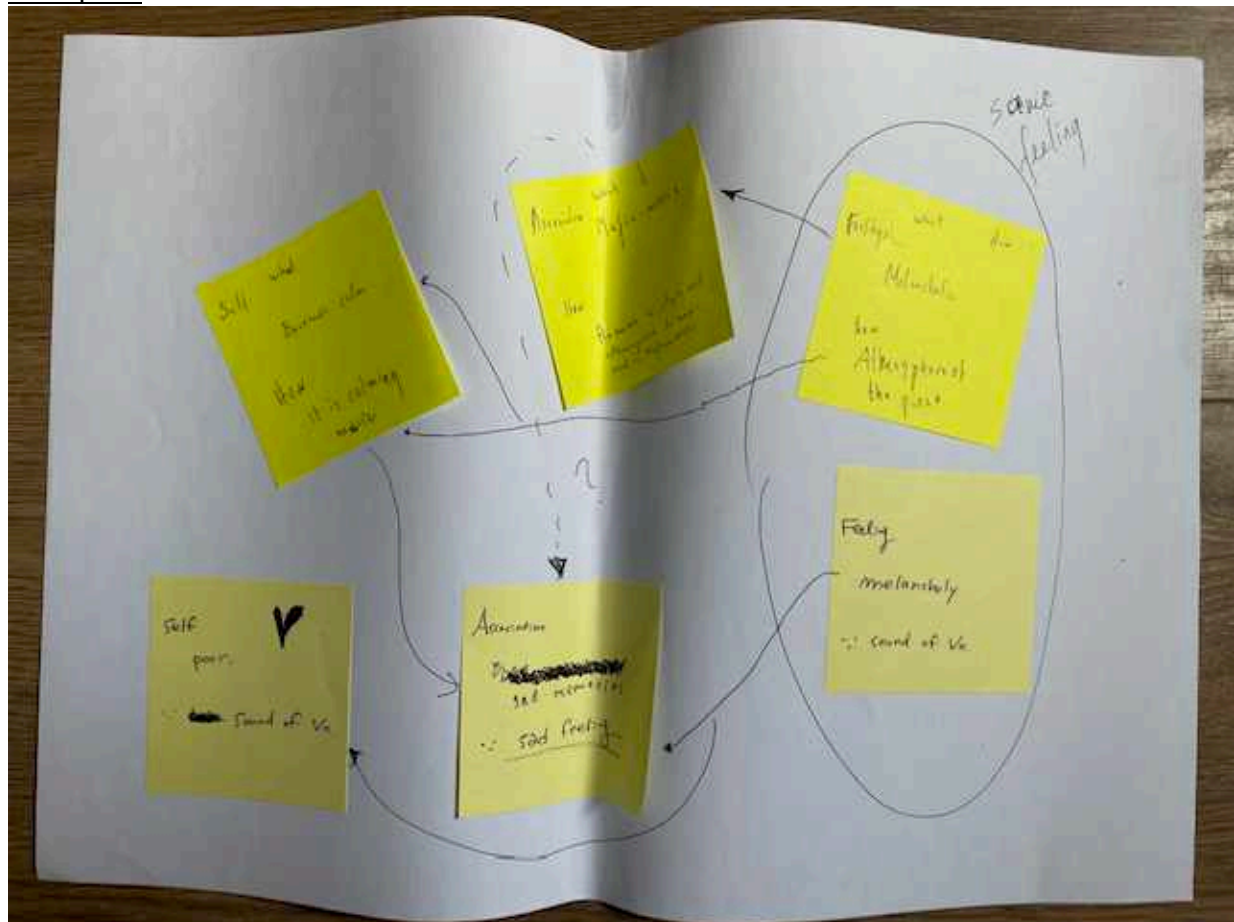


Also on this drawing, the feelings are: 'peaceful, calm, more passionate after / slow melodic music' leading to 'deep breath, making me calm' for test person no. 3. Test person no. 4 starts with 'motionless', which is also calm, that triggers images: 'field of wheat' and 'field with trigo', strikingly synchronous with what no. 3 describes as 'sunny day, country side', and 'kind of music I listened to when I go for a walk alone', this aloneness by test person no. 4 expressed as 'boring' eventually. Apparently, the music seems to generate quite the same set of feelings, and also catering uncomfortable stirs of boredom (no. 4) and discomfort (no.2), while on top of that generating quite the same set of images, culturally situated as

they surely are. The flux of these test persons differ: for test person no. 3 the feelings touch the self whereafter the images arise, whereas for no. 4 the feelings lead to associations that eventually touch the self.

Furthermore, it is interesting how the duo drew a big circle called 'music' around their post-its, as to express that music encompasses all experiences. The doodle in the middle might express the complex currents of mental and emotional processes evoked by it.

Example 3



This duo agrees that feelings are the starting point of musical experience. They explicitly mention that their feelings were identical. For test person no. 5, the melancholy gives rise to moods as depicted by particular movies: 'Reminds in style and atmosphere to music used in Mafiamovies', whereas simultaneously calming (!) the self: 'Becoming calm'/'How it is calming music', taking the 'sad memories'/'sad feeling' of test person no. 6 as an end point. No. 6 accounts for a multiple trigger arising out of the 'melancholy'/'sound of Vn. [violin]'. Not surprisingly her associations are 'sad memories'/'sad feeling', which somehow parallels the mafia movies if one interprets a memory as a movie-like phenomenon, but asked to describe what happens to her 'self', she comes up with quite obscure notions: 'poor' / 'sound of Vn.' [violin], an erasure, and a drawing of a heart. Maybe this person is left in aporia by the music, or is in all dimensions absorbed by it.

An overall phenomenon seems to be that the duo's, however doing the assignment individually (writing words on the Post-its) in the first place (and aggregating their notes in the second), seem to have resonated *with each other* while listening. Sitting next to each

other, sometimes knowing one another, but often not, the duo's give more than once – so, as a duo – the same account of their feelings, a version of the musical experience that doesn't appear in the descriptions of the other duo's:

Example 1 (test person no. 1 and no. 2): the entire flux parallels, from a memory to tranquility to (self-) contemplation

Example 2 (test person no. 3 and no. 4): 'country side'/ 'field of wheat'

Example 3 (test person no. 5 and no. 6): 'melancholy' and a gloomy interpretation ('sad'/'mafia') of the music. Gloomier than the other duo's, at least.

Research in group listening in the fields of sociology, embodied cognition, psychology of behaviour and biology will surely bring this issue further.

Learnings

In session 1, we learned that music can start triggering from any starting point in any direction, in any order, regardless of participant's backgrounds in music education. Also, we discovered that associations are pivotal for the listening experience: as phase, as vortex, as trigger, as wandering, as channel, as occurrence, as destination. The line between associations and side thoughts is very thin. Associations can be understood as side-thoughts and the other way around, which is particularly interesting since many musicians – and affirmed by a wider public opinion – believe that a strict and unbroken focus on the music itself is the essence of music listening.

Session 1 showed that music triggers five mental/affective (re)actions:

- feelings
- thoughts
- memories
- side thoughts
- images

In conceptualizing a game design, we became absolutely sure that the user interface and the game protocol should be so open and multidirectional as possible.

Session 2

The second session, with the same groups, contained a different assignment. As soon as the music started again, participants had to draw intuitively on a new, large piece of paper, in a free manner, with no other instruction than to base their 'drawing' on their listening of the music. They were given pens and coloured markers. When the music stopped, the artistic researcher (Hamel) interviewed all participants, inviting them to reflect on what they had drawn. In a collaboration, the drawings were analyzed towards an insightful account of the transformatory process of how the music traveled through the body and mind of the listener to eventually materialize on paper. The drawings hereunder are from various listening sessions.

Through this exercise, we found the grounding for the game design. We namely identified three basic modes of listening, revealed by the intuitive drawings of our test persons.

The first mode we called 'Body listening'

This listener uses his/her body as a seismograph that transfers the music to the paper in the most direct manner. It is a completely intuitive, reactive and motor-driven process in which there is little account of individual traits. The sole interpretational actions are primal graphic choices and preferences like the direction of the curve, the thickness of a line etc., paralleling the music in a logical way, for instance thickening the line when the music becomes louder. The Body Listener is mainly medial. The pen follows the music, it is as simple as that:

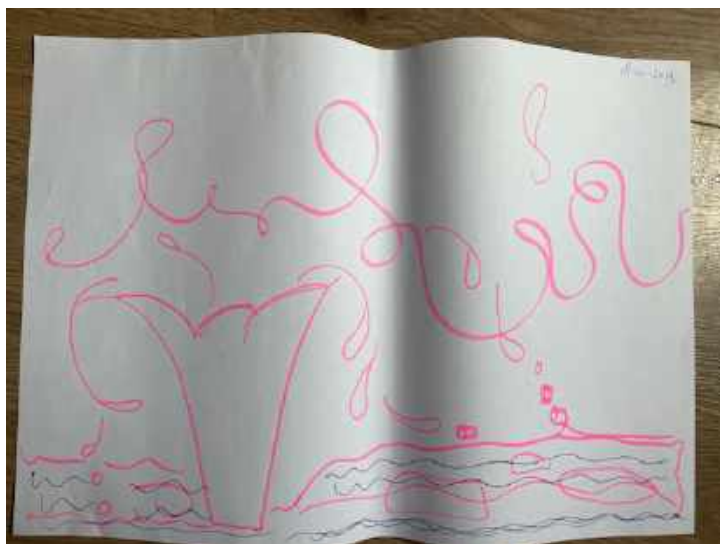
Example 1,2,3



This is a nice curve, neatly drawn from left to right, representing a musical flow. The paper is clearly something to write – writing as a discursive, directional flow from left to right – on, something that expresses a narrative potential.



Here the reactive impulses are scattered over the page, as if the music is an assembly of events and the piece of paper is a canvas. There is a clear account of different intensities of experience.



A glorious curl, the vague form of a chalice or a figure, elegant drops, balloons or tadpoles, something that resembles a bicolor sea. This drawing is an embodied account of listening to music. Forms moving in space. Energetic, free.

There are two things to say to the Body Listener, something to cheer and something to criticize.

1. *How wonderful that you listen without prejudice, without wanting to know why, or any need to understand what you hear. You just let yourself go and live in the moment of the experience.*
2. *In a way, you are behaving like a passive jellyfish. You let yourself be pushed by the tide, with no opinion and no preferences. Music actually does mean something and is meant to alter, move, enhance, transform you. Not something to just transfer without friction.*

The second mode we called 'Heart listening'

This listener uses the music as a cause to stir up his/her own emotions, decorating them with images, whilst evoking memories good and bad, contemplating about the meaning of life and/or the nature of the self, while being swept into rapture by the music or, for that matter, being pushed into ennui by it. The drawings these listeners make have absolutely nothing to do with the music, but are concrete scenes and sceneries of (for example) sailing boats, trees, a glass of wine, a rocket landing on the moon, a birthday cake, cats, dogs, and so on:





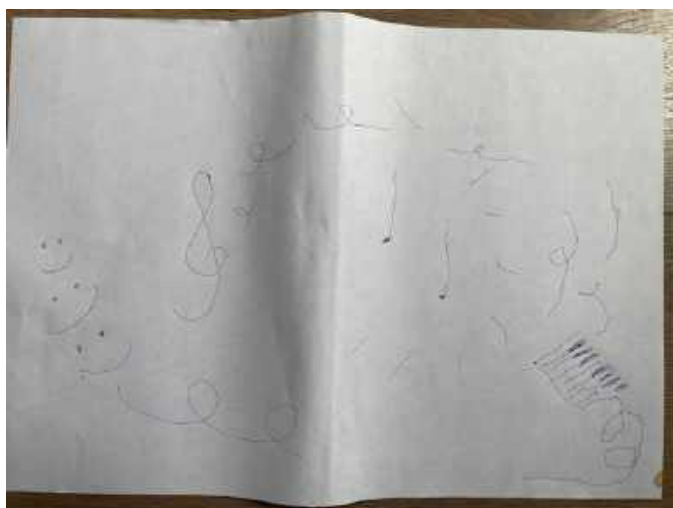
Apart from the fact that it is a free world and music is meant to set us free, it is wildly interesting (and mysterious) why listening to a 19th century flute sonata triggers someone to draw a dog. One of the possible answers could be: music and fantasy operate in the same manner, occupying the same territories of the mind.

So also to the Heart Listener something to cheer and something critical can be said:

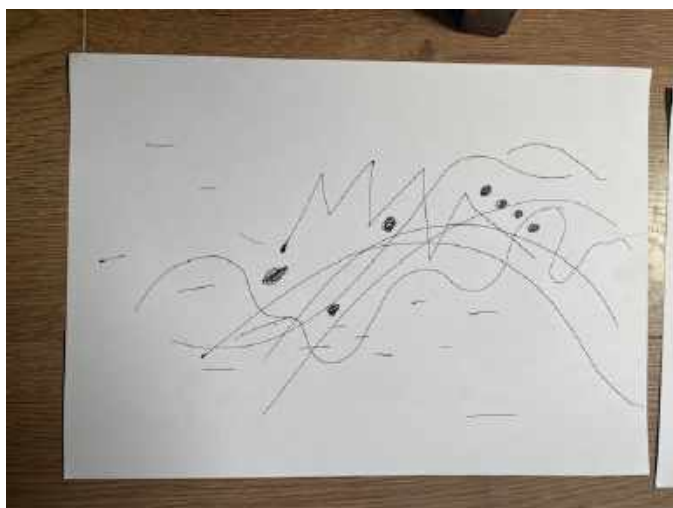
1. *How wonderful that music brings you to such a richness and intensity of emotions. As a true music lover, you luxuriate in the experience and really get the maximum out of it.*
2. *In fact, you are not listening to the music, but using it as an interface to put you on a narcissistic voyage. The only thing you do is admiring the spectacle of your inner theatre. You don't connect at all with the 'music as music', you are only imposing yourself upon it.*

The third mode we called 'Head listening'

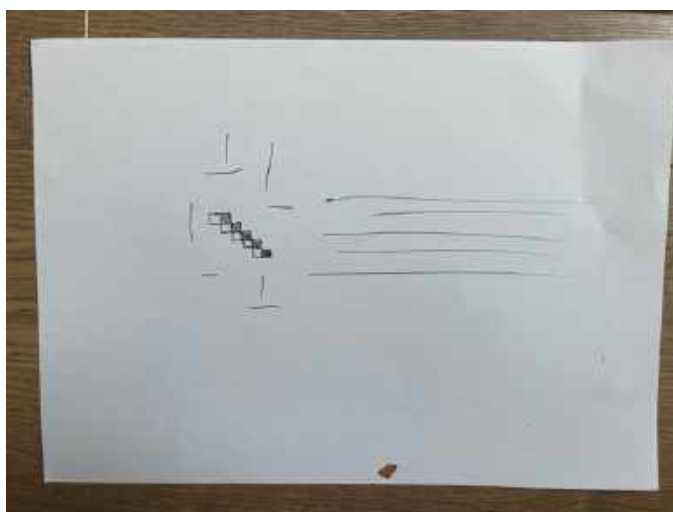
This listener listens to the music with great interest in the musical properties. All professional musicians are trained to listen this way, but also among laymen in our session there were a few that not let themselves go (body) or were only occupied by themselves (heart). A Head Listener draws instruments, music notation, keys and orchestras. A Head listener is aware of musical form ('this is the verse, and that is the chorus'), the musicians and their instruments ('what a wonderful oboe-player!') as well as a general cultural context ('I prefer baroque music above italian opera'). Also someone completely ignorant about (classical) music is a Head Listener when he/she is fascinated by the performance rather than by him-/herself, because of the outward focus.



This person most surely has had some basic music education, as he uses keyboards, well-drawn notes and a treble clef as to represent the music that he hears.



Though graphic in its kind, and unsophisticated, somehow this person had a clue that what he listened to had something to do with dots and lines representing musical events.



This is a brave attempt to condense the listening experience into something resembling of music notation, represented by a staff of 5 lines (which is correct) and a couple of indicators of high and low, dark and light. In its metric make-up, it resembles a score.

By the way, also in example no. 2 from session 1, we can detect properties of Head Listening, through the drawing of treble and bass clefs.

Also to the Head Listener, something to cheer and something critical can be said:

1. *How wonderful that you really know the music to the core. You are an expert listener to whom the music has no secrets. Concentrating on what only matters – the music – you are an ideal member of the audience.*

2. *Being devoted to the properties of the music, your experience can become quite Apollonian. Music also has a Dionysian side. Loosing yourself, letting go of orientation and immersed in feeling is as meaningful as persisting in constant awareness, occupied with puzzle solving, determining and analyzing.*

Learnings

Session 2 brought a number of things to the light. The first important thing to add to the profiling as depicted above, is that everybody has access to all three of the modes. Of course. Thus, every 'Head Listener' also enjoys the eros of the music, and every 'Heart Listener' is somehow aware of that the sounds come from a piano, and from a piano *piece*. Likewise, a 'Body Listener' is never void of any emotions or thoughts, hence the thickening of the lines in the drawing. He/she also will position him/herself in the best possible position in the hall to hear the music properly. The listening modes – or profiles – are interpreted as such just to clarify a starting point for each individual. Apparently each individual has one of the listening modes first in line. The drawings are a proof of that.

Furthermore:

- There is no point in valuing one mode over the other, since they just appear as they appear, as behavioral reflexes. This is especially worth mentioning because 'Head Listening' is thought to be the ideal listening mode. By layman as well as by musicians.
- Since everybody has the potential of the three modes, any two other could/should be trained. And that is exactly what GAMPSISS is going for.

All in all, we determined these three listening modes and isolated them theoretically here above, since we had to come up with a clear model that could function as a ground for our game design. The three modes were eventually transformed into three planets where the player could loll about and train his listening skills.

3.2 Interviews with musicians

Musicians are master listeners of music. They listen like an octopus swinging its arms in all directions at once, listening to many different domains and layers simultaneously. While playing, they are active in the moment and aware of everything that happens and sounds, while operating a vast network of reference points through the deployment of a multitude of listening modes. In the present they listen to their own instrument, through which they listen to the history and character of their instrument simultaneously. Depending on how they judge the sound they have produced, they will adjust it. In fact, they listen to an imaginary ideal sound and relate their own sound to it in a continuous cycle of controls and adjustments in which the search for critical tension (and sometimes also the pushing of boundaries) is at stake. At the same time they listen inward, to their inner world and link their feelings to the (multiple possibilities of) expression of the music in order to fill it with personal meaning. Finally, while listening and in a continuous process of searching and evaluating, they try to reveal what the composer has heard, by imagining how he/she has listened to his/her music for him-/herself, in his/her inner self. On top of that, musicians simultaneously listen to the musicians around them and respond to them in a free but also protocolled way that we call 'play'. Moreover, during all this specialized work they shift back and forth between all these areas of attention at lightning speed. Time travelers, multi-taskers, listening gymnasts they are.

For this research, 10 professional musicians from the field of classical music were interviewed:

- 3 singers
- 1 clarinet player
- 1 percussionist
- 2 violinists from a symphony orchestra
- 1 baroque violinist
- 1 cembalist/organist

The form was an open discussion around the question 'how do you listen?'. Along the way, we touched on the conditions for listening. Luckily, they were not hesitant to express their view and expectancy of how an audience should or could ideally or preferably listen to music. The interviews took place in the offices of their employers and lasted about two hours. Some musicians brought music examples to illustrate their insights. The interviews were recorded, though unfortunately some of them are lost due to a computer crash.

Condensing and harmonizing the interviews, the input from the musicians resulted in a scheme of twelve stages. Each of the twelve sections addresses a stage or situation of music listening. The list was submitted to the musicians for further refinement or correction, and thus received its final form, see below. The list is somewhat chronological in the sense that it starts at the beginning, namely when the music is not yet sounding, to then the conditions for listening, to the first sounds that sound, to the arousal of emotions and thoughts, and so on. Gradually, however, the strict order blurs and evaporates, because everyone listens differently, and will go through different stages, as well as go for different endpoints, as we will show. Some, for example, will see 'wanting to lose themselves' (number 10 and 11, see below) as the ultimate goal, others connect with the music and their own experience in

other, equally valid ways. Increasingly, the list becomes a collection of possibilities rather than a sequence of stages.

This text, therefore, is not thought of as normative in any way: it is not a collection of prescriptions on how to listen. It is intended to give insight into how musicians envision and define their listening activity. A certain wishful thinking about how they would like audiences to listen unmistakably shines through. That's exactly what makes the list valuable, because this proves once again that there are many different kinds of listening. In the words of two of the musicians: *Music is integral, so body and mind, meaning and intoxication, a bouquet of impulses that allow you to enter into conversation with all sorts of layers of yourself.*

And: Listening is a temporary bubble. Relating to music is also a cultural process. You get sucked in (or not) via the reciprocal dynamic between internal curiosity and external music.

This is what the musicians came up with:

1. Get rid of noise, your obstacles and annoyances
2. Prepare yourself to surrender
3. Activate curiosity
4. Concentrate and become receptive
5. Jump in, but stay aware
6. Engage in emotions, critical thoughts and associations
7. Forget yourself but keep reflecting
8. Let your emotions lead you to new experiences
9. Feel how you can change and explore new selves
10. Arrive in the now
11. Disappear in the music
12. Listen to yourself and your experience also when the music has stopped

Learnings

- Numbers 1-5 are sequential, and for classical music fairly generic.
- Numbers 6-9 are of a higher intensity and can appear in any order, interpolate or appear simultaneously. Also, they can be skipped or overthrown.
- Numbers 10 and 11 are more transcendent experiences that not every listener has, or aims for. In their ultimacy, they are likely to read as (normative) endpoints of ecstasy, but here the initially sequential character of the list should not be interpreted as a normative display. All numbers 6-11 can be considered as end points.
- Number 12 addresses the post-music experience, which is aesthetically incredibly important. The prolongation of the experience in which one can revisit the material is a measure of impact and meaning.
- Number 2 ('surrender'), 7 ('forget') and 11 ('disappear') indicate that music is a powerful force, a something that is 'everywhere at once', a totalitarian form of art, as was shown in the theories of listening.
- Number 3 ('curiosity'), 5 ('aware'), 6 ('critical thoughts'), 7 ('reflecting') and 9 ('explore') indicate that listening is an activity of the mind, complemented by 5 ('jump in'), 6 and 8 ('emotions') that indicate that music is about feeling(s). Finally, 2 ('surrender'), 6 ('engage'), 7 ('forget yourself'), 8 ('let your emotions lead you to new experiences'), 9 ('how you can change and explore new selves') and 12 ('listen to yourself and your experience') indicate

that music has a transformatory potential, it being something that can be framed as for instance spiritual, psychological or socio-cultural.

- An overarching and more encompassing course is that listening is perceived as some sort of a travel, starting out with leaving the (stable mode of the) self, towards forgetting and disappearing, to finally arrive at a spiritual state in which the self is questioned and newly discovered. Something that is supported by the desk research.

3.3 Interviews with composers

Micha Hamel and Janna Michael

For this research, nine composers from the field of contemporary classical music were interviewed. Interviewers were strategic researcher Michael and artistic researcher Hamel. We aimed for a varied sample of composers of contemporary art music in different stages of their career, a variety of genders, and representing different sub-genres or audiences. We strived for this variation in the sample to represent different voices within the Dutch classical music world and increase our chances to find varied accounts of listening and ideas about the sector. The form was a semi-structured, in-depth interview, conducted through a method of 'active interviewing' (Holstein and Gubrium 105). The interviews took place at the composers' houses or at the institutions where they teach. Because of contact restrictions in the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, one interview took place online. The interviews were in depth and lasted two hours or longer. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The interview quotes presented below were transcribed by the authors from Dutch to English. The aim was to acquire expert knowledge about the listening experience of western classical music and its ideals.

In the previous chapter, we defined a particular kind of expert listening – as it comes to the properties and the building blocks of music – as 'Head Listening'. We applied this terminology to produce an insightful trio (Head, Heart, Body) for our game design, but in more academic terms, 'Head Listening' should be read as 'analytical listening', such as applied by an culturally educated, studious and diligent listener:

The first listening style to be addressed is what could be called 'analytical listening'. Analytical listening is the ability to discern the technical elements of a piece of music and enjoy the music not purely as an emotional utterance but also as a piece of craftsmanship. The skill of analytical listening and its status are likely to be as old as musical notation is; compositional operations expressed on paper facilitate complexities that exceed the immediacies of perception. Together, these operations constitute a standalone artifact: the 'musical composition'. To genuinely and deeply enjoy such composition, the activity of decoding and unwrapping this product of some master's craft enables an experience of spatiality. The architecture of the music becomes manifest in the conceptual space, *i.e.*, the mind, of its listeners thus rewarding them for their mental efforts. Since composers kept on discovering the possibilities of elaborate operations, music theory gained importance over the course of the centuries in Western Europe, up to the point that music philosopher Adorno considered analytical (or structural) listening the essential skill for a 'serious' audience (Adorno²¹, 1956).

Being highly trained craftsmen/-women, most of the composers interviewed listen to music in an analytical way as the following quotes illustrate:

Composer no.1

[I listen] *Very analytical[ly] (...) How is that construction? Or: oh, what a beautiful transition. Or: oh, how does that fit together? Or I listen with the score on my lap.*

Composer no. 2

When I listen, it's first of all to the structure of the music. To how the piece is put together. The logic and the causality or the deliberate breaking of it. That I find most interesting.

To composer no.2, analytical listening is in line with Adorno, considered the ultimate form of listening, or at the least, for listening to *his* music. He strongly points out that music is an architecture of time and memory. Reading the suggestive overtones in the following statements, analytical listening is requested from (if not imposed on) an audience:

Composer no.2 (continued)

It's about the ability to either listen from moment to moment, which I'll just call the 'Céline Dion kind of listening', where she makes sure that you, every moment she's doing something, are emotionally touched. Or you let go of that and go for the meaning of all those musical events as a chain, as a whole. Then you are rewarded afterwards. I think it has to do with distance: being able to oversee the whole by listening analytically. The more you get a sense of the coherence of things, which quietly emerges at the moment when things that are interwoven and form relationships with each other, the more you can really integrate those layers. That you are able to mirror the notes at the end and bounce them back to the beginning. That you understand the connections, and that this is ultimately more profound. I think having insight into a work of art is very satisfying. (...) When you're listening, you can also listen back and connect things. You can listen back, like: hey, I just heard that already and before that it happened once before, but that was something different. All that happens while you're listening. It's a very complex way of rewinding and moving along at the same time. The time factor is so great about our art form. It doesn't just go 'this way', but you can go in all directions at the same time. That's a very rich field. You can switch to other layers and other layers of time very quickly. That's what I call deeper listening.

Another composer says how he shifts between listening modes. In the second sentence, he acknowledges the limitations of analytical listening, and addresses a certain tension between them, up to a point that they can become mutually excluding:

Composer no.3

I have moments when I lose myself in music as well as many moments when I just want to listen analytically. I wish I could listen like I used to [as a child], when everything was a big mystery and everything just came to me.

Out of this forever lost paradise, the next composer also acknowledges this sort of binairity, but comes up with a more integrated view:

Composer no.4

I do listen analytically, but that doesn't mean that that's a better listening form than the associative way of listening, or to put it more strongly: I think that an associative way without a whole package of knowledge is there too. I think those two forms of listening are simultaneously present.

...which somehow is not surprising since his musical imagination sprouts forth from an affective, subjective source:

Composer no. 4 (continued)

I am my own listener, I make music that I would like to hear myself. The music I write starts with that prior experience: (...) that sound I hear is very strongly related to other things I've heard.

In the last quote we have come somewhat closer to the creative process. Coming to talk about how the internal listening(s) that the composer executes during composing, the following composer brings the different listening modes (analytical and intuitive) actively into his process of creation, as a tool to construct an aesthetic ideal. While shifting modes (or broader: changing roles) he investigates how formal (analytical) operations work out for a listener, whom he tacitly implies as someone listening music in a more general experiential mode:

Composer no. 5

I think I've learned not to judge myself immediately. Like: oh, this is not allowed, oh this is just a simple triad, oh, this has been done so many times before, this chord progression. So I create first and I do that from and kind of listener mode and then I continue with it in composer mode. (...) As soon as I have [composed] a few minutes [of music] I go back into the listener mode. Then I think: okay, something really has to happen here because what I just made is really too boring. And then I revise.

Seeing that composers define two listening modes that appear in their practice as makers as well as in their receptive ('consumer') mode, in different combinations and levels of integration, a new concept arises that is productive if not pivotal for audiences too: dialoguing. Which is: engaging in a process of flux that includes emotional as well as intellectual modalities. Investigating what composers do as (pure) listeners, a very important answer came from composer no. 6:

Composer no.6

One is like 'Ooh, this! Ooh, that! Ooh, wow! Or: 'Now I get this, and now I get that.' So I'm kind of in a dialogue. Maybe I have a dialogue with the music I listen to. An inner dialogue. It's kind of an active communication way, but it's not that I think: oh, I'm dialoguing with myself, or: I'm dialoguing with the music. Everything has become one thing.

In the first sentence, she describes a series of responses. The vividness of the experience lies in the fact that she is active, and executing an internal dialogue. But this dialogue has a special form. It is an enhanced form of response dynamics that intensifies the situation in such a way that a merge between music and listener is achieved.

Learnings

First, we learn that every composer listens differently – which is not at all surprising. The consequence might be, that an audience should listen differently to any single composer. Again, not 'listening differently' as listening to the differences of how symphony of composer A differs from the symphony of composer B, nor by being aware – by reading the program booklet – that this piece has different properties than the other, but to apply a different set of listening skills in order to be able to connect to the music, and from there on explore the possibilities of listening offered by this particular music. New listening modes may even appear, discovered.

Second, we learn that whatever listening technique, skill, mode or profile one chooses, the secret lies in the dexterity of it. The 'metaskill' of being able to dialogue, to shift positions

and modes, to be flexible, to be able to travel, to transform, to transgress. And in the end: to *meet* the music on equal terms, like it is a living person. The ultimate stage of this intense dialoguing is 'everything to become one thing' (see composer 6), which means that music and listener become one in a situation where borders dissolve. Listening then equals – mystically said – becoming music.

3.4 A repeated listening diary study

Janna Michael and Koen van Eijck

To acquire a deeper knowledge on listening and musical appreciation, listening attitudes and listening habits, researcher Michael and van Eijck (EUR) conducted a study in which repeated listening was researched. While the full paper is being published elsewhere (please contact the authors if you would like to read the full study), we highlight some of the findings here.

Listening to music can trigger, enhance and mediate powerful emotions (e.g. Clarke²², 2005; DeNora, 2000; Sloboda²³, 2010). Earlier research has established how the way we listen, perceive and evaluate music is informed by cultural identities and socio-economic factors (e.g. Bourdieu²⁴, 1984; Frith & Goodwin²⁵, 1990) and how music functions as a resource for the self that is mobilized in different situational contexts (DeNora²⁶ 2000). Despite these valuable works, our understanding of how emotional relations with music develop over time and are described in the context of socio-cultural identities is still limited. The relation between music and emotion has been explored in the fields of philosophy (e.g. Davies²⁷, 2003; Kivy²⁸, 1990; Przybysz²⁹, 2013), musicology (Daynes³⁰, 2010), psychology (e.g. Evans & Schubert³¹, 2008; Juslin³², 2016; Juslin & Västfjäll³³, 2008), and, to a lesser extent, sociology (DeNora³⁴, 2000; Hennion³⁵, 2015). But how are music listening experiences informed by socialization, and how do the strong experiences with music listening come about and are made sense of? This sub-study explores the self-reported experiences, perceptions and associations of people who have listened repeatedly to a piece by classical music composer Dvořák (1841–1904). We interviewed participants about their preferences and listening habits and asked them to keep a listening diary during the process of listening to the music for eight times. Based on the interview material and the listening diaries, we are drawing new insights on the ways in which people familiarize themselves with classical music and how this affects their appreciation. Building relations with music is deeply personal, yet we find patterns in the way people discover the different layers of the music which are informed by their musical education.

This study builds upon the existing work and intends to enhance our understanding of how musical meaning is created and which role is played by memories, emotions, and socio-cultural background. We expand understanding of this matter by exploring the perceptions and emotional responses to repeated listening. We do so by having participants report on their actual experiences while, on their own terms, repeatedly listening to two pieces of music, one of these being the first movement of Antonín Dvořák's Symphony No. 8, the other being a piece of their own choosing.

In this analysis, we focus on the Dvořák movement, which facilitates interpretation of the results as all participants report on the same piece. Classical music in general and this piece in particular, make for a particularly interesting case for several reasons. Classical music is widely considered one of the most legitimate cultural genres, which makes many eager to learn more about it, yet feel insecure about whether they will understand it. Simultaneously, the legitimate position of this highbrow genre remains no longer unquestioned in contemporary European societies and is, especially for younger people, less widely known that it used to be. Classical music is often associated with diverging cultural meanings regarding its listening. It has long been associated with focused, 'analytic' listening, but it is also broadly conceived as relaxing background music which may enhance

one's focus on other tasks. (DeNora³⁶, 2000). Music without lyrics yet with a complex musical structure lends itself well for a wide variety of interpretations by participants. We chose a movement of Dvořák eighth symphony as it is created by a top composer, yet it is not one of his most famous pieces which makes it likely to be unknown to our participants, yet full-filling genre conventions and thereby being a relevant representative of classical music. Further, this piece is, as assessed by our artistic researcher, relatively easily accessible and this movement is rather variegated, allowing for different emotions and associations to occur. Classical music listening has often been associated with analytic modes of listening, feelings of 'mastery', or the joy of understanding what is going on musically. On the other hand, enjoying classical music is often considered to be not so much an intellectual or analytical endeavor, but rather a spiritual or intuitive activity. Clearly, there are different ways to approach and appreciate this music and we expect these ways to depend not just on the specific piece of music itself, but also on the listener.

Daynes³⁷ (2010) has conducted a study in which she repeatedly exposed participants to the same piece of music and measured their emotional responses to tonal versus atonal music. Our research here, is inspired by her set-up, yet our analysis focusses more on the emotional experience and narrative about the experience. Daynes found that increasing familiarity through repeated listening enhanced understanding of musical structure and allowed listeners to better anticipate emotional events in the music (see also Deliège & Mélen³⁸, 1997). Apart from these changes through repeated listening, absolute levels of familiarity played a role too as the emotional responses to atonal pieces were consistently weaker than responses to tonal music. Through more exposure and time, individuals appear to develop a liking towards more complicated music, and a tendency to dislike simpler, well-known music. For example, Szpunar, Schellenberg and Pliner³⁹ (2004) argue that the more (subjectively) complex a song is, the larger the upward trend in liking is since the complexity of the song becomes gradually understandable. Still, liking diminishes as soon as enjoying complexity is replaced by boredom and satiation. Thus, appreciation of music tends to exhibit an inverted U-shaped relationship with familiarity, where the exact shape of this so-called Wundt curve depends on both intrapersonal and intramusical factors. Hence, the richness of a song, indicated by its multiple, complex musical layers and structure, delays the optimal experience which is reached later than with a less complex song. Earlier studies have also shown that, indeed, appreciation does not necessarily increase with familiarity. Witvliet and Vrana's⁴⁰ (2007) findings suggest that repeated exposure actually stimulates *polarization* of perception. Music that was initially rated positively was evaluated even more positively after repeated listening, while music which aroused negative affect was evaluated more negatively with increasing exposure (see also Finnäs⁴¹, 1989). They argue that this finding makes sense if processing fluency is theoretically linked to plausibility. Increasing fluency through repeated listening can then be seen as a confirmation of the initial hypothesis regarding the likeability of a stimulus. As we listen to music, we form mental representations or schemas of the piece which are partly transferred to long-term memory. During repeated listening, we may activate the schema and add additional information or modify it (Daynes⁴², 2010). That is also how this notion of plausibility works: through repeated listening, people develop more elaborate mental associations to other ideas and build additional connotations that tend to strengthen initial attitudes. Similar polarizing results were observed in a study of the relation between exposure and appreciation in the

visual arts (Meskin, Phelan, Moore & Kieran⁴³, 2013) (see for a more elaborate literature review Michael & van Eijck, forthcoming).

Methodology

In order to gain an in-depth understanding of people's listening experience and emotional response to – and relation with – music, we had to find ways to capture this inarticulate experience. We therefore first conducted extensive (pre-diary) interviews capturing the background and musical habitus of participants (see also Rimmer⁴⁴, 2012). Following the initial interview, we asked participants to listen eight times to a piece of Dvořák and eight times to any musical piece of their own choosing (with which they had no or limited familiarity) while keeping a listening diary for each session to capture their experience as closely as possible. Diaries are still a relatively rare research tool, yet we considered them particularly suitable considering the flexibility and expressive freedom they provide, thus offering “an effective tool to study introspection” (Koopman⁴⁵ 2016: 229). The kind of free response that is enabled by diaries “encourages respondents to think more deeply about their experience, and is more motivating” (Sloboda⁴⁶, 2010). However, since the open-ended nature of the diary format also has the potential drawback of complicating comparison, we used post-diary interviews to ask for clarification or elaboration of the participants' diary entries so as to safeguard adequate interpretations of their listening experiences as well as grasp their reflection on the overall process. Depending on participants' location and the fluctuating COVID-restrictions at the time of the study, interviews were either carried out in person (in an office at the university or in the homes of either interviewer or interviewee) or online via Zoom.

We adopted the diary format from Daynes⁴⁷ (2007), which gives rather open-ended instructions for each listening session, asking respondents to write down any thoughts, memories, emotions or other associations that come up while listening to the music. The use of open-entry diaries enabled participants to capture their experience as close to in-the-moment as possible and allowed for plenty of expressive freedom with their own emphasis, thus enriching the substance of the post-diary interviews afterwards. Participants were asked to listen to the music and fill out the diaries right after each listening session. They could plan these listening sessions at their own convenience, but preferably within some 4-6 weeks. They were free to choose a setting that suited them, ranging from lying in bed and being fully focused with a headset on to listening while jogging or using public transportation. These settings, as well as their moods, were recorded in the diaries as well.

We aimed for a broad sample not consisting of classical music listeners but anticipated that people without interest in music would be unlikely to participate. The sample involved several students from different programs and different universities, as well as some working respondents. All of them had pursued a university education or were currently doing so at either bachelors or masters level. In total, 15 participants completed the entire trajectory; four males and eleven females aged between 18 and 49, with a large majority being in their twenties. As the research team is based in the Netherlands, participants were also located in the Netherlands but had eleven different nationalities, typical for the international student population of the universities at which they (had) studied. Interviews were conducted in either Dutch or English. Dutch quotes have been translated into English by the authors in the sections below. We subjected all interviews and diary entries to thematic analysis

following Braun and Clarke⁴⁸ (2006).

The research on listening diaries made it to the national newspaper 'Algemeen Dagblad', that headlined: *Will the beauty of a piece of music increase when one listens to it repeatedly? This professor will research it for us.*



Findings

There are a few shared traits of the repeated listening experience that hold for virtually all our participants. All of them came up with associations in their diaries. Most are about their own lives or experiences, such as associations with movies they saw, places they went, or fairy tales, but also many about nature, such as forests, lakes, birds, spring. Interestingly, all participants expressed feeling overwhelmed by either the intensity or complexity of the music at some point of the study, typically early on. For many participants, the repeated listening was not only an inward, associative journey, but for some the music turned into a soundtrack. For Floor for instance, the moving world outside her window triggered the idea of turning the music into a soundtrack. *As the song started to sound more powerful and other instruments started to play along, I could feel how the focus shifted from myself to what was happening outside. I started noticing how the cars are moving while watching the city from the window and I was trying to find the perfect match for every sound to every car moving.*

The emotions participants experienced were as varied as the Dvořák movement itself; ranging from calmness to anxiety, from sadness to euphoria, or from nostalgia to feeling uplifted. This complexity is also what makes the piece hard to grasp at once and why it takes some time to comprehend it, although this was typically perceived as pleasant.

When looking for patterns in how diary entries evolved during the series of listening sessions, we can distinguish between three categories of listening trajectories which will be introduced in detail further below. These are 1] growing appreciation; 2] decreasing appreciation, and 3] unconvinced.

Despite many commonalities the listening trajectories varied vastly among participants in terms of their experience and appreciation of the piece. Those in the *deepening appreciation* group, (11 of the 15 participants), often had a strong existing interest in music and were eager to invest in familiarizing themselves with the Dvořák piece. They typically listened in a quite concentrated and curious, sometimes even analytical manner, getting to know the piece through a continuous process of discovery, which generally was associated with positive emotions, pleasant associations, and high levels of appreciation.

Those in the *decreasing appreciation* group (2 out of the 15 participants) showed some initial interest in the Dvořák movement, but soon found it either annoyingly complex or boring because it did not speak to them in the way popular music does. They adopted a more casual listening mode and were generally quite relieved when the listening sessions were over. Notably, both participants in this group had had limited musical training.

The *unconvinced connoisseurs* group (again 2 out of 15) consisted of those who were on average most familiar with classical music. In addition to a willingness to invest in the piece similar to those in the first group, this group also compared the Dvořák movement to other works or composers of classical music and were actually quite critical of the piece. Their appreciation did not increase with exposure, but suffered from their informed criticisms, making the repeated listening task quite burdensome towards the end.

Conclusions

The analysis of the Dvořák listening diaries attempting to capture the participants' listening experience revealed three different listening 'trajectories'. All participants who voluntarily committed to the participation started with initial curiosity about their repeated listening experience and without being familiar with the Dvořák piece. During their first listening sessions, all of them discovered new associations or elements in the music. From there, the majority of the participants enjoyed the series of sessions and deepened their appreciation. For them, the perceived complexity of the music allowed for ongoing discovery, a multitude of emotions and diverse associations. For two participants, the ones categorized as having a 'decreasing appreciation' Dvořák is demanding in an unpleasant way. With them we also see limited experience with classical music, they are big fans of pop music and, there is no shame in admitting that Dvořák is not for them.

For some, here categorized as 'unconvinced connoisseurs', it appears very relevant to compare Dvořák to similar composers and understand what he is doing and why, almost as if they take Dvořák's perspective or try to understand the composer rather than the piece.

The listening trajectories as they came to the fore in this experiment also confirm that the inverted U-curve showing first an increase and then a decrease in enjoyment with repeated listening is indeed too simple. But despite these contingencies, when listening eight times, the piece does grow on most participants and their appreciation increases. This is promising for arts education, but also shows that it is important to consider people's musical habitus and preferences which heavily affect their listening experiences. And while we see individual trajectories regarding the relations people built with the piece, we also see their personal histories and musical education to be important in informing these trajectories. Independent of these varied listening trajectories it is striking to see how moods and circumstances affect how the music is experienced. It is truly about the interplay between the stimulus (music), the subject (participant) and the circumstances (time of day, business, secondary activities).

Across the different types we see cultural goodwill being a relevant influence on how participants relate to the music. "Classical music is good for you" appears a common cultural belief we find regardless of whether participants ultimately deepened or decreased their appreciation of the Dvořák piece.

3.5 Listening to others in society

Annebeth Erdbrink and Micha Hamel

From the findings and learnings of the researches above, an omnifarious outline of musical listening arises. Due to the nature of listening itself, these theories fit in a general assemblage in which many congruences and crossmappings occur, but still also resist reduction and stabilization. As for the musical side of our project, we had to limit ourselves and chose to work with 'dialoguing' as a central concept, especially to be executed in order to circulate and integrate the three listening modes that we got out of the drawing sessions. However, while the first half of the abbreviation GAMPSS – GAmeful Music Performances – speaks of music, the final four letters S,I,S,S stand for Smart, Inclusive and Sustainable Societies. How to bridge those realms? How to translate the skills for music listening to societal listening? How could society eventually benefit from listening skills trained in a concert hall?

Value of person-oriented listening

Listening skills are considered as one of the core life skills (Wolvin & Lim⁴⁹, 2022). We maintain our human connections by listening to others. Of all communication activities, listening is the most widely used daily communication activity (Janusik & Wolvin⁵⁰, 2009). People generally apply one of four primary listening styles when they listen to others: their listening behavior can be driven by time, action, content or the very person they are listening to. People in individualistic communities (like The Netherlands) tend to prefer a time, action, or content-oriented listening style (Beall⁵¹, 2008) and are generally less focused on the very person they are listening to. Although there are plenty of reasons and situations to mention where those preferred listening styles are useful to apply, practicing person-oriented listening can benefit human relationships and thereby also society as a whole. It can stimulate trust and reduce conflict and misunderstandings amongst people. In a time of increasing polarization where people seem to be listening less and less to each other, investing in person-oriented listening seems to be of great value.

Response patterns and open mindset

Person-oriented listening is the premise of *active* listening. Active listening was first introduced in the 1950s by well-known clinical psychologist Carl Rogers⁵² (1951). It includes communicating interest to the speaker (McNaughton et al.⁵³, 2008) and involves listening behavior where the listener actively tries to grasp both the content of a message and the underlying feeling or attitude to the message (Rogers & Farson⁵⁴, 1957). Active listening aims to create a deeper connection between speaker and listener, as the listener gives the speaker full attention via inquiry, reflection, respect, and empathy (Spataro & Bloch⁵⁵, 2018).

An essential element of active listening to others are the *listeners' responses* to the speaker. These are crucial because perceptions of active listening are tied to the response patterns (Hall⁵⁶, 2012). As active listening is person-oriented, the responses involve reflecting on the speakers' messages and asking questions to encourage elaboration and further details (Weger et al.⁵⁷, 2010). Five active listening response styles are identified: Advising/Evaluating, Analyzing/Interpreting, Reassuring /Supporting, Questioning/Probing, and Paraphrasing/Understanding (Johnson⁵⁸, 1996). Person-oriented responses positively

impact the immediate communication and the relationship of those communicating (Hall⁵⁹, 2012). Another important part of active listening is keeping an *open, curious, and non-judgmental mindset* (Tzchakov and Grau⁶⁰, 2020). Active listeners strive to identify and question assumptions while always respecting the speaker (Ferrari⁶¹, 2012).

Strengthening the listening attitude

The importance of listening is generally acknowledged (Eggenberger⁶², 2019), but listening abilities can be overestimated (Zabava-Ford et al.⁶³, 2000). We often regard listening as an automatic process rather than a skill essential for good communication (Goby and Lewis⁶⁴, 2000). To become proper active listeners, people must be willing to listen, know what they are doing and why they are doing it, and apply the necessary skills to accomplish their listening communication goals (Wolvin & Cohen⁶⁵, 2012).

Actively listening to others is a complex human behavior requiring training and development (Wolvin & Lim⁶⁶, 2022). But remarkably, we are generally barely "taught to listen". Listening is even one of the least taught skills in higher education (Jalongo⁶⁷, 2010). If attention is paid to listening in higher education, it is commonly constrained, misunderstood and providing little room for discussions on the topic (Bond⁶⁸, 2012, Adams & Cox⁶⁹, 2010).

Fieldwork

During the 2019 edition of the yearly 'knowledge festival' called the 'Night of Discoveries' in Leiden – a free of charge festival in which the citizens of Leiden are invited to visit all kinds of activities, exhibitions and demonstrations in the many buildings of the university –, researchers Erdbrink and Hamel asked 40 passing-by visitors to answer two questions about listening to others. Specifically, why attentively listening to others often seems so difficult to us. Visitors could write their answers anonymously on paper and deposit their form in a special box (see pictures below).

The two preprinted questions were as follows:

- 1. Why do you think people often do not listen to each other?*
- 2. What can stand in your way of listening to another person?*



The visitors' answers can be summarized per category in the table below.

1. Why do you think people often do not listen to each other?		Quote of visitor
OWN NEED	the need to be heard first	<i>"Above all, people want to tell their own story. "</i>
	preferring not to listen	<i>"Lack of interest."</i>
DISTRACTION	full of thoughts	<i>"Own thoughts running wild during the conversation."</i>
	surroundings	<i>"There are more and more stimuli, and that makes it harder to pay attention."</i>
	other people	<i>"Talking over each other."</i>
JUDGEMENT	prejudices and bias	<i>"People sometimes see other people's opinions very much through a lens of their own ideas and experiences, so they sometimes fail to hear what is really being said."</i>
FEAR	social anxiety	<i>"Because it can be scary to have to change your opinion. It feels safer to stick to your own (ingrained) views."</i>
TIME RESTRICTION	priorities	<i>"Hurry."</i>
2. What can stand in your way of listening to another person?		
OWN NEED	the urge to be heard	<i>"The feeling that my own thoughts are important to share."</i>
	the need to be heard	<i>"Having to hear the same story too often (especially after multiple counseling/conversations without change as a result)."</i>
	the urge to talk	<i>"The need to contribute, more than letting the other person tell their story."</i>
DISTRACTION	full of thoughts	<i>"Not being in the moment."</i>
	surroundings	<i>"Crowds, distractions, no room to move, not flexible enough."</i>
	other people	<i>"Facial expression of the interlocutor or an annoying voice."</i>
	emotions	<i>"Too full of my own emotion; my own enthusiasm or sadness."</i>
	fatigue	<i>"When I am very tired".</i>
JUDGEMENT	prejudices	<i>"My own assumptions. Then, all too soon, I think "Oh, that person must mean this" or "I know exactly what the problem is". While later it turns out that the person meant it completely differently than I interpreted it."</i>
UNCERTAINTY	social anxiety	<i>"At the same time, we are concerned with how we come across to others."</i>
TIME RESTRICTION	priorities	<i>"Lack of time to listen, to ask questions."</i>
IMPATIENCE	priorities	<i>"Lack of patience."</i>

From this simple survey, the burdens of today's accelerated and alienated society come to light. First, a lack of time blocks the possibility of a listening based on qualitative (inner) dialoguing, which is a process of intertwined feed back loops including thoughts, feelings, commentaries and fantasies to enfold. Second, when hasty, and taking no time to form nuanced opinions, one has to rely on prejudices to navigate through life, and becomes biased. Third, when, as a result, not connected to other people in meaningful ways, one may become insecure – see the answers 'social anxiety' and 'fear to have to change one's

opinion' – and compensate for that by inflating one's ego. Which, fourth, leads to an array of phenomena, like talking too much, talking too loud, impatience, pushing one's own story, boredom with the interlocutor and distraction.

Where in a healthy situation, the ego is a source to engage in through a flux of distancing and approaching whilst making space to pour experiences of dialoguing, here the ego is solidified, and becomes an obstruction. Diversions and side-thoughts, being productive as long as they are applied *within* the listening process – as our research shows – are now pushed *out* of the listening activity into the realm of a general biased attention, where they become counterproductive: diversions become distractions that prevent the ego from listening, as well as side-thoughts are to escape from listening.

The task we are facing, therefore, is to restore, organize and construct an inner space in which the behavioral habits can be pushed back into place. The space in which there is a wide array of flexibilities so the inner world may flourish. Time is key. Taking time will be the kickstart of a process of (re-)humanisation, kickstarting the upward spiral: that listening will make us better human beings, and that good people are defined as good listeners. In the deliverables that we designed, taking time was a central concept. In deliverable 1, we built a game that asked a full hour from a concertgoer – an hour to be spent in advance of the concert – to focus on and train his/her listening skills. An investment of attention to be rewarded by a more varied and more qualitative concert experience. In deliverable 2, we built a live action game arena in which the concertgoers were invited to dedicate themselves to philosophies of listening, to become aware of the importance of listening, to train their listening skills, and – last but not least – to contemplate about the role and function of music, and of listening in society, and finally, become vocal about it.

4. STUDY 1: LISTENING SPACE

a game to prepare for a classical music concert

4.1 The game prototype

The game Listening Space can be played through the following link:

<https://listening-space.gamelab.tbm.tudelft.nl>

When playing it, do keep in mind that it is a prototype, and not a ready to market product.

The extensive report of the scientific research on this game prototype – from concept to game analysis to the effects on its users – can be read in our collaborative paper '*Listening Space – An exploratory case study on a persuasive game designed to enrich the experience of classical music concerts*'⁷⁰. The chapters in this present artistic research report solely address the artistic considerations during the game design, as well as contains a general evaluation at the end.

4.2 Design process

For designing the game prototype, the team collaborated closely. All our expertises mattered and had to converge into the game design. Since our team didn't include a game designer, we had to find a studio that could actually manufacture the game. Luckily we could collaborate with Gamelab TU Delft. Specializing in serious games, they at first showed us a number of games that they had built for others, for us to get inspired by. These experiences and the continuous input of the Gamelab were a great driver of the process.



Goal

The goal of the game prototype was threefold:

1. increasing awareness about listening as a rich activity *that is developable*
2. informing the gamer that their listening can be expanded *for the benefit of musical experience*
3. training existing and new listening skills, resulting in a potential *for deeper experience*

Principle

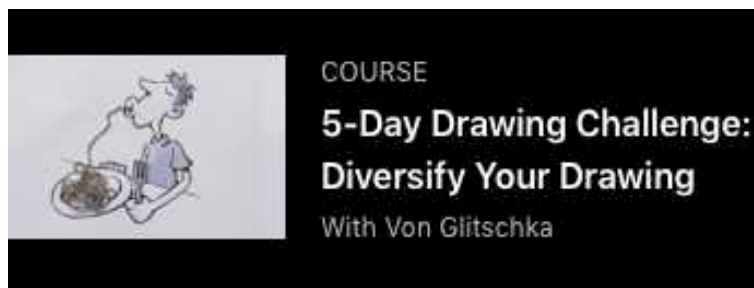
One of the biggest fears that concert organizers rightly have, is that new technologies are interfering the pristine experience of music. In a certain way classical music resists innovation, not because its musicians are conservative or the music itself is outdated, rather because the concert situation is too simple to spoil, too straightforward to bargain with: someone playing music for another person who listens, the latter being silent to be able to listen better, an edifice with thick walls facilitating that. The many innovations that the sector has initiated or undergone are theatricalizations like the adding of film, lighting design, fire works, video mappings, drinks, moderators, live animations (VJ), as well as interventions in the set-up, putting the audience amidst the musicians, in a circle around the musicians or lying on the floor with their eyes closed. Many of these interventions are succesful, but are not replacing their older, simpler versions. Their effects remain local. The majority of concerts are still in (succesful) robust setting.

The crucial thing we decided was that we didn't want the audience playing a game during the listening of music. Audiences fidgeting on their smartphones during an orchestra concert might look good on trendy photos to be used in some marketing concept that shows that the orchestra is not the dinosaur everyone thinks it is, in the end this will backfire since it deviates from the whole point of the visit: listening to music. We therefore decided that the game should be played in advance, as to prepare for a classical concert. We thought that the game experience should not exceed the duration of one hour, so that a vistor could play it somewhere between the moment of buying the ticket online and the concert itself (within the period of a couple of days, or up to many months), but 'in emergency' even in the venue, when arriving and realizing that the game still had to be played. In that case, while having a coffee, the game could still be played from 19:15 to 20:15.

Since the game had to be generic, we filled it with a variety of musical examples, all recognizable as classical music. The game promised to be inclusive, we wanted a simple interface, so that a maximum variety of user would have no problem operating it.

Examples

We took inspiration from the following examples:



This is a serious challenge that activates people (amateurs) to mobilize their creative

potential. We thought our game prototype also should contain serious exercises, meant for amateurs.



This is a superficial way of avatarizing yourself into a famous character. Still, we thought it was a good idea to add a certain goofiness in our game, to install a mood of informal playfulness as to give it a relaxed overall feeling. Also, we thought that working with strong symbols and clear players' profiles would stabilize the experience, which, based on philosophical, artistic and sociological agendas could soon become brainy and vague.



This challenge was called 'The Icebucket Challenge' and was a hype at the time. We liked it particularly because it made the player proud. Also, we thought a general feeling of 'fun to do, let's do it' would be beneficial for a classical music game that has to convince new listeners. We therefore wanted the game prototype not to be *too* serious, because an emphasis on the educational aspect would quickly overlap with things like program books and pre-concert talks.

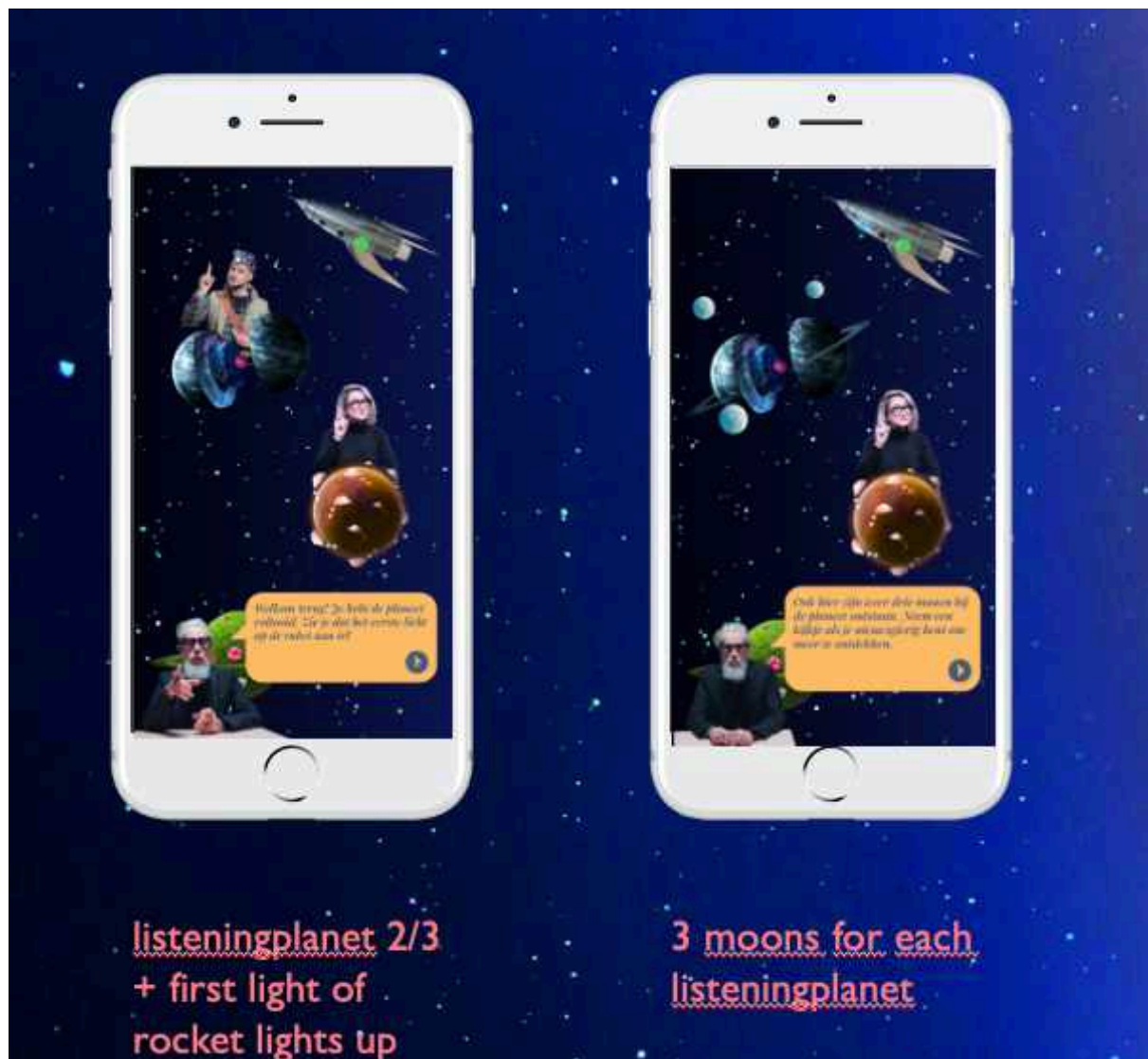


This is one of zillion fitness apps available for smartphone. We thought our listening training should also be broken down to clear steps that are easy to perform, leading to an overall result.

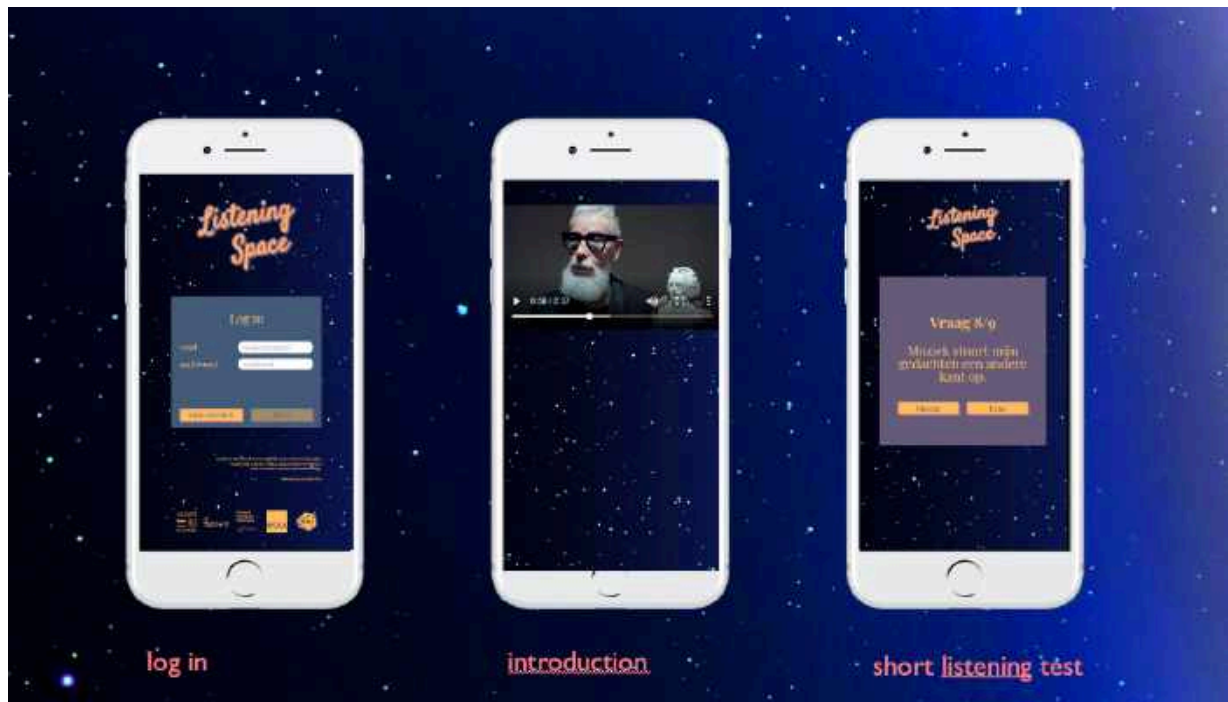
Content

These artistic considerations led to the final design:

- to work with a simplified version of the three listening modes to clearly distinguish them from one another, even up to the risk of caricaturizing them. A simple theory would be easy to remember and to apply, later, in the concert hall.
- to symbolize the listening training as a journey into unknown worlds, that resulted in the allegory of a rocket traveling to three different planets
- to symbolize each one of our listening modes through a planet in which the player can dwell and exercise.



– to give the player a comfortable start by letting him/her start on the planet (in the listening mode) that he/she is familiar with. The game defines that through a questionnaire when entering the game, that analyses the answers along the lines of how the drawings in the listening sessions (see chapter 3) were used to determine a listening profile.



This means automatically that the game contains three possible points (planets) of departure.

- the three listening modes were never hierarchically displayed or addressed.
- to facilitate the 'journey of listening discoveries' each planet has a guide as a representative. This guide gives advice and encouragement in a positive tone, and aims the player to explore as much as he/she can.



- the game prototype doesn't contain game levels in the classical sense, but for the player who is interested in knowing more, an optional visit to a planet's 'moon' is possible. This way, we tried to diversify the game internally.

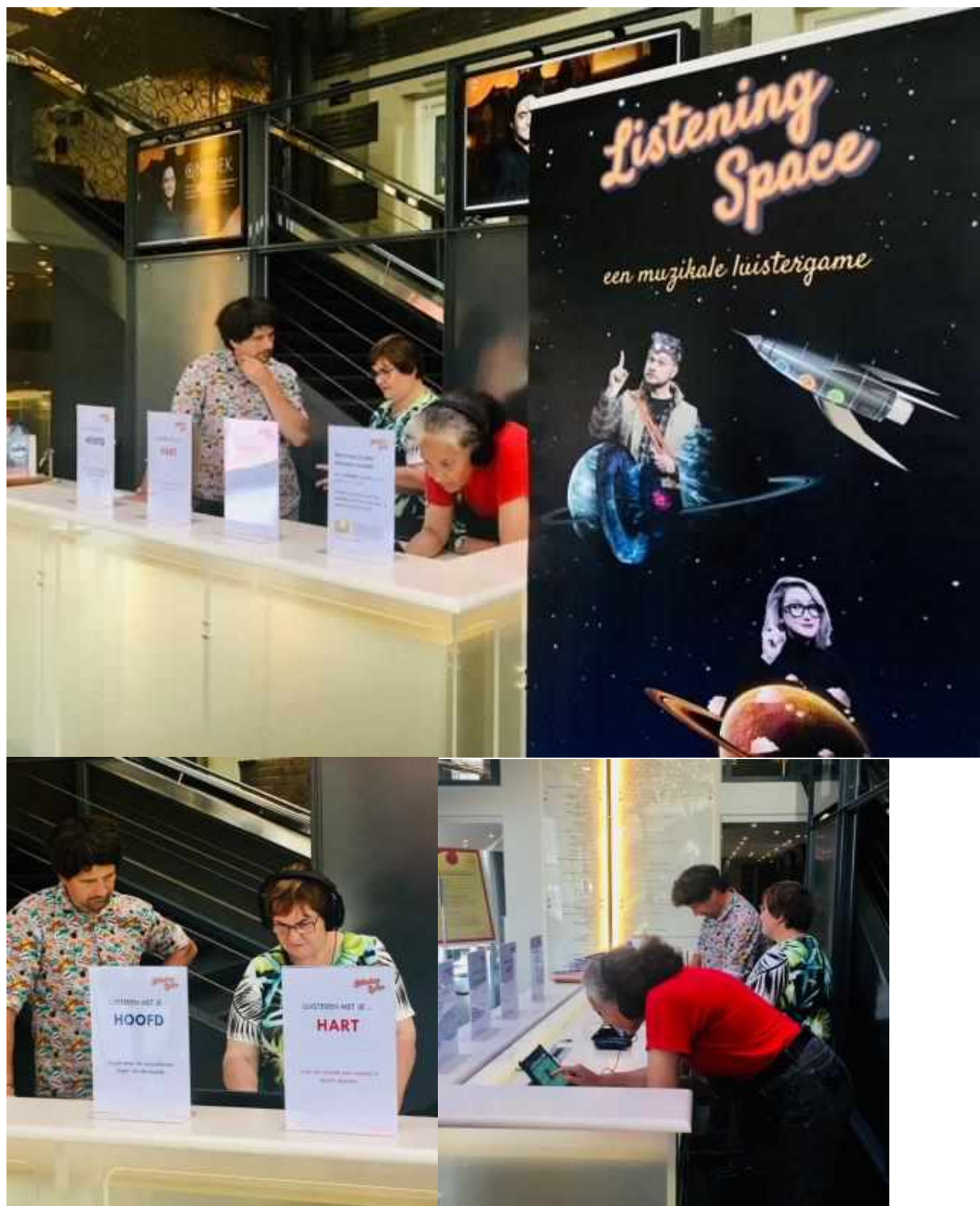
– the journey finishes with a 'master test' in which the listening modes should be alternated, combined, integrated, so as to train an elasticity of listening. This is the central goal of GAMPSS: to activate a flux of dialoguing resulting in what we call 'elastic listening'.



Testing

We tested parts of the prototype amongst ourselves at the Gamelab, as well as a public test session on the 'Uitmarkt Amsterdam', in the lobby of the Concertgebouw.





After these sessions, we finished the building of the game prototype and tested it with audiences in concert halls, see scientific publication.

4.3 Artistic evaluation

In general, the game prototype met enthusiasm, especially with our target group, the 'passer-by's'. See for details our paper: '*Listening Space* – An exploratory¹ case study on a persuasive game designed to enrich the experience of classical music concerts'⁷¹. Hereunder some critical findings by the makers themselves about the artistic aspects of the game prototype.

The game itself

– As said above, we tried to avoid the ingrained set of associations that western classical music is serious, stringent and metaphysical. However, the colorful, theatrical and slightly ironic game that we made, wasn't doing it for quite some people, because they experienced it as too childish in its look and feel. Especially the actors, who perform in an exaggerated way and are dressed in theatrical 'cliché' costumes, were associated with television programs for children, instead of as a relieving informal way of presenting the game's listening theories. Apparently, we took our wish for accessibility too far or in the wrong direction. A next time, careful testing with focus groups could tackle this issue, though of course it remains impossible to make something for absolutely everyone. Rather one can think of building a number of variants, so that the customer can choose the version of his/her preference. This of course will make the game more expensive.

– The game starts with a short, playful survey in order to define your 'initial profile'. As profiling is a precarious socio-political issue in our time, it was a struggle to find the right questions for the questionnaire. In the version at stake, we didn't manage to have the questions lead to the listening mode in a completely transparent way, which actually was deliberate, but lead to misunderstandings. The irony of the questionnaire wasn't completely clear to everyone, and some audience members got suspicious over it.

– Although the game took an hour to play, there were not enough minigames on the 'planets' to experience the listening modes to a great depth. Especially on 'Idonia' – the one about Body Listening – the experience was a bit shallow for there were too few games, but also because of the fact that is contradictory to train a *physical* experience while staring at a smartphone screen, which is an highly disembodied situation in itself. We cannot imagine how to solve this problem now. Secondly, in order to deepen the skill training, many more and more complex, challenging mini-games should be added. However, this would make the game much longer, which will likely lead to future audiences not beginning (at all) or not finishing the game challenge, leaving the game only to avid gamers instead of drawing new users. Also here, the issue of accessibility is something to finetune, balancing it with content-related ambitions. Something to chew on for future developers.

– Another issue is that the game as it is now is a single experience. An audience member that accomplishes the whole pre-concert/preparatory journey surely benefits from the increased awareness of listening, and sometimes also from his/her increased listening skills. But will those skills last? That is unlikely. Still, it is equally unlikely that this audience member will play the game over and over again, even when it is filled with new audio fragments regularly. In order to fit in a functional education game, the multitude of listening theories had to be simplified and compressed, which now meets its disadvantage: the theories are grasped in a single play, rendering it unnecessary to play it again. With its

1

simplified theorization, the game prototype is not encompassing, but on the other hand nor are the skills acquired for a life time. While this game prototype was successful in engaging people and apt for educational use, in this version it mainly seems to function as a one-off experience. Further nuancing and a continuation of the learning process could be efftuated through adding more levels or even by new game conepts and games.

Other issues

– The audio excerpts for Listening Space were granted to us by our private partners. As them being in kind contributions for the project, as well as they were meant for an educational prototype, they were free. Also we selected music by composers that were free of rights (composers that died longer that 70 years ago). This made, of course, that the music samples were all from music of past times, which wasn't a problem in the first place (since GAMPSISS is about classical music), however it obstructs the possibillity to work with (more) contemporary or other musical genres (pop etc.). At least, when one wishes to work with a budget that is in proportion with the final product and its prospective market. To work with contemporary music will make the game challenge much more expensive, up to the point that it is unlikely that consumers will buy the game as an additional to their concert ticket, nor will concert producers aquire the game challenge and give it to their audiences for free. Rights should be settled under special conditions maybe, and to the purpose of the game accordingly.

– A more encompassing conceptual question was raised by some during the entire four years of our research: are these listening skills (Head, Body, Heart + circulating them) generic, or are they specific for classical music? Or – to broaden the scope – for analogue music (which would include for instance folk music, world music and early jazz)? This is a hard one to answer. On the one hand, one can say that any music can be listened to as a generator of feelings (Heart), as something to generally enjoyed (Body) and to be understood (Head). On the other hand, specific musical genres are withdrawing themselves from these categories, or at least, they are forcing the theory towards the hypothetical. Like what to do with trance music with its mechanical aesthetics, with John Cage's philosophical 'non-music', or contemporary film music that is close to sound design? Also, non-western genres will surely open op to many more listening possibilties, as their cultural configurations account for a different vision of human life and meaning than the quite cartesian layout of Listening Space. It is unlikely that all three listening modes are equally applicable for all sorts of music, unless it operates in a maximum holistic mode.

– This all gives rise to a series of new questions. If Listening Space is a generic, well functioning listening skill training, an empty framework to be filled with audio fragments of a specific genre, why does one need to fill the framework with audio fragments of an other (say: hiphop) genre at all? If listening *as such* is trained – as GAMPSISS boldly claims – one could train the skills for listening regardless of the genres. It would very well be possible, apart from taste and preference as points of access, to train one's listening skills for classical music through hiphop music and the other way around. That touches on the weird, or the overly optimistic towards future users. However, it is equally unlikely that for every musical genre – and as if rigidly defining them would be beneficial to anyone – a completely new game will have to be built. This all is open for discussion and further design research.

5. STUDY 2: LUISTERMUTANT 2021

a gamified concert event

Micha Hamel and Arlon Luijten

5.1 The enterprise

The starting point for Luistermutant 2021 (Listening Mutant) was fairly simple. We wanted to materialize 'Listening Space' into a live gamified concert. The planets of 'Listening Space' would be converted into three listening stations, in which each listening skill could be trained. In the performance as a whole, of course, interactivity should be the key word, so we had to rethink the venue (the concert hall) as a collection of spaces in which groups of people could play games and minigames. Quite a task, since that would mean splitting the audience into several groups that had to distribute themselves over the building. However, this wasn't completely covering the ambitions of GAMPSISS, which also had societal development as one of its key motifs. Therefore, we added a fourth listening mode: that of social listening, listening to other people.

We defined our ambitions for 'Luistermutant 2021' ('Listening Mutant') as follows:

Artistic ambitions

- Gamified concerts as a new interdisciplinary art form
- Gamified concerts go beyond the sheer delivery of information and become education in the complete sense of the word, something that shapes the individuals' citizenship.
- In such a concert, music connects with the discourses of the world and contemporary society
- In such a concert, music links to a multitude of contexts and events in an artistically and dramaturgically meaningful way
- In such a concert, music regains its dimension of cultural and spiritual marker in the tradition of idealism, but then in updated form
- In such a concert, music is understood as a driver for personal awareness and is experienced as relevant as it seeks to connect with citizenship and its values
- In such a concert, classical music as heritage is rebooted, preserved and appreciated

Social ambitions

- People become better at listening
- People become convinced of the importance of listening
- People incorporate their improved listening skills into their behavior
- People become more harmonious and collaborative in their everyday lives

Producing the performance

Since we spent all of our budget on the production of 'Listening Space' (a flaw in the financial structure of the Smart Culture call, which included very little money to actually *make* the Ludic Performances) we had to be inventive in making the second and even larger deliverable, Ludic Performance no. 2, later to be known as 'Luistermutant 2021' (from here on named Listening Mutant). This is what we needed:

- a modular hall so that we could work with different groups of people and in different artistic disciplines

- an orchestra to perform 19th century music
- a production partner to produce such an event

In the Netherlands, only one organization could be interested in producing such an event: the Holland Festival. The Muziekgebouw Amsterdam would be the perfect location too, because its concert hall being modular. After having developed a representative sketch, Luijten and Hamel pitched the idea with the Holland Festival music programmer Jochem Valkenburg. To our great delight, committed himself to the project.

For an orchestra, we found Philharmonie Zuidnederland as a partner. They had been very cooperative in providing the sound files for Listening Space, and the organization and its musicians are known for supporting and producing innovative concert concepts and formats.

Having Listening Mutant being produced by the Holland Festival, the project would draw national attention, which corresponds to the ambition of GAMPSISS as a research that would have impact not only on the discipline itself, but also the sector at large.

A new composition

One of the conditions that mr. Valkenburg set for us was the commissioning of a new piece of music, since the Holland Festival is about innovative and new performance arts. Actually, that fit perfectly in what we were aiming for, namely designing a training environment for the audience's ears, and using music as its training material. Collaborating with a composer would cater to the possibility of matching the training material and tasks with their goals and eventual outcomes. We were lucky to find Bram Kortekaas, an upcoming Dutch composer who had considerable experience in composing for symphony orchestra, as well as someone much into exploring new forms and aesthetic possibilities for the benefit of classical music and its futures. He joined our team and by bringing his artistic thoughts and musical ideas he contributed greatly to the project. His main contribution to the performance was of course the writing of a substantial orchestra piece in which the three listening modes identified in 'Listening Space' – head, heart and body – were the basis. Three different episodes of music, each one of them especially made to exercise a certain listening mode, finishing with a 'master proof' (a proof of expertise) in which the modes were quickly alternated and combined, eventually leaving it to the listener which listening mode of his/her choice to mobilize at any given moment, thus making him/her a dialoguing, elastic listener. The score included cues for the lighting designer when to change the color of the lighting in the auditorium, thus synchronizing the music with the listening mode to exercise.

These brief score excerpts below show how Bram Kortekaas translated the listening modes into three different types of music, fit to train one's ears with. Which music to compose for which mode was a central topic in our team discussion, but finally was made intuitively, in a holistic artistic way: by sticking to the most obvious auditory profile. Bram Kortekaas then further elaborated upon this during his creative process, since it had to play out as music in the first place. Of course we were aware of the fact that any music could be listened to with any of the modes (see evaluation of Listening Space) – that being our final goal, even – but still we thought for training purposes it would be good to work with isolated musical episodes that were inclined to one of the modes each, in, as said, the most obvious way. Practically spoken: in order to exercise 'head listening' Bram Kortekaas composed an

intricate, elaborate music to facilitate the discovering of layers, themes and counterpoints in the music (Example 1). For 'body listening' (Example 2) our composer came up with rich, vibrant, almost sculptural chords that had no rhythmic or melodic complexity but were designed to overwhelm. For 'heart listening' (Example 3), he wrote what could be called 'epic music', which is akin to film music, meaning heroic gestures, dramatic violin melodies and pulsating, exciting rhythms.

Example 1

The musical score for Example 1 consists of six staves, each representing a different woodwind instrument: Flute 1 (Fl. 1), Flute 2 (Fl. 2), Oboe 1 (Ob. 1), Oboe 2 (Ob. 2), Clarinet 1 in Bb (Cl. 1 in Bb), and Clarinet 2 in Bb (Cl. 2 in Bb). The score is written in a single system with six measures. Each staff shows intricate melodic lines and counterpoints. The first measure features a piano (p) dynamic marking. The second measure features a Piano (P) dynamic marking. The third measure features a piano (p) dynamic marking. The fourth measure features a piano (p) dynamic marking. The fifth measure features a piano (p) dynamic marking. The sixth measure features a piano (p) dynamic marking. The score is written in a single system with six measures. Each staff shows intricate melodic lines and counterpoints. The first measure features a piano (p) dynamic marking. The second measure features a Piano (P) dynamic marking. The third measure features a piano (p) dynamic marking. The fourth measure features a piano (p) dynamic marking. The fifth measure features a piano (p) dynamic marking. The sixth measure features a piano (p) dynamic marking.

Example 2

18

Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Ob. 1
Ob. 2
Cl. 1
Cl. 2
Bsn. 1
Bsn. 2
Trp. 1
Trp. 2
Tbn. 1
Tbn. 2
Tuba
Euph.
Timp.
T.A.
18
Trp. I
Trp. II
Tbn.
Wdr.
Cn.

Example 3

A musical score for a string ensemble, consisting of six staves: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, Double Bass, and Double Bass. The score is divided into three measures, each marked with a box containing the number 15, 12, and 181 respectively. The first measure is marked with a box containing the number 8. The second measure is marked with a box containing the number 8. The third measure is marked with a box containing the number 181. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'p' and 'cresc.'. The tempo marking 'poco a poco stringendo' is visible at the end of the score.

New collaborations

In conceptualizing the ludic performance, we aimed for a maximum amount of media, artistic disciplines and features. Ideally, the performance would have the energy of a luna park or an Arabian 'souk' market wherein there is a lot to do and a lot to get. A surrounding in which there is much choice, a labyrinth-like navigation, and in which the items are sexy, accessible and fun (though at a deeper level engaging and profound). Thinking along these lines, we thought that it was necessary to also include a digital game. Redesigned (by lighting design) as an arcade or even a game vault, the auditorium could house a community of gamers very well, and we thought it was important for the audience to feel like one.

For 'Listening Space', the in-house Gamelab of our consortium partner Delft University of Technology built the responsive website that we used as a prototype for our research. Since we ran out of production budget, we had to come up with something smart. Embedded researcher Luijten contacted the HKU (Hogeschool voor de Kunsten Utrecht/University for Applied Sciences Utrecht) and found teacher Henk Fakkeldij willing to participate with a group of students specializing in game design. In a process of collective creating under the tutelage of Luijten, and filled in by the requests and expertise of Erdbrink and Kortmann, a game for the smartphone was developed, which contributed greatly to the feeling of accessibility of the performance for young audiences, that we were keen on to achieve while aiming for an inclusive happening. This game thematized the fourth listening mode of GAMPSISS: social listening.

Covid

The performance was played three times in the main hall of the Muziekgebouw aan het IJ during the Holland Festival 2021, in June, Amsterdam. Due to covid restrictions, the audience was downsized in numbers dramatically, from an envisioned number of 400 participants to 120, of which only half was participating and the other half watched from the balcony. Also the participants were obliged to remain seated, packed in a single space – which felt, for what we artistically wanted to do, terribly conventional. So unfortunately we had to let go of the idea of an audience moving in small groups through the building, visiting different spaces in which various listening games were displayed and to be played. The giant multi-layered clockwork of interactive elements, with an audience experiencing poetry on

their headphones while, guided by facilitators holding flags, moving from the one listening station to the next, navigating their personal journey and eventually becoming the Listening Mutant themselves, was shattered. The performance that we produced, is therefore to be seen as a brave attempt to save what we wanted to make and research. Incomplete and overdone as it worked out, we at least got a glimpse of a multimedial, interdisciplinary and inclusive performance that seriously addresses profound questions of listening to music and listening in society.

5.2 Listening Mutant 2021

a description of the events

Arlon Luijten

Hereunder follows a description of the scenes, games, concert excerpts, exercises and events that collectively formed Listening Mutant 2021, a concert like an eclectic gym. A gym for and about listening with heart, head and body. An experiential crash course in listening to music, to yourself and to others.

In the following, I describe this course of the performance at length and in detail in the hope that this will allow the reader to "see and hear" it. Dramaturgical explanations and questions I avoid as much as possible, since these can be found in the chapters thereafter. This linear and dry description of the performance serves as a reference for the interpretative, reflective and critical texts that follow. Between descriptions, there are quotes from the performance. These quotes are set in **bold**.

THE PERFORMANCE

PROLOGUE

Walking into the auditorium, the audience sees a traditional orchestra set-up, but in front of it there is a collection of steel devices and objects, different in shape. It looks like a gym. On the chairs for the audience, white plastic protection suits are placed. On the large video screen displayed above the orchestra this text:

Welcome

Choose the network: HF_Luistermutant on your phone

The devices, the white suits and the call on the screen make clear that this is going to be an interactive experience. When the hall light goes out, an animation of an octopus appears on the video screen that is suspended above the orchestra, in the back. From a large set of loudspeakers a voice sounds, guiding the audience through the performance:

There you go – along the water of the stream.

Along the water of the creek follow the stream

The stream downhill calmly walks along and meanders

Meanders sloshing down into the woods

That forests so black so dark that never

That never was in you any desire

To go there not everyone who

Wandering around is lost

Lost is only the one who does not know himself

The text makes clear that we are going on a journey. When the voice is gone, the symbol of the octopus also disappears. From now on we know that the octopus is our guide.

PART 1: THE QUESTION

Simultaneously, two small spotlights: one illuminating the conductor now standing on his podium, the other on a woman (an actress) in a white suit with a top hat, looking like a circus director. She also stands on a small podium that is placed in the hall, amidst the audience. The orchestra is dressed in traditional black costumes. The attention of the woman is focused towards the audience. On the video screen:

Free the Listening Mutant

It is now clear that something is expected of the audience. They are being actively engaged. Then, the orchestra plays a short excerpt of music, namely Mendelssohn, the beginning of the fourth movement of the Italian symphony (no.4).

At the end of the music, four young actors emerge. They wear white suits topped with large sculptures reminiscent of megaphones, each one of them facing different directions. The four players clearly have different cultural backgrounds. They nod modestly to the audience, and each one of them opens a script, then placing them on the music stands in front of them, according to the conventions of a song recital. Electronic, cinematic music starts over the speakers.

The four players recite a text about the different aspects of listening and listening culture. Musical, historical, artistic, political, economic and philosophical knowledge. Opinions tumble over one another, preparing the audience for the broad context in which the performance will take place. The argument leads to the premise of the performance:

Society has to change. For that, we need to listen to each other in a better way. Mendelssohn's music, known for its multiple voices and layers, is apt to employ as a training device. The concert form does not have to change for this, but the listener does. They must learn to listen in different and multiple ways.



During the talk, texts appear on the video screen, commenting on the talks of the speakers, providing point-by-point explanations. Also, it interrogates (and challenges) the audience:

Actor 4

Citizenship is

A: a clean pavement in front of your front door

B: the check mark in the polling station

C: the annual tax return

D: taking part in economic activity

E: obeying the law meticulously

F: doing something extra for society, for example, by doing voluntary work

G: helping to shape the world

Actor 1

Would anyone who feels like a citizen raise their hand?

Screen projection

DOES MENDELSSOHN HELP US TO SHAPE THE WORLD FOR THE BETTER?



Actor 1,2,3,4 simultaneously

NO NO NO!

Too little

Could be

YES! YES!

Screen projection

OR SHOULD WE STOP PLAYING MENDELSSOHN?

These two questions form the central issue to be answered by the audience during the final scene of the two-hour performance, and can be rephrased like this: can western classical music (and by extension, its institutions and infrastructure) be relevant for society and literally contribute to it by being a driving force in social development and citizenship?

The scene ends in a cacophony of voices and opinions, thematizing a multitude of questions, wherein radical counter-voices and all kinds of societal issues are brought into the arena:

Actor 2

Mendelssohn was a rich white man, born in a golden bed.

Actor 3

Without LIFE experience. He teaches me nothing!

Actor 1

Do you hear WHITENESS in his music?

Actor 2

Do you hear WEALTH in his music?

Actor 4

Classical music is a spiritual piece of me-time

Then, eleven additional performers in white overalls enter the stage and stand between the steel objects. It is clear that they are there to assist the audience. The arena is open, it appears to be a gym and it is time to train. To train the ears, to train for citizenship.

PART TWO: THE MUSIC

A headphone symbol appears on the video screen.



The audience put on their headphones. They hear the voice of the guide again. The voice activates them by calling them to an adventure:

follow me

I'm with you

the call the call for the march that heroes

make heroes and when I speak of heroes I speak of you

yes you

who else?

follow my voice

i'm with you...

As from now on, the audience members are led through four forms of listening, facilitated by four 'listening stations'. These stations were symbolically communicated as if the audience was on a journey. In pre-covid times, these stations were distributed over four different spaces in the building, the audience literally going on a journey. In times of covid,

we unfortunately had to let go of that concept, and make the audience stay in the main hall, respecting distances also.

STATION 1 - HEAD LISTENING

This part of the performance, led by the white woman, will introduce the audience to three forms of listening to music: Head Listening, Heart Listening and Body Listening.



In a school-like, informative demonstration, the white woman explains that there are several elements in music that you can recognize: melody, rhythm, chords and harmony. The orchestra plays short excerpts so the audience can immediately practice this. Who is best at discerning the different musical elements? Finally, the orchestra plays a longer excerpt so the audience can challenge themselves. Then, the headphones are put on and the guide prepares the audience for the second form of listening:

***Just now, through head listening you listened to the music
but now, in the heart listening station, you will listen to yourself
through the music
This way of listening we call heart listening
and in this performance has the color red***

***You are a human being
You have been living for a while
so your heart is full of life experiences
As an untapped potential, you are sitting in your chair
The archive, your inside database, is still dormant***

***You are curious
All your feelings are ready for action...***

STATION 2 - HEART LISTENING

The audience are asked to grab their smartphones and log in to the 'mentimeter network app', an interface that allows for interactive polls with groups. The video screen now shows pictures and videos, each followed by a question about them. The whole thing has the form of a psychological test. The audience enters on the phone what feelings, images and thoughts arise inside of them ('in their hearts') while listening to the Mendelssohn excerpts played by the orchestra.



***You are standing in front of a window
You look outside
What do you see?***

- 1. a landscape***
- 2. a person***
- 3. an abstract form***
- 4. nothing***

There are also questions that appeal to personal experiences and histories:

Was your first kiss outside or inside?

- 1. outside***
- 2. inside***

Was your first kiss what you expected it to be?

- 1. yes***
- 2. no***

Wander and wander off. How far can you get away from the music? Hold on to the thinnest possible yarn. Almost forget the music

- 1. I managed to do this***
- 2. I couldn't achieve this***

At the end of this exercise, a video with many colored areas appears in which the audience's input choices are calculated and converted into a personality profile. But not an individual one, it is a group profile. The actors in the white overalls enter again. When they take off their overalls, they wear multi coloured catsuits, the colors corresponding to the results of the profile test. They explain by saying:

This profile gives us information about Mendelssohn's ability to spark and evoke your personal stories. What we see is that a group identity, a particular "person" emerges from your collective data: in this case: fiery, humorous and unfaithful. Fiery - because the image 'fire' was clicked on more often than the image 'donkey'. Humorous - because you clicked on internally contradictory pictures more often than on obvious ones. Unfaithful - because you took quite a long time clicking on the pictures with persons

On the video screen, the 12 skills of active listening (in social contexts) appear:

- ***encouraging smile***
- ***an open body posture***
- ***lean towards the speaker***
- ***occasionally touch the speaker lightly***
- ***make eye contact***
- ***nodding in an encouraging manner***
- ***eliminate your own bias***
- ***pay attention to emotions of the speaker***
- ***hear what is said between the lines***
- ***respond personally to what the speaker is saying***
- ***repeat what the speaker has said***
- ***invite questions***



The players in colored catsuits give the audience a listening advice based on their group profile:

*Since you are ardent, I recommend that you pay more attention to the speaker's emotions from now on, rather than allowing yourself to be taken in by your own emotions
 Since you are humorous, I recommend that you keep a close eye on whether this trait is not charging you with too much prejudice. And since you are unfaithful, I advise you not to ask inviting questions. They may well be misconstrued. These three skills stand out for you, audience members in this room, are extra important to focus on while listening to the other person, because there is still room for improvement there! But pay attention: this is what Méndelssohn does to you! After attending a Rachmaninov concert, our research shows, 'lean towards the speaker' and 'smile encouragingly' need extra attention. After listening to AfroJack, we see the 'make eye contact' take a back seat, but the 'touch the speaker lightly' manifest more clearly than before.*

Actually, this mentimeter wasn't real. It wasn't operational, it was fake. We used it as a theatrical instrument to support our storytelling. It is unimportant whether the audience ever finds out that the quiz was fake. Important is that they have engaged themselves in listening to their hearts.

When the audience puts the headphones back on, they hear the voice of the guide who now addresses the whole body:

*slowly mutating creature with ears on knees
 ears under your armpits on the back of your hand*

***in your navel in your elbow and on the back of your head
one large eardrum
membrane receiver of vibrations
hundreds of votes are coming in
they speak at the same time
what do they have to say?***

The audience is now ready for the third listening position

STATION 3 - BODY LISTENING

Meanwhile, the white woman stands on the balcony and addresses the audience down the hall through a megaphone. She urges them to put on the white plastic protection suits and enter the space in the middle of the hall, the space with the green, steel objects. The audience now becomes physically active, as they take their seats in the listening chairs/devices.



They now look like lab rats watched from above by the remaining audience.
At each Listening chair/device, there is an instructor in a white overall saying things like:

***Listening is not with your ears but with the surface of your entire skin
And your skin area is two square meters
Two square meters of membrane
Ready for impact***

Sling your legs in a knot, swing your arms in the air and tilt your perspective

*Try fearlessly, take your chances where you can
For you are one big ear
Don't like Mendelssohn? Try it upside down!*



As the audience alternates seating in different chairs each time, the orchestra repeats the same Mendelssohn excerpt so that the impact of the changing posture on listening can be experienced well. As a reminder of the experiential nature of this scene and reference to instagram museums, the video screen gives another piece of advice to the active audience:

How does it feel inside out upside down backwards?



Don't forget to take a selfie!
And share it with the OTHER
#hf21 #luistermutant
#NOTHERENOW but hereNOW



After trying out different listening positions, the audience return to their regular seats and put on their headphones. This features the voice of the guide preparing them for an summarizing test in which the audience must combine the three different forms of listening: head, heart and body. Also, the voice makes an advance reference to a new form of listening not yet exercised, namely 'social listening', listening to others:



***mutating is quite a process and just when you don't think about it
at thunderclap the gate appears
without luggage you walk towards people in the distance
you know their name you know for sure
But...never heard their names....***

STATION 4: ELASTIC LISTENING

The woman in white addresses the audience, saying that from now on they will be asked to practice what they have learnt by alternating between the three listening modes. When the room turns blue (ambient lighting effect), they will have to apply and exercise 'head listening', which means listen analytically in order to recognize melody, rhythm, chords and harmony. When the lighting turns red, they will have to apply and exercise 'heart listening', which means allowing images, feelings and thoughts to arise. When the lighting turns green, they will have to apply and exercise 'body listening', which means using the whole body to capture and sensorially experience the sound as they have practiced in the steel listening chairs.



On the basis of an especially composed piece of music composed by Bram Kortekaas, a piece that identifies and facilitates each of the modes in a straightforward way, the colors change first slowly and then faster, requiring the audience to shift listening positions at an increasing pace. Finally, the color indications disappear and the colors blend continuously on the video screen. The listener may now decide by him-/herself, inspired and prompted by the music, which listening mode to apply, and when to shift to another. A listener masters the exercise when he/she is able to shift elastically, or even integrate the three modes into one transcendent one.

(Intermission)

PART 3 : THE SOCIAL DIMENSION

When the audience enters the auditorium after the intermission, it is illuminated with light effects so that the room looks like a magical cave. As a reminder of elastic listening, the orchestra plays the finale of the music from before intermission one more time. Then the voice of the guide (symbolized by the octopus) sounds again over the headphones, preparing the audience for a new form of listening: Social listening, listening to others.

which voice can you believe

mine mine mine mine mine mine

which voice do you prioritize when there are so many at once

who directs traffic in the auditory canals

so many opinions I didn't know there were so many yes so many and more so many more

filter the noise

***find the core the screaming core
that longs to be heard so desperately***

This social listening is exercised through a game that the audience plays on their own smartphones.

The woman in white explains:

“In this game we try to listen deeply to someone else. The goal of the game is to free the listening mutant. There are three listening modes for you to apply:

- 1. Listening purely to the information without being distracted by emotions and side issues***
- 2. Listening to what is been said between the lines***
- 3. Not listening at all***

You can liberate the listening mutant only (!) if you apply the right listening mode in a specific situation. One hint: alternating and combining these listening modes will lead to success. In case of technical problems, raise your hand and one of our facilitators will come to help. Good luck.”

DESCRIPTION OF THE GAME PLAY

The game on the smartphone is designed through animated videos. The various sounds and sound effects from the game, combined with the composed game soundscape sounding on approximately 120 smartphones in the hall form a large collective sound concert. A magical experience. When starting the game, the audience, now turned into individual gamers, wakes up in a cave. On their smartphone screens, a flickering shadow on the wall of the cave reads: 'Free the listening mutant!'.

Throughout the entire game, the player is given options to choose a next action. The options and dialogues in the game appear "written" on the screen, accompanied by an audio voice that speaks a gibberish language that symbolizes the emotional content of what is spoken. He starts with two options:

- 1. to stay put**
- 2. to get up and go out**

Once the player has understood the 'call', he (the avatar is male) sets out and the adventure begins. He soon encounters another cave dweller named Eustachias. Eustachias looks a bit like the avatar of the gamer (the protagonist) but older, with a long gray beard and worn clothes. Eustachias has a simple vegetable garden next to his hut in the cave. He seems to have lived there forever.



The avatar passes by and Eustachias, who at first tries to convince him to stay safely with him, eventually follows him, slightly reluctant. From now on, they are traveling companions. Throughout the game, Eustachias will provide the avatar (the gamer, in effect) with good and not so good advice.

Being companions in search to free the listening mutant, they have no clue who or what the listening mutant is, nor where to find him or her or it. Along the way, they encounter a number of mysterious challenges. Also, magical characters cross their path: a seductive boatwoman, a ravenous snail and a giant earwig.

Here is a sequence of scenes: when the avatar, crossing a shaky bridge, does not heed Eustachias' fears, they both fall into the water.



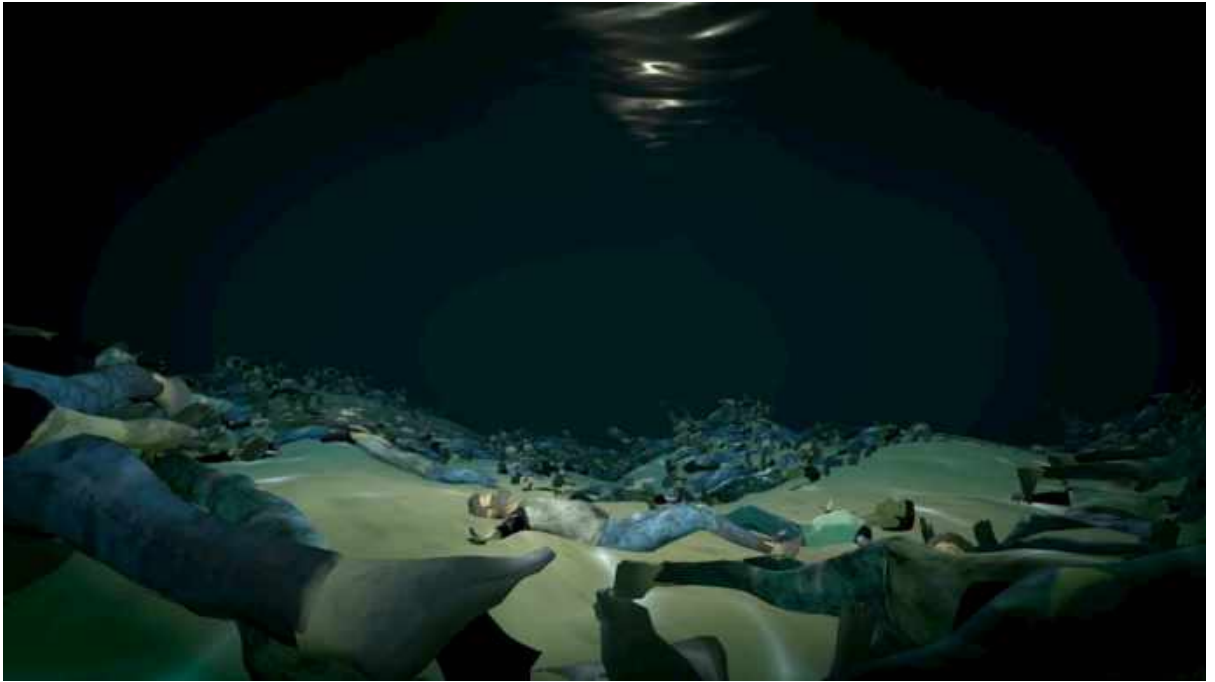
From the distance comes a beautiful boatwoman, enticing the player to come aboard.



When Eustachias and the avatar get into a conflict over this without listening carefully to each other's arguments, they both sink to the bottom from fatigue.



At the bottom they find hundreds of replicas of the avatar who, apparently, didn't make it either.



However, if they do listen to each other they gain the capacity to decide to board the boat or to swim further in search for land. In the case that they board the boat they hear where she is sailing towards: a wonderful, comforting and pain-free destination. If they listen carefully 'what she says between the lines', they may understand that she will lead them to death. The avatar who chooses to stay on the boat therefore ends up in heaven, a space containing only replicas of himself, with no 'other' to be found. This heaven thus turns out to be a 'hell'.





When the player and Eustachias decide *not* to climb aboard, they swim to land. There, a gigantic snail enters the scene, who says that he knows where the listening mutant is. However, he talks mostly about himself, and thus is not worth listening to. The avatar and Eustachias should be wise and leave! A next challenge is a puzzle door. The avatar must listen both to the 'pure information' to open the lock as well as, at the same time, to Eustachias' personal feelings.



The information that Eustachias utters is needed later, when attempting to cross the shaky bridge. In a classic master test at the end of the cave, the avatar and Eustachius face a giant worm, that guards the exit.

Passing the worm requires combining different modes of listening. The avatar should not listen to the advice of Eustachius who wants to destroy the worm, nor should the avatar listen to the pure information of the worm, but rather to the personal information behind his words. When the avatar doesn't listen in the required manner, he is eaten by the worm.



But upon properly completing this final listening task, the avatar transforms into a bird and

flies past the worm out of the cave into a new, unknown world, full of strange beauty to dwell and explore. While listening rightly on each occasion the avatar frees himself, and thus finds himself being the listening mutant himself.

The old Eustachias dissolves, leaving his threadbare clothes behind. He appears to be the non-listening version of the player, the one for whom life is tiresome and hollow.



End of game.

The lights in the hall go back to normal and the woman in white explains to the audience that they have now covered all four stations, and that, like the avatar in the cave, they too are on their way to free the listening mutant, or better said: the listening mutant in themselves:

“You have now gathered six listening modes on your journey

1 Head listening

2 Heart Listening

3 Body listening

4 Information listening

5 Listening between the lines

6 Not listening

We return home. To the question. In search of the answer.

Then she summarizes the assignment and the central question in the performance:

You heard Mendelssohn's music earlier today,

But does this music help us make the world a better place?

***With the six listening tools you have acquired and practiced, you are
you are now entitled to judge this music.***

Are we becoming better citizens because of Mendelssohn?

Or should we stop playing his music?”

FINALE – THE DEBATE

Like at the beginning of the performance, four players in white overalls enter the stage. They again wear the megaphone-formed elements on their bodies. The woman in white explains that each one of them will defend a different opinion of Mendelssohn. The audience then is asked to take out their smartphones again so that after each round the least popular voice can be voted out. This time the poll is real.



The audience, nourished by all the listening experiences and insights they gained during the performance, have become listening experts, fully equipped to determine the fate of Mendelssohn's music. The orchestra and its conductor wait for the outcome in tensitiy.



Then, the floor opens for the actors:

Actor 1

"(...) So no, music that's made to feel something, to sit navel-gazing and digging in yourself, no, there's no need to spend so much time, money and attention on that. Let that go. That time has passed. Move on. Mendelssohn, your time is up (...)"



Actor 2

"(...) Don't build walls around your ears. Don't let music narrow down your identity. Allow yourself freedom. Let Mendelssohn live on (...)"



Actor 3

"(...) Be in sync with today's world, so that absolutely everybody in the room can say: yeah shit man, this is about me. Mendelssohn has had his time. Choose for the present (...)"

Actor 4

"(...) Want to know who you are? Then listen to Mendelssohn. Open your ears and your eyes will see again (...)"

When the audience has chosen between the last two remaining votes, they have practically made a verdict whether Mendelssohn will be played for the last time ever, or not. Not being judged by ignorant people, but by listening experts who also are conscious of the role of listening in society, the issue of the relevance of Mendelssohn – and of classical music at large – is articulated in an edgy but truth-seeking way. After the verdict, be it positive or negative, the orchestra plays the 'Ouverture Hebrides' by Mendelssohn. For the last time, or as a first time of a long future for this heritage.

When finished, at the very end, the woman in white appears for the last time. She now carries all the megaphone-shaped elements previously carried by the 4 speakers. She looks like a multi-voiced being. She resembles the octopus that leads the audience throughout the performance, which was an adventure of transformation. The transgression from being an unknowing listener to a multi-skilled listener who is aware of the importance of music as well as the importance of listening well in social situations, as a citizen.

— **The End** —

5.3 Dramaturgical framework

Arlon Luijten and Micha Hamel

The title says: Listening Mutant, the listener as a mutant. Mutate, change. We chose to coincide the purpose of the performance: change, with its form: transformation. The goal is to make the audience change, or mutate, into another listener, a richer one, a more elastic one. The form we chose refers to Joseph Campbell's *The Hero's Journey*, a famous storytelling format.

In it, the protagonist receives a call to a hero's journey that he/she will take under the guidance of a guide. Along the way, he/she encounters good and false counselors, develops new skills and insights, and proves his/her heroism with a self-assembled weapon that often symbolizes all that he/she has learned along the way. Finally, in passing the master's test, a growth, a change, a transition occurs. The traveler is perfected into a hero.

In our performance, the audience is called to free 'The Listening Mutant', a cryptic assignment that will have to be deciphered underway. In all, the audience itself must mutate and thus liberate a new kind of listener within themselves. A listener that is skillful and explicit. The performance was therefore designed as a fanciful landscape in which the various opportunities for learning and growth are to be discovered. The narrator in the performance, the woman in white, a disguise of the religious-cultural trope 'Shapeshifter', functioned as a guide in the audience's heroic journey:

***".... to walk through empty space
softly through the dark by touch
That no man's land where I held your hand"***

Interactive games and gamification

The following features of a game have been building blocks in designing Listening Mutant:

- *Experience-based* (actions/feedback)
- *Experimental* (new ways/situations)
- *Safe* (no real-world consequences)
- *Interactive* (playing and working together with other players and partners)
- *Engaging* (joy and fun)
- *Immersive* (immersed in multiplicity, leading towards flow)
- *Challenging* (differentiated, concerning levels of difficulty and learning styles)
- *Reflective* (moments of looking back and analyzing)

We also grounded our work on the following, broader notions, inspired by the theories of game researcher Jane McGonigal:

- *Blissful productivity*

When we play, we are happier and more engaged than when we are just hanging out.

- *Epic meaning*

We love being a part of, and contributing to, a big meaningful story

- *Urgent Optimism*

While engaged in play, we experience extreme self-motivation

- *Social fabric*

When we play, we are virtuosos at weaving a tight social fabric. We like people more after playing a game with them (even if they beat us). This is because it takes a lot of confidence to play a game with someone. So playing a game creates trust and connection.

Multiplicity, Covid, Gesamtkunstwerk and Bühnenkomposition

Since Listening Mutant is not conceptualized as a story that runs from A to Z, but a landscape through which the audience must navigate, it was originally conceived as a wide range of activities and experiences. The main hall of the Muziekgebouw would have functioned as the central space where the orchestra would have played the Mendelssohn pieces and the audience would have engaged in group activities such as listening games, social reflections and voting polls. The three listening modes heart, head and body would have taken place in three other spaces in the building. The audience would have been divided into three groups, alternating between the three rooms. Then, after they would have all visited the three spaces in a different order, they would have been united in the main concert hall. While moving around the building, with their headphones on, they would have been guided by the voice of the Shapeshifter's. As a result, the experience would have resembled an amusement park in which the audience moves from one attraction to another. Or it would have felt like a museum in which the audience visits different floors, different exhibits. In a setting as described here, the audience perceives the multiformity therein as organic, each form of presentation taking place in a specific space.

Shapeshifter:

***"hundreds of votes are coming in
they all speak simultaneously
what do they have to say?"***

Conceptualizing Listening Mutant as an 'serious amusement park', or a labyrinth with its pluralistic contents and interfaces, we let go of the idea that all parameters should lead to a single effect, and every narrative had to be scripted in order to convey a central message. This could be compared to the dramaturgical and compositional difference between the so-called 'Gesamtkunstwerk' and the 'Bühnenkomposition'. Wherein the Gesamtkunstwerk is a form in which different disciplines merge and fuse into one total form, the Bühnenkomposition is an arrangement of different forms and disciplines after, and next to each other within a performance. In the latter, the fusion does not take place on the floor but in the minds of the audience.

The original design of Listening Mutant was a multiple Bühnenkomposition, in the sense that the different scenes were distributed over different rooms. However and alas: because of Covid19 restrictions, the public were not allowed to move around the building, nor to be gathered together in large groups. Therefore, at a late stage we as a creative team had to make a radical redesign: everything would take place in the main hall, in fixed places, with sufficient distance between the members of the audience. So, that which was intended as an exploratory labyrinth had to be squeezed into an assembled whole, a performance on stage with the audience on their seats. In other words: a conventional Gesamtkunstwerk. This created fusions and meanings that, in retrospect, should not have been there. The performance grew into a more arty and serious performance, as all the transitions took on additional meaning. The performance, which had been conceived as a non-linear

experience, now became a continuous and more intelligible whole, loaded with the expectation of a polished whole, instead of a adventurous assemblage. Also, the original strength of a layered work in which there was differentiation by level, entertainment value, educational value, presence and representation now became a work in which the choices had to be made between these many forms for practical reasons. In other words, instead of having the choice from an abundant array of menus, the audience was served the plate of the day.

Of course, It would have been better not to squeeze the performance into a conventional whole, but we had to make a choice for the sake of the show and the goal of our collective research enterprise: could an audience listen to Mendelssohn with new ears? Maybe the concept would have been better served by presenting the individual parts as a series at different times and in different spaces, since that way there would have been no noise of expectations. We will never know, or better said: new researchers might design new forms of presentation that could answer questions like these.

Shapeshifter:

***do you remember the gentle wavering
with courageous strides
to a way of moving that did not yet exist?***

Hybrid art

Another tension in which Listening Mutant was developed and executed was the intertwinement of the following three issues:

1. the performance had to be a 'Bühnenkomposition' research, designed to retrieve data
2. the performance had – for the audience – to be an experience, valuable within artistic conventions. In other words: it had to be 'good as a performance'
3. the performance had to make a clear and concrete proposal to address issues of innovation and urgency, centering around the impact of classical music on a society.





As for the collision between issue 1 and issue number 2, the free, autonomous forces of an artistic work are to be ambiguous and leave room for the imagination. Its poetic force is at odds with a scientific test that seeks to measure with great precision, and in the end leading to concrete conclusions. However, It is impossible to get tangible data on direct aesthetical experience without altering the experience itself. So in making a performance, those two ambitions are contradictory. Still, we held on to it, it being an artistic research enterprise.

We therefore left the linear chain of a creative process and entered a working practice in which exchange and mutual interaction took place between creator, performer and audience. Input was given by all of our team members, regardless of their discipline and experience, by students, musicians and the non-professional actors of JTSZO (Jeugdtheaterschool Zuideroost/Theatre school for the youth, Amsterdam South East). We chose to open the dramaturgy, to question and redefine the artistic space as well as the language in which we express ourselves, and to redesign the creative processes. In doing so, we hoped to create access to the process and performance as to create space for non-artists – citizens – to become present in the work. In doing so, we sought to break out of the

scheme of a single creator being the creator of an hermetic work and its immanent artistic significance. Listening Mutant sought to be an accessible, artistic arena for inclusive exchange. This step was a necessary step, since the performance itself was about multi-voiced dialogue in the first place. A space where different truths can coexist and enrich each other depending on context, purpose and perspective.

In the hybrid and imperfect performance that Listening Mutant became, we still cherished the welds and the cracks, because they were meant to reflect the problematics of the subject matter itself. For us, meaning was created by differences, by not-harmonizing the separate elements into a unity. Again, theater that addresses polyphony must be developed, made and performed from a need for dialogue and multiplicity, brought together by voices, knowledge and experience in mutual dependency. Creating together requires a willingness from all parties to let go of their own bias, representations and expectations and allow common ground to emerge. On that basis we achieved a shared goal and a common outcome. For the further elaboration on the multiplicity of the performance, see the next chapter 'Lenses'.

Credits

<i>Production</i>	– Holland Festival 2021 
<i>Artistic concept</i>	– Micha Hamel, Arlon Luijten
<i>Stage director</i>	– Arlon Luijten
<i>Music</i>	– Bram Kortekaas, Felix Mendelssohn
<i>Texts</i>	– Daniël van Klaveren
<i>Games</i>	– Arlon Luijten, Annebeth Erdbrink, Rens Kortmann, Micha Hamel, Janna Michael
<i>Orchestra</i>	– philharmonie zuidnederland 
<i>Conductor</i>	– Bas Wiegers
<i>Actress</i>	– Lidewij Mahler
<i>Performers</i>	– Students of the Jeugdtheaterschool Zuidoost Amsterdam: Rowénshell Terrencio, Tizea Looijen, Keisha Boye, Annastasia Kah, Suradnya Badal, Dorelia Schraven, Jahcysa Boschman, Christopher Hatton, Deshelle Haynes, Nienke Cogenbach, Jelainy Entingh
<i>Coaching performers</i>	– Nina Haanappel, Irene Lips 
<i>Research</i>	– Annebeth Erdbrink, dr. Janna Michael, Micha Hamel, dr. Rens Kortmann, prof. dr. Koen van Eijck
<i>Trainees game design</i>	– Gayatri Kodikal, Aldo de Vos
<i>Visuals</i>	– Jip Warmerdam
<i>Sound effects</i>	– Max Abel
<i>Mentimeter</i>	– Matthijs van Herikhuize
<i>Smartphone Game</i>	– Students of the Hogeschool voor de Kunsten Utrecht: Ruben Hooijer, Misha van den Heuvel, Erik Wiersma, Wouter Kamies, Luuk Siewers, Reinier Maartense.
<i>Coaching smartphone game</i>	– Henk Fakkeldij, Wiebe Giebels 

Objects/chairs

– Jan Neggers and students of the MBO Theaterschool Rotterdam:
Daantje Janmaat, Eileen Kissi, Jerrel van den Hoven, Nancy Koetsier,
Siris Koch, Nina de Vet, Dwayne Collignon, Esmee Daenen, Bart
Langerak, Lars Wassenaar, Elisabeth Azzaro, Hajar Yakhlef, Nika
Ferwerda, Nica Kraus, Maud Weber.

Coaching

MBO students

– Esther Viersen, David van der Wees, Nadia van Vuuren-den
Hartogh, Dirk Sonneveld

de MBO
THEATERSCHOOL
ACTEUR | PRODUCTENT | VORMGEVER | TECHNICUS

5.4 Evaluation

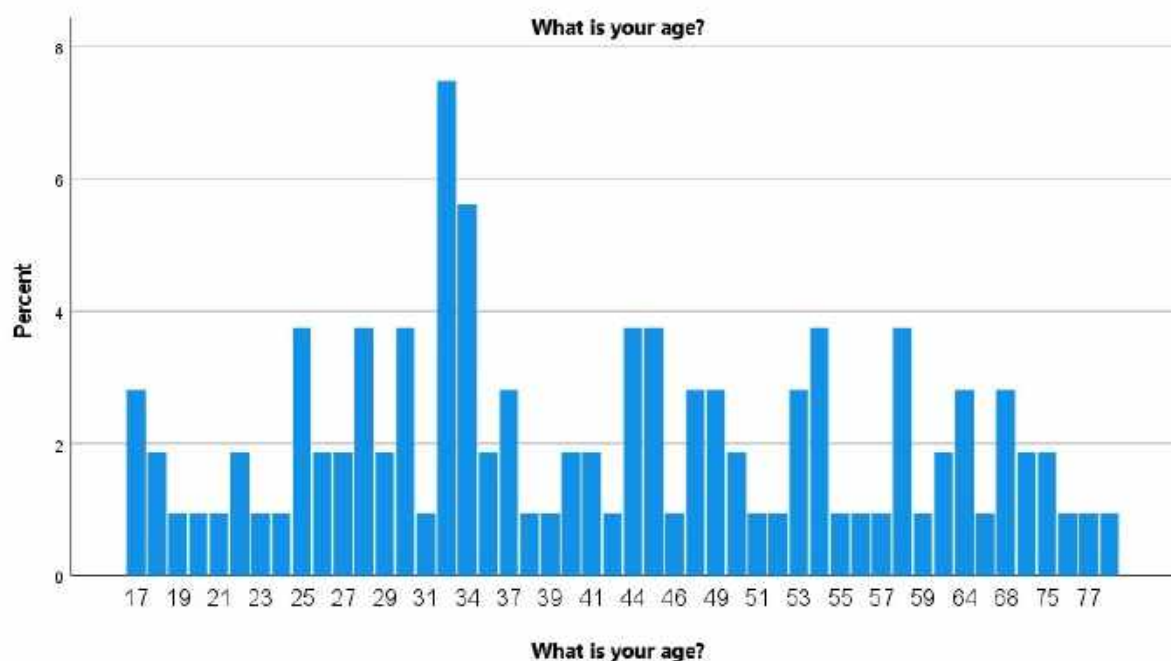
Janna Michael and Annebeth Erdbrink

Research design and methodology

As the plans for the performance had to be changed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, so did the evaluation plans. To capture the concert experience, we invited the concert visitors to fill in a survey after their concert attendance. Within the survey, we asked whether they would be willing to elaborate their experiences in an interview. From the survey-respondents, we selected a variation of participants for the interviews. Here, we aimed for maximum variation – thus participants with differing degrees of appreciation for the performance, different ages and gender.

Sample

After the performance of Luistermutant 2021 (Listening Mutant), all visitors were asked to scan a QR-code that led to an online survey with about 30 items that asked about their experience. 127 visitors filled out this survey. Their ages ranged from 17 until 78, with an average age of 42 and a standard deviation of 16.

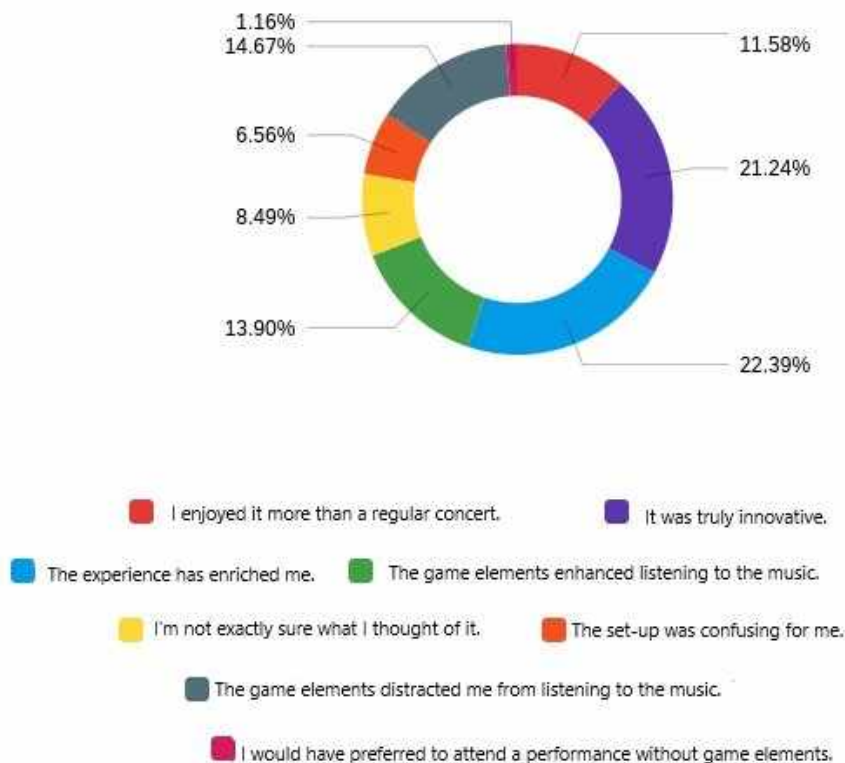


46,3 % identified as female and 52,8 % as male. 15 respondents never visited a classical concert before and 9 never listen to classical music at all. 49% of them never play digital games, but only 17 % never play analogue games.

General experience

First of all, respondents were asked to rate the performance (1-10 scale), this resulted in a mean rating of 7.5 (between *more than satisfactory* and *good*).

Further, respondents stated the following about their experience of the performance:



69,11% of the respondents indicated they had a positive feeling during the performance (felt at ease, felt challenged, immersed). Others felt overstimulated, not taken seriously, confused or annoyed.

Message of Listening Mutant

The majority of the respondents had actually taken away the message from the performance that there are multiple ways of listening. Others also indicated:

- *open your ears*
- *what type of listener am I?*
- *continue to think about listening*
- *listening is homework*
- *Mendelssohn's music is really beautiful*
- *classical music is relevant, but not for everybody*

Effects of Listening Mutant

- 53% indicated that listening became more fun through the performance
- 61% realized through the performance that listening is difficult
- 74% experienced that music can be used to train and develop listening skills
- 47% had the intention to apply the listening suggestions to listen to classical music
- 54% had the intention to apply the social listening suggestions in their daily life
- 34% became motivated to visit a classical concert more often
- 68% would like to visit interactive performances like Luistermutant 2021 (Listening Mutant) more often

Quotes from interviews with visitors

The interviews with several visitors of Luistermutant 2021 (Listening Mutant) provided more insights in the experience of the performance.

General experience

Most interviewees indicated that the performance was so extensive to them, that it was not so easy to describe their general experience. Many mentioned the speed of the performance, which often appeared too fast to process everything. But this was not necessarily perceived as something negative. For many of them, some parts of Listening Mutant proved successful and others less so. This often seemed to depend on the practiced nature of the listener, but was random at times as well. Particularly the composition of Bram Kortekaas seemed appreciated by all interviewees. Remarkably, only one interviewed visitor indicated that he was aware of the research aspect of the performance and that this influenced his general experience.

"I found it very special in the way it was done with that orchestra and then ... the explanation of it, yes super fun."

"I liked that so many different things were combined. That I actually didn't get bored at all because I was kept busy in many different ways the whole time. But sometimes it felt like it went really fast. Which meant that sometimes I was actually more concerned with overseeing what I had to do than having the peace to really feel what the different ways of listening were and how they worked for me. Maybe with an artistic project like this, you need to be a little less afraid to occasionally say 'now we're just going to give some dry explanations of what we're going to do.'"

"Yes, it went fast. It was also very diverse. I felt like you guys tried to cram way too much into that one performance. Maybe when you go forward with that, one should maybe break that down into parts and parts that you want to look at separately or something."

"There were parts where we said 'gosh, well that was special' or 'that was surprising' (we surprised ourselves, or the musicians or the artists surprised us). But there were also parts where we thought 'yeah, there must be a good idea behind this...' but it didn't come across clearly to us."

"It kept coming to me all the time 'yes, but this combines every person all the time'. So why are we figuring this out? Everybody is already this listener that you are working towards. But then I also realized later, yeah I've probably just been just an experienced music listener for years and then in that respect I'm not the right target audience for this research."

"But I did have a great evening! I found it interesting, and at some moments I really liked it. What was the name of that gentleman? Who had written that one piece of music especially, Bram Kortekaas."

"I was actually sympathizing with the researchers, that I was afraid my results would not be accurate because there was too much noise."

Listening modi

Interviewees reported understanding and remembering the three listening modes as presented in the performance. This resulted in thoughts on listening on another level (deeper) than people did before. For some, the difference between 'Heart Listening' and 'Body Listening' was not that clear. Of all three listening modes, body-listening seemed to be the hardest to execute.

From all the interactive moments in Listening Mutant that focused on the different listening modes, the exercise in body-listening was mentioned by most interviewees. Some enjoyed it, while for others it was distracting or unclear. Also, one interviewee shared her experience of the heart-listening exercise.

"Sometimes you can get absorbed in the music, but here there were so many distractions the whole time. With the exception of Bram Kortekaas' piece (because that was a whole)... The downside, though, is that if you start to hover like a helicopter above the music and above yourself, to distinguish those three forms of listening as well, then you get less carried away by the music. Then you start listening more analytically anyway, with your head."

"I feel like music lessons should actually be more focused on that feeling of heart-listening as well. That actually doesn't occur enough."

"I can imagine a theory for the heart-mode and with that physical mode [body-listening] I can't do as well. I don't know how to place that. Look, it could be that you say "it's about vibrations in your body," "things with bass". But I don't know how that is different from the heart-mode. I think the heart-mode has two layers; so say, the layer that comes in as spontaneously as the bass in your body, which therefore immediately does something to you without actually having thought about it. And a second layer that I place much more in cognition, where you actually allow yourself to experience something, as it were."

"With heart-listening I think you get carried away and with body-listening I am actually very present."

Experiences with the listening exercises

"The body-listening practice was very funny; because of course it becomes more and more intense and you experience the music very differently. I found that very funny."

"I found that I was more concerned with 'how do I keep my balance' [referring to an object during the body-listening exercise] and the ambiguity about the length of the exercise. So it was distracting. I sometimes didn't realize at all that the orchestra was also playing."

"I found the body-listening exercise really funny. But when you then sit on your chair and you have to do the body-listening, I was confused for a moment, 'okay, but how to do this?'."

"You were given a kind of guided fantasy: like 'Imagine you are in your grandparents' house'. I saw my grandmother's violin. Next to the door where it always hung, with a bow next to it. My grandmother had incredibly long hair, I think maybe to her knees. She didn't often have it

loose, it was always all put up. But very occasionally she rolled it up. That violin, that bow and those hairs got longer and longer while I was listening to the music. I was taken out of the house on the waves of her hair, so to speak. On an adventure. I'm not someone who has daydreams like that all the time. I'm pretty practical and am busy with my head a lot with my work. So I surprised myself because of that. It happened to me, it wasn't like I was conjuring it up. But I can still tell it pictorially."

Social listening game (the smartphone game)

When asked about the social listening game – the in-game-avatar and Eustachias trying to free the listening mutant – that visitors played on their smartphones as part of the overall performance, there were no very specific scenes discussed. People more generally reflected on the game and their experience. For some its key elements (theme, storyline etc.) were not clearly linked with the rest of the performance. Others did enjoy the game and even came to think about the issue of listening to others in their own life. For a small group unfortunately, the game was too much out of their comfort zone, probably due to inexperience with this type of games.

"I didn't really like the lack of overlap of the game with the performance and the issues from the performance were not clearly included in the game. It could be much better put together, let me put it that way."

--

"I kind of liked that that game was so elaborate. Another thing I did think about is that one of the clues to finish the game was that I had to stop listening too closely because otherwise I would get into a kind of loop. I didn't think about it for days, but I did once have the thought 'oh yes, that game did show that there is also a limit to when you should stop listening and that there is some kind of balance or something'. Then I also did think 'yeah, that's actually the same in life'."

"The game was very much about listening to others. I tried my very best. I also managed to finish it, so I was happy with that."

"I've just been messing around. Bit of trying out this, bit of.... I haven't been listening at all! Just very visually and physically I sat and played. I liked it for a while, but I also got very irritated very quickly. I was done with it and thought 'ok done, forth, now listen again'. Yes, I am not so positive about the game, but I think it is an original idea. To see what you can achieve that way."

Social listening

Most interviewees (not all) indicated that they did not directly come to think about social listening and its value for themselves and society so much during the performance. Still, in all interviews people had (new) ideas about listening to others and shared experiences. Maybe it is safe to say that the effect of the performance concerning social listening was rather indirect.

"Also the idea that when you're listening to someone's problem, that you actually want to interrupt all the time and give advice when that's not necessarily what someone needs. That's helpful and that's a really nice comment. Whether that's really specifically something I

took away from the show ... maybe not necessarily, but yes, it is something.... “

“I was reminded of a situation I have been in. Where I was responsible for. I thought again ‘it doesn't always work’. Especially not when things are polarized, then people don't listen at all. There's no point in actively listening to them then. They are then so withdrawn to their positions that they possibly listen actively to each other [only], to like-minded people but not to differently minded people. Of course, the trick is often to be able to handle those different perspectives.”

“I did happen to think about listening. Because by chance someone said 'oh, you interrupted me' or something and then I thought actually people do that quite often in conversations and so do I myself. So I happened to pay attention to that from time to time lately. But I never linked that to that performance, so that's hard to say; whether it's because of that.”

What has stuck with the visitors?

When asked which elements from Listening Mutant stuck with the visitors, interviewees indicated various things, depending on their personal experience. Concrete elements of the performance were mentioned, like the compositions of Bram Kortekaas and the three listening modi. But also more conceptual elements like ‘inclusiveness’ and the overlap between listening to music and listening to others in society were mentioned.

“You can listen to music in a very committed way and listen to others in the same manner. That you really want to get to know the piece of music or what that person is saying. Or you can do it in a more passive way. So that those gradations are there, there is overlap in that. Also that you can listen (to music and others) with different senses or feelings.”

“It would be a nice challenge for me if I could bring that calmness that I bring to music, if I could bring that to a conversational setting. Then I have improved a huge step also in my way of communicating, I think. For me it works in preparing for genuine listening to be aware of ‘ok, I have a body and that body is bigger than my head.’ – that the performance did something to me, that actually not very strongly, to be honest.”

“Bram's music now and then; I can still hear that music in my mind sometimes.”

“It's not that I've never thought about that before, but then now sometimes I think 'oh yeah, these are all white men I see in this playlist now.’”

“What struck me very much, and what I also remembered more often afterwards, was when I used to go to a concert I would get carried away by the music and thought that that was ‘wrong’ because I thought I was supposed to apply ‘head-listening’ only. But the performance showed me that there is no right or wrong and that it is ok to listening the way you want.”

5.5 Six lenses

Arlon Luijten and Micha Hamel

Listening Mutant 2021 was a study of musical and social listening that sought to activate potential new audiences for western classical music by using gamification. A multitude of disciplines converging into an event that includes contemporary concert practice of 19th century western classical music, Listening Mutant 2021 could be described, experienced, understood, as well as combined in different ways based on different objectives, perspectives and conventions.

'Luistermutant 2021 is too full of good ideas. Chaos and overstimulation guaranteed'

(review in NRC newspaper, see Appendix p. 172)

In order to make these perspectives explicit, and clarify them on a more theoretical level, we have worked out seven lenses below. Seven different ways of looking at the performance, each defined by its own vocabulary, and framed by its parameters that sprout forth from the overarching definition.

LENS 1: a concert

LENS 2: a game

LENS 3: a scientific and academic research lab

LENS 4: a social listening workshop (a civic training course)

LENS 5: a really enjoyable evening!

LENS 6: a music theater performance

And of course, the number of lenses can be extended. Luistermutant 2021 (Listening Mutant) is a hybrid work with an artistic core that can be interpreted in many ways. It can change color depending on which conventions you look at it from, the expectation that is created by, the ticket you bought, or for what purpose the programmer, the conductor the musicians, the company the municipality, the party, the agency, the therapist, the Gutmenschen, the loved one or YOU deploy it. By describing the six main lenses to a great extent below, the multiplicity of the experience is unveiled.

LENS 1: a concert

Listening Mutant is a concert. While there are theatrical forms such as text, video, choreography and audience interaction, the music is leading in the dramaturgy and construction of the evening and the theatrical forms are supportive of a deepening, multi-part listening experience of the music.

Concert program:

1. *Ouverture by Felix Mendelssohn.*
South Netherlands Philharmonic conducted by Bas Wiegers.

2. *A composition for voice and electronic composition of 8-bit sounds and samples. The text speaks of the social, economic, political, philosophical and societal realm in which listening takes place. (composed by Max Abel)*
3. *A sequence of loose, sometimes repeating, Mendelssohn fragments. South Netherlands Philharmonic conducted by Bas Wiegers.*
4. *A sequence of produced, electronic compositions with text (narration) for headphones. (composed by Max Abel)*
5. *A composition referring to John Cage for 120 mobile speakers operated by the audience itself. The audience becomes musicians. (composed by Max Abel and Arlon Luijten)*
6. *'Gamut'. A new composition by Bram Kortekaas. South Netherlands Philharmonic conducted by Bas Wiegers.*
7. *An interactive composition of game show referenced sounds, jingles and spoken text for live voice, samples, 8-bit sounds, Mentimeter and 120 cell phones. (composed by Max Abel)*
8. *'Ouverture Hebriden' by Felix Mendelssohn. South Netherlands Philharmonic conducted by Bas Wiegers.*
9. *A heavy electronic final sound, both reassuring and ominous (composed by Max Abel)*

Explanation

The concert focuses on the music of Felix Mendelssohn, played by the South Netherlands Philharmonic conducted by Bas Wiegers. Also, a new composition by composer Bram Kortekaas will be premiered. Especially for this context, Max Abel composed and produced electronic soundscapes that thematizes methodically and narratively the phenomenon of listening. All these musical pieces are moderated by a narrator. She provides information about listening modes to be practiced by the audience in order to listen to Mendelssohn's music in a new way: with the head, with the heart and with the body.

In addition to compositions for orchestra and soundscape (on headphones), the program also includes an experimental, interactive composition by Max Abel and Arlon Luijten. In this, the audience, besides being listeners, become performers themselves. The members of the audience play an individual game on their phones that generate music. The phones transform into instruments, in this context. The game is composed of various soundscapes, musical themes and sounds that provide feedback on gameplay. The game is played without headphones, so the room is full of sound(s). Because all players have a different game progressions and enter sound worlds and effects at different times, a collective modular composition is created. A collectively produced soundscape that is unpredictable, always different, but still musically coherent. The storyline used as incentive (driving force) for playing is about social listening, forming an additional layer in the experience.

This social moment in the concert is a reminder for the audience to experience listening not only aesthetically, but also socially. After all, people listen not only to the

construction of notes, but also to themselves and others. To emphasize and intensify the authentic, acoustic listening experience, the concert includes listening to produced music with headphones. This is a listening experience that, unlike with orchestral music where listening is a collective experience, is private and internal.

In the premiere piece, 'Gamut', by young dutch composer Bram Kortekaas, there are colors, timbres, rhythms and harmonies that clearly challenge the audience to listen with their heart, head or body. Later in the piece, all these qualities flow organically into one another. In preparation for 'Ouverture Hebriden' which closes the program, the audience participates in a second interactive composition musically composed of sounds that are references to a television game show: jingles, spoken text for live voice, samples and 8-bit sounds forming a lively musical experience. This piece confronts the audience with a world where compelling TV formats determine our democracy through emotion-driven sound effects and film music techniques. The Concert ends with 'Ouverture Hebriden', a musical finale encompassing all listening experiences.

One special feature is still to be mentioned: in the middle of the concert, all listeners are requested to come off their seats and put on a white disinfecting suit. This is not an artistic choice, but has to do with preventing Covid contamination.

LENS 2: a game

While there are other disciplines to see, hear and experience such as orchestral music, theatrical scenes and choreography, they are only there to form the immersive playing field of a game, played on the pulse of the music and storyline. The game design is based on social listening principles. Listening Mutant is a so-called persuasive game; a game that entices and challenges the player to behave differently.



Game menu:

INTRO : the playing field

LEVEL 1 : designing/training avatar and weapons (technical skills)

LEVEL 2: designing/training avatar and weapons (emotional skills)

LEVEL 3: designing/training avatar and weapons (physical skills)

LEVEL 4: skill-test 'GAMUT'

LEVEL 5: The test for social interaction with the avatar

LEVEL 6: opportunity to hack the playing field

LEVEL 7: endgame

The game is played in different levels and their corresponding appearances, but together form a whole and lead to a traditional game finale: an endgame. In the various rounds leading towards the finale, the player builds his avatar and develops his/her (listening) weapons to be used in the endgame. The game is led by a game facilitator: the Shapeshifter. She gives instructions, explanations, keeps the story going, keeps scores, wraps up the different rounds and supervises the gameplay.

Explanation of the levels

INTRODUCTION of the playing field

After the opening tune, the content playground is built by four live characters. The playing field consists of a political, social and economic context of listening to music. Listening is the purpose of the game, and the player has 'to listen his/her way' through the levels. The four characters wear white suits with futuristic listening-weapons as encouragement to an active gaming attitude.

LEVEL 1: designing/training avatar and weapons (technical skills)

In the first level, the player is given a simple set of technical skills to move their avatar through the playing field. In the form of a series of short listening fragments played by the orchestra, these skills are trained. There is no possibility for scoring points in this round and it is played without an interface.

LEVEL 2: designing/training avatar and weapons (emotional skills)

In the second level, the player builds the inner world of his avatar. He does this by reacting to a series of sound clips (Mendelssohn), photos and videos and linking them to his own associations, thoughts, feelings, memories and physical sensations. The choices that the player makes for his avatar are not expressed in points. The nature of this level is exploratory. The interface in this round is the cell phone controlled by Mentimeter. There is no possibility for scoring points for the avatar in this round.

LEVEL 3: designing/training avatar and weapons (physical skills)

In the third level, the player (and his avatar) physically occupies various devices set up in space. He/she optimizes and trains the avatar by tilting, hanging, wobbling, tickling, vibrating and stretching it. In this round, players wear a white plastic costume, like in a role playing game. This reference to apocalyptic worlds increases the urgency and overall experience of playing. There is no possibility for scoring points in this round.

LEVEL 4: skill-test GAMUT

The fourth level takes the form of a test. The listening skills trained in level 1, 2 and 3 are repeated and trained. The player self-evaluates the performance of his/her avatar.

LEVEL 5: the test for social interaction with the avatar.

In the 5th level, the avatar's social listening skills are trained by playing a challenge on the cell phone. This challenge is reminiscent of a cinematic escape room. In this round, the player must try to escape from a cave that essentially represents his old, obsolete listening attitude. Finishing the game is possible when three different social listening skills are applied and combined at the right moments. These skills are:

- Technical listening
- Empathic listening
- Not listening

In this level, the social domain and our actions in it are imagined as an adventure game. This game does not take place solely on the small screen as it often still does in the gaming industry. The game is played by a group of individual players in the same room, allowing the gamer to be continuously stimulated by the other's game play through the audio effects built in for moments of success and failure. This all forms an auditory scoreboard and thus a competitive element in the gaming experience. It also lightly refers to the social rat race of winners and losers that we are all caught in.

LEVEL 6: the ability to hack the playing field.

In the 6th Level, by making use of a democratic voting system, the player has the fate of one of the characters in the game – the historical figure Mendelssohn – in his hands. The player decides whether he (his music) may stay alive or not. The player hacks the playing field in which Mendelssohn's music can live on by destroying perspectives on, and possibilities in, listening, by voting it out. The interface for this round is Mentimeter, a voting application for smartphones.

LEVEL 7: endgame

The endgame takes place entirely *in* the avatar. The playing field resembles a concert hall where western classical music is normally played. The game is now completely limited (and intensified) to the listening itself in which all the learnings and experiences are compiled and applied. The interface is an orchestra with a conductor.

Finale

The game ends with an image through which the facilitator reveals herself as a Shapeshifter, an oracle who has guided us through several levels, and has provided the player with knowledge and wisdom of listening. The listening arms that the four characters wore in the intro now in combination form an octopus, much like the octopus that showed the player the way out of the cave in level 5.

LENS 3: a scientific research lab

Through this lens, Listening Mutant is to be understood as a scientific set-up, social simulation and quasi-experiment. Musical and theatrical forms are employed to create a fictional field lab that forms a laboratory in which the subject acts and reacts to six experimental conditions.

Research protocol

- *zero measurement (first survey)*
- *introduction : introduction to music + social context*
- *condition 1: technical listening*
- *condition 2: emotional listening*
- *condition 3: sensory listening*
- *condition 4: elastic listening*
- *condition 5: empathetic listening*
- *condition 6: social listening*
- *closure*
- *post-measurement (second survey)*

'Outline method'

The study takes the form of a quasi-experiment in a testing environment. Surveys measure listening attitudes and behaviors of subjects in both musical and social domains, as well as the possible interaction between these listening forms and subjects' own reflections on their own changing listening behaviors and attitudes. Through a zero measurement beforehand and a post-measurement afterwards, the relative impact of the experimental conditions designed for this laboratory setting are also examined. This setting consists of several parts that are different in type, size and character. Some components are interactive and store data from the observed behavior of the subjects. Other components are designed to focus on storyline, immersive environment, case exploration, exercises and examples. These components form the basis for the experimental conditions described above. The quasi-experiment is supervised by a facilitator and a number of assistants.

'Experimental conditions'

Introduction:

The introduction consists of two parts that correspond to the two forms of listening that are central to the domains of musical listening and social listening. It begins with a Mendelssohn excerpt played by the orchestra that is the basis of the experimental setup. The subjects are introduced to the music that is the subject of the research and to the researcher who will supervise the quasi-experiment. Retrospectively, the subject can use this musical opening as a zero measurement for later self-reflection.

The second part of the introduction consists of naming the social context in which musical and social listening takes place.

Condition 1: technical listening

The facilitator names some aspects of the music that subjects can listen to in an analytical way by determining musical elements like melody, rhythms, chords and timbre. During this explanation, these aspects are illustrated by the orchestra. After this brief instruction, the

orchestra plays a new excerpt and the subject is asked to recognize the musical elements. Parallel to the findings of the previous research tool Listening Space, this analytical listening is called 'head-listening'. Through the ambient lighting of the laboratory a color is assigned to this form of listening: blue.

Condition 2: emotional listening

The first data are harvested through answers given by the subject in response to multiple-choice questions in the form of pictures, videos and textual questions paired with excerpts from the fourth symphony of Mendelssohn. For this component, pictures, video fragments and text projections on a large video screen suspended in the middle of the laboratory setting. It tests what images, thoughts, feelings and memories arise while listening. The subject completes his answers on his own cell phone. Parallel to the findings of the previous research tool Listening Space, this listening based on personal emotions is called 'heart-listening'. Through the ambient lighting of the laboratory a color is assigned to this form of listening: red.

Condition 3: sensory listening

For the third condition, subjects are given white plastic prevention to contamination suits in order to remind them that they are part of a laboratory setting, and what responsibilities that entails. They then take their seats in a number of extreme objects that invite them to perform various physical postures and efforts. Also here, excerpts from the fourth symphony of Mendelssohn are being played. Parallel to the findings of the previous research tool Listening Space, this listening purely based on physical sensations is called 'body-listening'. Through the ambient lighting of the laboratory a color is assigned to this form of listening: green.

Condition 4: elastic listening

The fourth condition counts as a summary and repetition of the three offered musical listening modes exercised in the previous parts (analytical, emotional and sensorial). The subject listens to a piece of music named 'Gamut', composed by Bram Kortekaas for this experiment. This composition consists of four episodes: three episodes that are apt for the three listening modes as exercised, and a fourth episode in which the three listening modes are combined, merged and alternated, so as to activate the subject to integrate the three modes. The ambient lighting of the laboratory is employed to clarify which of the learnt listening modes is currently to be executed. Each color is softly visible on the large video screen. During the music, the colors change and the subject is expected to change his/her listening mode accordingly. At the end of this test the subject is aware of the listening modes that are at his/her disposal (or is aware of which mode is not yet completely mastered).

Condition 5: empathic listening

In this condition, social listening is addressed and practiced. Subjects play a game on their phones. In the game, they find themselves in a cave in which they receive a call to free the so-called 'listening mutant'. This name indicates a character, but also refers to the possible change, development and/or mutation that the subject undergoes by playing the game. Therefore, this game is a persuasive game; a game that entices the subject to change his/her listening behavior. The subject, in search of the listening mutant, encounters various

tasks, puzzles and characters. Each time, the player can choose between three forms of social listening:

1. Informational listening
2. Contact listening (empathic listening, hearing the message that is said between the lines)
3. Not listening

The player's choices for one of the modes determine the course of the game. Only by choosing the right listening mode fit for the occasion, as well as combining them in the right way and at the right times, the game's goal can be achieved. Elements that in everyday life prevent good listening, such as prejudice, time pressure and distraction have been conceived in game design. The subjects in the laboratory, playing the game on their devices with the sound switched on, literally hear the progress of their neighbor. This was deliberately done, so as to allow social game factors such as competition and comparison to play a role in this condition. On top of that, it creates a social context.

Condition 6: social listening

In this condition it is tested how the subject, after having processed all previous information and experiences, moves in the social and democratic domain in which western classical music is programmed and financed. The subject is addressed as a citizen who creates and shapes society and, as in political elections, and can speak out in matters of listening and the extent to which this can and should be trained in concert halls. The subjects participate in an electoral simulation in which four different opinions about the societal relevance, artistic importance and inclusiveness of classical music practice are debated. At the end of the debate, the question is proposed to the subjects whether or not to continue to program and perform the music of composer Felix Mendelssohn. In three rounds of voting the verdict is passed.

Closure

To conclude and thank the subjects for participating, a final piece of classical music is played by the orchestra still present. The final image of the laboratory experiment shows the facilitator in a complex structure of listening symbols, which can be interpreted as encouragement to keep on integrating listening modes.

Post-measurement (second questionnaire)

The post-measurement (second questionnaire) measures the extent to which the trial produced a change in behavior and/or attitude in the subject compared to the pre-measurement baseline.

LENS 4: an enjoyable night out for the entire family!

Your night out begins at 7:30 pm and ends at 10:30 pm. There is also a matinee, starting at 2 p.m. and ending at 5 p.m. The evening is suitable for the whole family.

Invitation

Experience Listening Mutant and its wide range of experiences. After you are taken to your seat in the beautiful great hall with its fancy lighting design, there are games to play alone or with each other. There is a costume for you to wear so that you may participate in the show. You can pick a fantasy chair of your choice, or relax in designer chairs. There is also a video screen of 60 m2 on which visuals (photos and videos) are shown in combination with live music played by an orchestra consisting of no less than 85 musicians. The video screen also shows how to join games, minigames and assignments. Smartphones on for immersive participation! It is all very simple.

If you need help, there is always a staff member nearby to help you. At different times in the program there are acts provided by actress Lidewij Mahler - known for the popular television series GTST - in a costume designed by Isabell Shulz - known for the costumes from the Dutch version of Ru Pauls drag race on TV. There is also a Silent Disco through the headphones waiting for you on your chair when you enter. Creator of Luistermutant is Micha Hamel - known for the television show Maestro in which celebrities learn to conduct a symphony orchestra.

Half way through the show, there is an interval during which drinks can be enjoyed, either inside or on the terrace, with a spectacular view over the IJ, with its magnificent ships on one side and a city view on the other. Mind you: right by the water, the sun intensity can be strong and it can be quite windy. Be prepared! No meals are included.

The team of Listening Mutant is looking forward to welcoming you!

LENS 5: a social listening workshop (a crash course in citizenship)

While much of the evening is filled with music, theater and games, which you as a user play and undergo, all listening tools are accessible to heterogeneous groups of users. In essence, all these multimedia forms are at the service of learning to listen differently, and better, to yourself and others. The workshop is suitable for companies, organizations, schools, municipalities and is best when they participate in combination.



Workshop Program

- *part 1: musical reception, introduction to workshop leaders and themes*
- *part 2: warming up by listening to music*
- *part 3: a game: the do's and don'ts of listening*
- *part 4: group discussion on listening to each other, neighbors and strangers*
- *part 5: musical conclusion of the workshop*
- *take home learnings.*

General introduction

In big cities, we live together with people of different cultural, social and economic backgrounds. Social media increasingly define the language and (thus) the functioning of political and social debate. Technology drives opinions and statements with quick impact and that elicit quick reactions. These media thus force politicians into soundbites that in turn lead to instant, anonymous, and often polarizing reactions from citizens. The leaders who play this game best are given precedence over those trying to develop a sustainable vision for society. Debate and society erode, harden and polarize consequently. Listening is an antidote.

Content

Listening Mutant is a playful, interactive workshop in which listening is practiced in different ways and contexts. All exercises are playfully interwoven in the form of a concert, because going to a concert is a social activity par excellence and music is universal and accessible, and thus a good entry point to the actual goal of the workshop: social listening and connecting. The workshop leader plays the role of 'The Shapeshifter'; a reference to a mythical character, a guide who in different cultures guides people through social and spiritual transition.

Structure of the workshop:

Part 1: musical opening and introduction to the workshop leaders

Participants will be musically welcomed and then watch a playful introduction to the phenomenon of listening, in which listening is considered from historical, sociological, cultural, musical, social and political perspectives. The introduction is narrated by performers from the Youth Theater School South-East (JTSZO), a suburb of Amsterdam. Performers who – in every day life – do not normally attend a concert of western classical music, nor would engage in a debate about its societal relevance.

Part 2: warming up by listening to music

The workshop leader introduces the orchestra that, like a kind of 'house band', provides the workshop with music, opening the ears of the participants. Through a series of interactive workshops, participants zoom in on themselves: how do they actually listen? With their head, heart or body? In a musical conclusion before the break, the workshop participants are challenged to combine all three modes of listening. After the break, the main part of the workshop begins. In this workshop, 'the other' is thematized.

Part 3: a smartphone game about the do's and don'ts of listening

Through a listening simulation in the form of an epic adventure-game, the participant practices listening to 'the other' (human being). Warmed up by the previous exercises, the participant experiments with listening techniques from the field of psychology (probing, summarizing, listening between the lines, deferring judgment). Also, the resistors that listening encounters (prejudice, distraction, time pressure) are addressed. In an array of challenges, the participant must choose between:

1. Informational listening (listening to what someone is exactly says)
2. Empathetic listening (listening for the meaning behind the words)
3. Not listening (when leaving the situation should be preferred over continuing to listen)

Only when the participant alternates and combines the above three social listening modes in the right ways, he wins the game. In this simulation, the participant finds out that listening is harder, more fun and more important than ever imagined before.

Part 4: group discussion on listening to each other, neighbors and strangers

From the awareness activated through the previous sections, participants are invited to engage in an interactive debate on citizenship around the question: what conditions are necessary for listening in society?

Part 5: musical conclusion of the workshop

The workshop ends musically by the house band.

Take home learnings

We see the workshop leader along with some assistants doing a final dance that symbolically shows what a society looks like where everyone listens to each other.

LENS 6: a music theater performance

While the performance makes use of interactive and educational moments as we know from workshops, games and conferences, in essence Listening Mutant is a piece of music theater.



Overview

- scene 1: the concert ritual
- scene 2: a polyphonic prologue (about polyphony)
- scene 3: the Shapeshifter and the listening exercises
- interludes: the journey, the change
- scene 4: the master test
- interval
- scene 5: the liberation of ourselves
- scene 6: the election
- scene 7: the epilogue (the stripped-down concert ritual)
- epilogue

Concept

The performance centers on the concept of change, with its connotations of development and mutation. Since the world we live in is changing faster and faster, we, as inhabitants of that world, must therefore keep on changing, developing, mutating. We must not only adapt, change as a species but shift to, develop into, a different species, in other words: mutate. We must become a species that rediscovers the *other*, and thus creating a livable future. The music theater performance *Listening Mutant* therefore emphasizes the importance of that other in this inevitable journey of change of man and world.

The question that this performance poses is: by listening in a more qualitative manner, can we steer change in a positive and sustainable direction?

Form and theme

Because change is central, the performance also changes continuously, as well as its parts keep changing in shape and genre. The overall shape of the performance is a development (a winding down) from the multidisciplinary and exuberantly theatrical to the sober, mono-disciplinary traditional. Because the opening and closing scenes of the performance are alike, the audience can observe their own change (mutation) and undergo a classic catharsis.

The story of change and mutation is moderated by the so-called 'Shapeshifter', the protagonist of the show. The Shapeshifter is the audience's guide on this journey of change, her role best being described as: (...) *A Shapeshifter is a being who helps you enter a new world. They possess knowledge of old and new worlds, the human and the divine, outer and inner worlds, the celestial and the earthly. A Shapeshifter is a changemaker traveling through time, is not a human, not an animal, not a god, not a man, not a woman. The Shapeshifter often plays the jester or the fool (...)* (Excerpt from the script)

The real protagonist, however, is the audience itself. Hence the frequent use of interactive scenes and gamification. The antagonist – the character who causes the suffering, and mobilizes the conflict of the protagonist – is *also* the audience. So the members of the audience are protagonists and antagonists simultaneously. The audience might look for the hidden antagonist, not find it, questioning the performance for it, but eventually finding out his own role in the drama, as an antagonist that develops into a protagonist. A real change. For this reason, in scene 5 the audience liberates itself and *from* itself.

Course of events

Scene 1: the concert ritual

The performance opens with an excerpt from a Mendelssohn symphony, played live by the orchestra. The music of Mendelssohn and its – rightful or unrightful – place in contemporary concert practice is the central topic of the performance. The stage setting is traditional and depicts the ritual in which the bourgeoisie used to meet, and as a certain cultural elite nowadays searches for a broader audience. Therefore, the formalities and formal frameworks in which musical listening is practiced are also questioned in our music theatre performance.

Scene 2: a polyphonic prologue (about polyphony)

Four characters enter the stage, each one of them representing a different opinion about the relevance of the music of Mendelssohn for today's society. The opinions are structured as follows:

- very much in favor of
- mildly in favor of
- slightly against
- radically against

The characters wear futuristic ornaments in the form of large chalices, tubes and horns, as if these are transmitting (calling) or receiving (listening). The loose elements seem to refer to an unfinished whole. In the final tableau of the performance, the ornaments will be assembled into a singular costume that signifies (and advocates) listening as an integrated notion. But that is at the very end. In this stage, the four voices are opponents.

They engage in a dialogue in which they present political, cultural, economic, aesthetic, historical and social arguments to support their point of view. The actors are all young actors from the Youth Theater School Zuid Oost (JTSZO, Amsterdam Bijlmer). As ethnic and cultural minorities, they represent that part of society that is underrepresented in western classical music concerts. Therefore these actors represent, according to inclusivity agendas, a future audience. The words they speak, in which the agenda and arguments of the project resonate, clearly warps with their culturality and frames of reference, which brings a theatrical tension to the scene.

Musically, an electronic composition clearly refers to political sensationalism programs in which form displaces content. As the text accelerates and turns into a cannonade of statements, the music develops into a thickening and a crescendo consisting of heavy electronic drones and the drum played live by the Shapeshifter. Synchronous with the sound of the drum, questions, commentaries and statements are projected on the large video screen. Finally, the video screen literally and symbolically delivers the crucial question: 'Should the music of Mendelssohn still be played?'

Scene 3: The Shapeshifter and the listening exercises.

The shapeshifter presents herself as a magical illusionist with the function of a 'circus director' in this theatrical overload. She demonstrates three different forms of listening:

a. head listening

The shapeshifter introduces a technical way to listen to music, like a music theory teacher pointing out to her students how the music is put together, is made up of rhythm, melody and consonance. The orchestra plays fragments of Mendelssohn compositions to illustrate this. Her message is: 'the more you understand about the music, the more you will enjoy it.'

b. heart listening

In this scene, the shapeshifter plays the role of a spiritual director who takes the audience on a journey through their own thoughts, feelings and experiences. This is achieved through questions and imagination exercises. The scene takes the form of a psychological test. As the orchestra plays a series of Mendelssohn excerpts, combinations of images and video clips appear on the large screen. Using their smartphone as a voting device, the audience chooses the photos and videos correspond to the thoughts and feelings they have while listening. Then, musical excerpts are paired with test questions answered by the audience. The excerpts are repeated during different questions, leading to desorientation and creating a dreamlike state. The scene appeals to a cinematic inner world of 'mental representations'. The audience seems to have entered their own 'movie'. On a more critical level, the set-up refers to a society of control, a society expresses every phenomenon in numbers, which is at odds with how the value of art is constituted.

c. body listening

In this scene, the audience dress in white plastic suits (in real life used for medical protection and anti contamination purposes) and are asked to enter a playing field of green devices that look like weird fitness gear. As the orchestra plays, the audience hang, lie, balance in the devices, sometimes prodded, tickled or caressed by assistants. They are instructed to activate their bodies in such a way as to create a physical, sensory listening experience. On the video screen behind the orchestra there is a large instagram-hashtag they can use when taking pictures of themselves or others. The scene thus refers to a culture of experience in which the deeper meaning of the musical work loses out in favor of the fact that the audience *was there, participated* and has the photo as evidence to share.

The white suits are ambiguous. At the one hand, they protect people from being contaminated, but at the other hand, since the sensory body is a listening organ, covid times are also blocking proper listening, because the white suit alienates the body from itself. Therefore, lightly but surely, the white suits allude to a dystopian future we are heading towards.

Interludes throughout the performance : the journey, the change

Every time the logo of the octopus (a symbol for the multiple reach of the shapeshifter) appears on the video screen, the audience is supposed to put on their headphones. Wearing them, the audience listens to a narration with a cinematic soundscape as an underscore. They follow the voice of the shapeshifter, who guides the journey. The story tells of a walk in a fairy forest, but suddenly taking the listener through the cosmos past various planets, ending up inside a body. The traveler is the audience itself, and his/her journey is symbolic story of transgression, mutation and change.

Scene 4: the master test

Now the shapeshifter asks the audience to alternate between the three forms of listening

while the orchestra plays a piece, composed for the occasion. By an immersive lighting design, the room changes color every time a new form of listening is to be exercised, thus guiding the audience's listening. The audience is also given time to reflect on the social themes of the performance as a whole.

- intermission -

Scene 5: The liberation of ourselves. (The game)

The lighting design transforms the hall into a mysterious arcade. When the audience members open their smartphones, a game launches. A game that starts with a man in a cave. This character wakes up and is given the mission to 'free the Listening Mutant' by a cave drawing in the shape of an octopus. As the game unfolds, slowly the gamer understands that he/she him-/herself is the Listening Mutant. Every gamer must seek to free himself from old (stiff, rusty) listening attitudes and mutate into someone who masters *listening informationally*, sometimes *empathetically* and sometimes *not at all*. Only then the gamer will free the character from the cave and win the game, the character transforming into a bird and being able to explore new worlds.

The game has the structure of an Aristotelian drama, tapping into Joseph Campbell's *The hero's journey*, but in the performance as a whole, the game has a Brechtian function: we are reminded of the task, the lesson we must learn in favor of our lives as citizens.

Scene 6: The election

In this scene, the four characters from Scene 2 reappear. Instead of a dialogue, each of them now speaks a short monologue, just as in election debates, in which each candidate reinforces his/her point of view. Grounded arguments alternate with populist statements and assumptions, as these things go. The audience is given the opportunity to vote off one character in each of the four rounds, so that eventually the character with the point of view voted for the most 'wins the elections'. The scene is framed by music that references game show elements such as jingles, show tunes and ticking clocks. This increases the voter's sense of urgency, but also alludes to the populist spectacle in which our democracy is bedeviled today. The winner is given the authority to decide over the question, put at the beginning of the evening: 'Should Felix Mendelsson's music continue to be played?' – as to (in this context) rate its societal relevance.

Scene 7: The epilogue (the stripped-down concert ritual).

The performance ends just as it began. The orchestra plays a piece of music in traditional arrangement, with no theatrical additions or interruptions. The audience gets the chance to experience whether, after all the listening techniques, attitudes and experiences taught, they listen to the music with new ears, as well as they are invited to contemplate how the they as citizens relate to it.

Epilogue

The shapeshifter appears, now wearing all the futuristic megaphone ornaments herself, thus resembling the octopus from the cave. The megaphone chalices point in all directions and the wires are connected to the four actors orbiting them like four satellites. It is a utopian image: man as a polyphonic, polymorphous being, well equipped to connect.



See Appendix for the two reviews that were published. One by newspaper NRC and the other on the culture blog 'Basia con fuoco'. Both reviews in Dutch.

5.6 Artistic evaluation

Poetic reflection

Arlon Luijten

An imaginative conversation between Arlon Luijten (AL) and the Listening Mutant (LM) in which Luijten in his role and responsibility of artistic researcher looks for answers and learnings that arose from the Listening Mutant 2021 project. Words of the Listening Mutant based on the script by Daniël van Klaveren.

AL:

I would like to talk about Listening Mutant, a very ambitious project about listening. You could call it a hybrid work: part concert, part performance, part game and part research set-up. That's quite a lot. Aren't you afraid that audiences, visitors, players, subjects will get lost in all the good intentions?

LM:

lost is only the one who does not know himself

AL:

Self-knowledge is the actual goal of the project? Is self-knowledge a prerequisite for listening? Listening to the other?

LM:

not knowing oneself is a malady from which we all suffer

AL:

And what would be the cure to this ailment?

LM:

look at the people around you
what stories would be contained within them?

AL:

Then let me start by you. You are a listening mutant. A character based on the shapeshifter phenomenon. Can you tell me something about yourself?

LM:

me
am not the stone nor the woman who becomes that
but the moment in between
not the daffodil by the water not the boy he was
I am his slowly changing breath
the scanning petals on his arms
the look in the mirror as Lady Gaga defines her new look
zipping the zipper of Ziggy Stardust

AL:

Can you elaborate on that? It sounds incredibly poetic and abstract.

Could you make it concrete?

What does a Listening Mutant do?

LM:

I move the surgeon's knife point the way in the no man's land

to the gate puppets of the caterpillar

bursting the husk popping the pea

not in the act but the conception you see my face

I push the hairs up through the skin

coax the chicks out of their eggs

pull roots through the clay

shadows I bring to the other side

AL:

With words like 'knife, cracks, bangs and shadows', change seems to be an arduous and painful process. Should I be worried?

LM:

isn't it a wonderful idea that you don't have to remain what you are?

AL:

Is Listening Mutant a promise, a warning, or a call for change?

LM:

all of us, all of us suffer if we are not going to respond to the call

the call the call for the march that heroes

make heroes and when I speak

of heroes I speak of you

AL:

So Listening Mutant is about me? Am I the target audience?

LM:

who else?

AL:

And what is the purpose of the performance?

LM:

you will lose yourself, branch out, refind, reform

and mutate into the new world

AL:

How?

LM:
follow my voice
I am with you

AL:
Listening Mutant is also a research project right? What are you investigating?
Does it require more knowledge about listening, or simply more listening skills?
Should we talk about it, or should we just do it?

LM:
better we know why is this void still
still so empty still so without end

AL:
That's a theatrical answer. Is the Listening Mutant a research in a theatrical format, or
rather a performance based on research?

LM:
if you are very far out of
or very far into
everything is basically the same

AL:
Isn't the danger that if you want to do everything, you won't do anything really well?
Can all these questions, all these disciplines be included in a single project?
Or, simply put, isn't it way too much? Too big?

LM:
we all know we prefer to be a crumb and not a limitless force
but being small does not serve the world

AL:
The project aims to change people through serious games and listening culture.
Can a human being change at all?
What would you like to tell the audience?

LM:
slowly mutating creature with ears on knees
ears under your armpits on the back of your hand
in your navel in your elbow and on the back of your head
breathe in as deeply as you can and see the space is yours you are
already no longer who you were because everything flows everything
changes and nothing stays nothing stays the same nothing perishes nothing
is lost look your eyes are like new your ears are everywhere you hear
whispers of a star light years away from you in your own DNA
we are made of stardust our life is surrounded by sleep
a sleep so deep that we are the dream of another

wake up
wake up
and change

AL:

Listening Mutant investigates the contemporary concert practice of western classical music and whether it can have an impact on contemporary listening culture through serious gaming. This is based on the assumption that if we start listening better to classical music we will also start listening better to each other. This could lead to a more sustainable society. Is that correct?

LM:

bilakrabankraban
prrrtita taliloe
words words words

AL:

How do you actually define listening?

For example, in the game played on the phone, the player is mostly reading, not listening. Is this an inconsistency or do you understand listening very broadly, as if you are listening to your own thoughts? Or listening as understanding the words read or the space in between?

LM:

Who knows what words really want when they blow in the wind in which they dwell wonderfully desperately struggling to become the wish they were?

AL:

What is behind the words? I mean: so much is said and written. If you don't know what power structures and intentions drive these messages, you can't really understand them, right?

LM:

hundreds of votes are coming in
they speak at the same time
what do they have to say?

which voice can you believe

mine mine mine mine mine mine

Which voice do you prioritize when there are so many at once

who directs traffic in the ear canals

so many opinions I didn't know there were so many yes so many and more so many more so many more so many more

not listening is also an art

filter the noise

find the core the screaming core

No words have been invented for the most essential thing

It's up to you to hear it anyway
let it vibrate in the membrane that you are
recognize the silent screaming core
Who so desperately wants to be heard

AL:
Can a person ever understand an other human being?
And if so, how? Are we made for that?

LM:
mutating is quite a process and just when you don't think about it
at thunderclap the gate appears
without luggage you walk into people in the distance
you know their name you know for sure
but never heard their names

AL:
Do you have any final advice for us?

LM:
first let go of the old life
cut off your hair throw away your inherited ballast

then walk through empty space
softly through the dark by touch
that no man's land where I hold your hand

to finally step through the gate
the world will not have changed
make no mistake
if you look with new eyes
hears with new ears
nothing is what it was

AL:
Thank you for this conversation

Evaluation (from here on: Micha Hamel)

In general, Listening Mutant was received well, especially by the young people we talked with afterwards. Also the artistic directors of the orchestra philharmonie zuidnederland and of the Holland Festival were positive about what it brought to the discourse of the sector of classical music. Hereunder some critical findings by the makers themselves about the artistic aspects of the performance.

The performance itself

– Many people (see **5.4 Evaluation** and **7.2 Appendix: reviews**) indicated that Listening Mutant was too full in every respect. Too long, too chaotic, too overwhelming, too diverse, too intense, too omnifarious etcetera. As creators, we can affirm that. We can detect two reasons for that. First, the Covid-19 crisis forced us to change our plans, as said above. The show that should have been distributed over a number of spaces now was packed into one space, and forced in a linear time frame. Still, we wanted to employ all the listening skills for the audience to train, which then became a bit much, but otherwise we wouldn't have been prolonging the research line started with Listening Space.

Second, as for budget and logistic reasons all elements of the performance were rehearsed separately and put together in one single day. Normally, a performance like this would have at least two weeks of rehearsals, with at least the final four days in the venue itself. Only by having more hours in the hall we could have easily made the performance smoother and more balanced. Especially when working with young, non-professional actors, it takes time to settle things and let them grow in what they bring. For reasons of budget, we could not afford more rehearsals. Taking this into account, it was incredible what they achieved, how far they came. That also goes for the actress, and for the technicians that operated the beamers and the lighting.

The good thing about the performance, however, is that it was bold and daring. We really wanted to do something wild, something that was never done before. As listening is an integral notion that pervades life continuously (also when we sleep), we wanted to create a totality, something that had a feel of integrality to it. Something to dive into, something immersive, as one is immersed into his/her 'listening existence'. Also, we wanted something joyful, something that had the feeling of 'play' in it. Learning from the criticism about Listening Space – it being too childish for some – we intended to create more of a festival atmosphere in which participation wasn't compulsory, but could be explored individually. Also the parts that were more political contributed to a more serious take on the theme, inviting the audience to think along with the performance.

– The manifold shapes of the performance, together with its integral result made it impossible to measure which factors exactly led to the awareness about the importance of listening. Though the performance showed results (see **5.4 Evaluation**), it would require more intense research to draw the factors of success and failure closer.

Other issues

– The boldest claim that Listening Mutant made was that an audience could be trained in listening to music as well as listening to other people. While the former could in some way be seen as plausible – as Listening Space showed –, the latter is a bridge too far. Listening to other people – social listening, as we call it – is a psychological, social, cultural, sensorial and

behavioral process that demands a multitude of skills that cannot be acquired overnight. Moreover, social listening is practiced in real life and through interaction. A smartphone game and a staged performance aren't exactly covering that. Of course, we haven't for one moment believed that our teachings (educational games) would achieve such. Rather, we were aiming to make people aware of the importance of listening, and question the relevance of classical music for today's world. Listening Mutant therefore has to be interpreted as a *persuasive* game – which is: a rhetorical construct to raise awareness – in the guise of a (research based) listening course. This also demarcates the difference between artistic and scientific research. Listening Mutant was created to provoke something, based on scientific research.

– Following on the previous point, the transfer of listening skills from music listening to social listening is highly speculative. In one theatrical gesture that would be simple enough to communicate to an audience, we stated that music listening consists of three listening modes, complemented with three listening modes for social listening (informational, empathetic, and not-listening), which for the latter, is of course incomplete, since hundreds of more modes are easily conceivable. For the sake of the performance, however, this all was insightful, though the idea that listening with the modes Heart, Head, Body could *automatically* be applied to social listening (listening to opinions in a political debate, and decide upon them) was a claim on universality yet to be proofed. Also, the audience evaluating themselves in all six modes made it impossible to control whether the audience had achieved a new skill level, nor if they applied the skills in the right way. Example: psychopaths are incredibly empathetic, as research shows, so how can we pretend that the listening skill set lead to better citizenship *sine qua non*? And if it does, are the skills instrumental, conditional or ontological to their outcomes? In these respects Listening Mutant gives rise to more precise research. However, the effects show promising outcomes as it comes to awareness and willingness to employ 'good' listening habits in the future.

– Following on the previous point, the final voting gives rise to reflecting. When we include the general rehearsal, Listening Mutant was performed three times. In the final vote, the music of Mendelssohn was voted *out* twice, and voted *in* once.

Since GAMPSISS had to investigate the relevance of western classical music through games and gamification, we thought that it was important to address this issue in the most explicit manner, namely, to see whether an audience of people having bought a ticket for a gamified and therefore non-traditional concert, would literally be able to judge the genre of classical music in its societal context after a serious training of their listening skills and their presumed importance as such. As GAMPSISS was about finding answers to what the sector struggles with, we as artistic researchers were not completely neutral, since our research set-up was designed in favor of western classical music, insofar that our hypothesis 'is it possible to train your ears by using classical music as a training device?', and 'can we by reframing the concert hall as a space where listening can be exercised draw an inclusive audience?' (paraphrasing the starting points described in **1.2 The why of GAMPSISS**) were rooted in a general positive valuation of classical music, which is not what everyone of our fellow citizen per se agrees with. Even stronger, in this postcolonial and postmodern society, the value of historic objects and practices are questioned and criticized under new sets of criteria, especially when it concerns a costly organisation like an orchestra. It was telling that the audience on our third performance voted Mendelssohn out

(to be *never* played again!), on basis of the argument – conveyed by a very convincing actress of colour – 'Do I see myself represented by this music? No.'. Clearly – as written by our playwright on purpose – an argument rooted in discourses of inclusivity, identity and representation as are at stake today. Apparently, a decisive and justifiable point for a young audience consisting of various ethnicities – the audience that we defined as our target audience. An interesting paradoxical situation, since we had made an effort to welcome this audience in the classical music sector, and also invited them to become vocal, however they were also rejecting the core of our content, the presumed goal of our enterprise. Of course, artistically, the rejection of Mendelssohn did not reject our event as such (see 5.4), nor would we as researchers ever prefer a 'yes' over a 'no'. Artistically, in the art world of today, in the context of so-called 'reach out programs', the contemporary reflex is to include these young people in the (entire) artistic process in order to raise awareness and respect, which sometimes works, but in many cases also not. And either way, a number of philosophical questions remain, as for identity politics:

1. Why is the 'I' so important?
2. Why is being represented *in this case* important?
3. How would being represented look like in an art form by which one isn't represented?

And for matters of art policy:

1. On what criteria should the conservation of cultural heritage be valued?
2. Can we, aiming for an inclusive society, design transcending criteria that do right to all art forms equally?
3. How do content-based cultural indicators and values relate to quantitative and mass indicators like numbers, polls and monetary dimensions?

With regards to the final point, we might have made a mistake, to go for a poll to seal the fate of Mendelssohn. Still, it made the relation between audience and stage radically explicit, since it unveiled that listening is strongly culturally embedded, and that the situatedness of both the music and the listeners were so engrained that a gap came to manifest itself. Were the cultural and educational scripts dominant over the sensorial realm? Is there a way to bridge this gap? Or is Mendelssohn's time up? It will take a next project to research that further.

6. EVALUATION, DISCUSSION AND FUTURE WORK

6.1 Answering the research question

GAMPSISS investigated the integration of games and gamification in classical music concerts, so that its audiences may engage themselves in meaningful modes of listening, eventually resulting in a listening culture from which citizens and society could benefit.

Research question:

How could western classical music be recharged, and redefined through games and gamification, so it may contribute to a smart, inclusive, and sustainable society?

Answer:

See 5.4

- The smart phone game prototype Listening Space has mild positive effects, especially with passers-by (new audiences), see '*Listening Space – An exploratory case study on a persuasive game designed to enrich the experience of classical music concerts*'⁷².
 - 74% of the audience of Listening Mutant experienced that music can be used to train and develop listening skills.
 - 21,24% found Listening Mutant truly innovative
 - 13,9% of the audience of Listening Mutant said that the game elements enhanced the listening to the music.
 - 69,11% of the audience of Listening Mutant indicated they had a positive feeling during the performance (felt at ease, felt challenged, immersed).
- The majority of them had actually taken away the message from the performance that there are multiple ways of listening.

With its sub-questions:

- *Could a serious listening culture be of importance for contemporary citizenship?*

Answer:

See 3.5

Respondents experience human interaction that lacks proper listening as poor.

See 5.4

- 61% realized through the performance Listening Mutant that listening is difficult.
- 54% of the audience of Listening Mutant has the intention to apply the social listening suggestions in their daily life.

- *Can classical music recover its societal positioning as an urgent form of art?*

Answer:

– 34% of the audience of Listening Mutant became motivated to visit a classical concert more often

- *Can gamification open up classical music for new diversified audiences?*

Answer:

– 68% of the audience of Listening Mutant would like to visit interactive performances like Luistermutant 2021 more often

6.2 Considerations and conclusions

Within the context of the GAMPSSIS project we therefore decided not to aim to change people's listening behavior all at once by means of the ludic performances. We mainly focused on the goal to make people *willing to listen* (as a first significant step to behavioral change in the long run), by providing them with an experience that would make them realize the value of person-oriented listening. Not only what it could bring in their personal lives, but also more broadly on a societal level. It would also create more freedom and responsibility to the visitors, if the message would be *there are different listening styles, including person-oriented listening* instead of *you should listen more person-oriented*.

As mentioned, we tend to overestimate our listening capacities. Earlier studies showed we can have a more realistic appraisal of our listening competencies after a listening intervention (Ford et al., 2000, Johson & Long, 2007). This inspired us for the ludic performances of GAMPSSIS: if visitors could become more aware of their *passive* listening behavior and discover what person-oriented listening entails including its positive outcomes, it could motivate them to strengthen their positive attitude towards listening and thus become more willing to listen.

Apart from the separate evaluations of Listening Space and Listening Mutant (see chapters 4.3 and 5.8) a few overarching things can be mentioned:

- From what we have heard, seen and read, one can conclude that games and western classical music can go well together. For Listening Space, we see that it is wise to have a game as an *optional* feature, since not everybody is enthusiastic about them. For Luister Mutant, we see that there is absolutely a market for gamified concerts (that are *optional* to go to, and never mean to replace a regular concert), though they will have to be designed, executed and (target-)marketed in a (more) refined way.
- The game prototype and gamified concert we delivered are new products for a small, existing market. In order to extend their incidental, local, and relative success, it is necessary to envision new markets, especially because the budgets needed are not available in the current state and structure of the sector. Furthermore, when thinking about such a new product for a new market, one might very well rethink the concert in all its dimensions too. since the biggest burden of innovation is when the new thing is an improved old thing that hadn't let go of its former identity and properties.
- To address listening as a skill that is important for everybody has met adhesion only. Also the becoming aware of it was considered meaningful, and the possibility of training one's ears was recognized. Which makes it plausible to further develop games as a regular 'tool' at a concert, as regular as a program booklet or introduction.
- This research project was about western classical music. The listening modes and their corresponding profiles were constructed out of listening sessions with classical music as input, and functioned sufficiently in both game prototypes. The question remains in how far

these listening modes are universal, and in how far either the game prototypes that we produced could be used as empty frameworks to fill with any musical genre, or that for every musical genre a tailored game should be developed, based on applicable listening modes yet to be discovered.

– This research project was about instrumental music. We deliberately left out music with text/lyrics (songs, opera, choir music) since text would direct the attention of the listener to new realms of meaning and (self-)understanding. To limit ourselves to investigate listening 'as such' to classical music 'as such' we had to also limit the definition of classical music into classical *instrumental* music, thus leaving out an incredible part of the repertoire. A listening that fans out over music as well as text (interpretation) is yet to be researched.

– In GAMPSISS, we haven't researched or addressed differences in listening to live or to recorded music. For the aim of our project – effectuating innovations for the classical music sector – we have been focussing on live music. For our listening sessions, for the concert visits attached to Listening Space, as well as the gamified orchestra concert that Listening Mutant was, we insisted on live music. However, for the in-game experience of Listening Space, prerecorded music fragments were used, pretending to be representative for – or even equal to – listening to live classical music in a concert. Media theory would object to that, but problematizing this issue would not have helped the project, since it is simply impossible to design a smart phone game with live music. A more refined empirical study on listening effects might lead to tweaking the game prototype further.

– As for inclusivity, GAMPSISS was a project that was output-oriented. The participants for Listening Space were recruited from student populations and from the extensive and extended network of our partners, as well as we flyer door-to-door in different neighborhoods in Amsterdam and Rotterdam – the cities where one could win a free concert ticket. For Listening Mutant, a enormous effort was made by the Holland Festival to draw new audiences by lowering the ticket prices as well as through target marketing. Also because the actors came from the neighborhood of Amsterdam Zuidoost, they drew quite some (new) audience from their social network, the many of them filling out the survey, of course.

Thinking of a more input-oriented version of the topic, one can imagine a more intense participation of new audiences in stages of brainstorming, design and production. In the current research design we surely held feed back sessions with our partners (orchestras, ensembles, interns) as well as with our co-producers (JTSZO, Holland Festival), but we haven't cocreated with the target audiences. We interpreted the research questions as a call to *make* something for society and test it, whereas interpreting it as a call to *co-create* something with the diversified society would also have been possible. On a meta-level, the latter would have worked out for the potentially political agenda of the work, at the same time it is still the question whether hypodemocracy is the true device to deal with vasty problematics, especially when the project isn't structured for it.

– Of course, the deliverables we produced are models, prototypes. Any further development will allow for a wide variety of alterations like more/less theatrical, more/less informative, pervasive/local, differentiated on audience groups etc..

– Extrapolating the contents of GAMPSISS, one could also imagine games that train one's eyes, nose, skin, and taste. As to prepare for a museum visit, for a restaurant or the like, or even as a general education in every school: as to prepare for or to enhance life.

6.3 Reflection on potentials and pitfalls

Learnings from the everyday interdisciplinary research collaboration practice

This chapter reflects on our work and functioning as an inter- and sometimes transdisciplinary team. It won't discuss research methodologies and outcomes but focuses on our working as a team. It summarizes and contrasts initial expectations and experiences of the different team members. It came about by sharing a questionnaire with open questions about initial expectations and experiences with working within the GAMPSISS project with the different team members. In addition, a few open conversations took place engaging with the same themes.

We know interdisciplinary research is widely spread and often encouraged by specific grants. There is hope interdisciplinary research will help in tackling grand societal challenges. In these discussions, the specificities of interdisciplinary teamwork, its preconditions and implications, are often overlooked (see for exceptions Brown, 2018⁷³; Groth et al⁷⁴, 2019; Qin et al., 1997; van Rijnsoever & Hessels, 2011).

Interdisciplinarity, however, is a wild animal to tame. On the most abstract level, the philosophical level, interdisciplinarity is flamboyant and appealing. Big issues need grand, encompassing gestures, executed by visionary people. Terminology and ambitions tend to be inflated by the deep wish to make a difference, to do things in a radically new way. In some way, one could say this is not the hardest domain to explore interdisciplinarity. On the other side of the spectrum, the very practical part, the part of doing things that have to be done in time, interdisciplinarity is also not so hard. All participants (creators, theorists) take and apply what they need, be it incomplete, underresearched, rough or speculative. Going for a collective goal, processes are funneled towards the result and collateral damage is part of the game. The hard process is where the team members have to find out what they are doing, and why, and why not this and why not in another way. It is the phase in which the fundamentals are questioned, the common ground is negotiated and, above all, should be decided what to leave out and how to interpret the knowledges to make them operational in the specific process.

GAMPSISS benefitted from the above described nature of interdisciplinarity as well as suffered from it. Initially, there were high hopes for the interdisciplinary collaboration. There was the hope that we as a team would be more than the sum of our parts. That we'll be thinking together about how we can bring our disciplines together and integrate concepts from one discipline into another. As one of the team members described: "I was hoping it would blur boundaries by having academics think about how to operationalize artistic ideas into a form that would maximize the desired effects, while artistic partners would create and translate into a performance by measuring it on its researchability." Similarly, one of the artistic researchers expressed his hope to gain new insights from academic research that he would then translate and make accessible in the form of performances.

The ambitiousness of the project was a two-sided coin from the start. There were belly aches for parts of the team about the large amount of untested assumptions surrounding democracy and concert visits – and simultaneous excitement about the chance to create something big, to tackle big questions and work closely together as a team. In line with this,

we were intrigued by each other's visions – on research, on games, on concerts and shared curiosity and willingness to learn from each other.

How have the team members experienced the actual collaboration?

It quickly turned out that different team members had different a priori expectations about the other disciplines and skills. As an illustration: the cultural sociologist found herself surprised by the request to provide a list of societal values that would be beneficial to our democracy. This task, she reckoned as a normative decision, which should be, according to her, made by the society in question. She moved on, pursuing different endeavors while the question of democratic values in the concert hall remained largely unaddressed. Similarly, there was the expectation that our PhD researcher would bring game design expertise, while she identified herself as a game researcher mostly, not to be expected to turn her skills inside out to a mode of creating.

We have spent a lot of time in meetings to learn from each other and succeeded in developing a better understanding of each other as persons and our disciplines. In these long working sessions, the roles of creator and researcher got blurry at times. This was necessary for the project, but also created tensions when team members weren't ready to leave their own field of expertise. Nevertheless, these modified roles and frictions that emerged regarding roles and responsibilities stimulated our personal development. We learned a lot from and about other disciplines – eg. game design, persuasion, sociology, music, concert practice, and we surely inspired each other.

This was enabled by a generally quite open discussion space, and we were eager for each other's input. At times, we worked in sub-teams, one-to-one ones and then had working sessions as a team as a whole. We also found each other for sub-projects.

As our project manager noted in retrospect, there are almost opposite work flows in artistic creation and academic research – while the artistic creation process might start slow and then flies from one idea to the next, gaining speed as it builds an artistic concept and figures out all the details along the way; the academic process tended to start with some excited ideas to then step back, read more and more literature, test assumptions, develops new ones and tests these again – in short, it seems to embrace 'slowing down' (e.g. zooming in to go for precision in order to solidify the intellectual discourse) as an underlying dynamic within its method. This resulted in asynchronities that were hard to tackle. On top of this, the academic research phase had at a certain point to reach into the production phase which made it more difficult to utilize the results within the performances.

When it came to the development of the two ludic performances 'Listening Space' and 'Luistermutant 2021' (Listening Mutant), it seemed at times that everyone was waiting for the other's input – the artistic side for an academic basis to work from, and the research side for an artistic approach to build scientific evaluations around. Keeping us together was 'like a wheelbarrow full of frogs', as the project manager reflects.

In line with these at times asynchronous ways of working and discovering, we struggled to integrate learnings from all different disciplines in some crucial steps. While we thus sat in our disciplinary fields with their different disciplinary agenda's we have sometimes built solid bridges, and sometimes these were too weak or too temporary. An example was the production of 'Luistermutant 2021' (Listening Mutant), which, when its realization took

flight, appeared to be not measurable in a quantitative way, yet quantitative researchability was taken into account in the initial planning of the performance. So the actual performance contained a lot of reminiscents of the initial plans. Yet constrained by limited resources and personnel, fragmented communication and changing circumstances caused by the Covid-19-crisis, the initial research plans couldn't be realized, yet had already constrained the artistic side of the production.

Similarly, after initial expectations were not met and there was at times little to build on, we suspect that we also lacked trust that enough relevant content for our own discipline was going to be created. Consequently, everyone at times retrieved from the group work to creating semi-independent sub-projects which fall under the GAMPSISS umbrella.

As several members of the Gampsiss team expressed, The initial, very ambitious project proposal haunted us in that it pushed us to think very broadly and tackle big questions, more than seemed realistic to do in a solid way within the time and personnel that we had. Simultaneously, we weren't able to stick entirely to 'breaking the work down' and limit ourselves to smaller ambitions. In line with this, there was quite some tension in creating something that was an intriguing game, *and* a great concert, *and* a well-founded research experiment, *and* a listening training, *and* a well-rounded performance.

Nevertheless, we recognize our team as a fruitful combination of disciplines. We are close enough to be able to communicate, yet distant enough to each have their unique contribution. For the research side, the close connection with the artistic field provided unique research access with the extensive network of practitioners involved. This unique access was not only evident in the collaboration of major organizations in the Dutch classical music field, but also in the willingness of people in the field to support the research by sharing their unique insights. Similarly, the artistic research and production were informed by academic research and were aware of, for instance, game-design principles and the literature surrounding listening.

Apart from the inner mechanisms of the team, we noted a couple of external constraints that were relevant to the evolution of the project. Firstly, while research costs were covered like in other projects there was very little budget for the artistic production even though this was a crucial element of the project. This was a flaw in how the call was financially structured by the funding agency, something that should be learned from for future calls that include art practice, artistic research and art objects.

Secondly, our team was spread out and associated with different institutions with different rules and expectations about our work and output. The different team members had different amounts of hours on the project which made communication and meetings slow at times. For example, project management plus artistic research for one team member was supposed to take 1,5 days a week, while the academic postdoc had 3 days available. This restricted our ability to collaborate even more.

Thirdly, the Covid-19 crisis hit us during our third project year. This led to the postponement of our second performance by a year, and – with changing Covid-rules – was forced to change its format, its genre (from immersive and participatory to a more conventional experience) and its audience capacity several times. Much of the dramaturgical thinking-through, the balancing of artistic elements as well as tackling practical issues had to be done

several times over. It also restricted our ways of working as a team, especially harming the creative sessions.

Reflecting on our learnings for future projects and what we would do differently then, we have a couple of suggestions. One important one is to be more mindful about the timing of the different work packages. As tasks and the volume of sub-projects changed, working synchronously became more challenging. It was tricky to create an artistic research based on academic research and design academic research around an artistic process simultaneously.

One team member also intends to 'stay with the trouble' (see Haraway⁷⁵, 2016) even more, to name and 'dive into' the frictions and uncomfortable themes earlier and deeper instead of working around them on one's own. In some phases we worked very close together as a team, and in others more isolated. While the close collaboration was fruitful, it also was time-consuming. Another suggestion therefore was to have more regular contact in all phases of the project, to take everyone along in research design and artistic design. In line with some of the tensions mentioned earlier, we also would want to design somewhat less ambitious projects to leave more freedom for later developments. Nevertheless, we are well-aware of the restrictions for funding when it comes to more open-ended projects.

All in all, as an art/science collaboration that was imperfect but ambitious, we created output with this project that would have not been possible without this combination of people, their skills and knowledge. The artistic field gained two innovative performances that are a lasting inspiration and set a new standard, since (as this is written in 2023) no gamficated concert that is more state of the art has been produced in the classical music sector yet, which is puzzling since 68% of our visitors is waiting for such a thing. It is about time that the sector catches up with what we have envisioned. Also, as humanity inevitably will – prompted by phenomena like fake news, cancel culture, racism, oppression and so on – have to take the 'ecological turn', listening will not be off the agenda anytime soon. As we see around the internet, the coaching sessions, courses, initiatives and lectures about listening are increasing. Our interesting academic output is a solid foundation to work from, and bringing everything further hopefully creating new applications, works and genres.

As a closing remark, we have to admit that we haven't done enough with our partners. Since the classical music sector is short on budget continuously, we decided at the very beginning to acquire as many partners as possible, because they would be convinced to participate for a low contribution, a strategy that actually worked. However, when GAMPSISS took off, the complexity of the project ate up a lot of our time, and we could not come up with tasks of partial researches for all them. On the other side, there were also a number of partners that had no time for us, which is understandable with respect what music organisations have to fulfill within their capacity in general. Last, as mentioned above, the modest volume of hours of main researcher and project leader Hamel (0,3fte) limited the possibilities of extensive networking and spreaded activity.

6.4 Advice for future interdisciplinary projects

For teams of researchers

- If you are working on an interdisciplinary project idea, reflect in a profound and thorough manner about why you want to design an interdisciplinary project and who needs to be part of it with what contribution.
- Instead of extensive cycles, work in smaller cycles, with compact milestones and clear planning.
- Strive for a team that is about evenly available to the project to have a similar amount of energy available from everyone.
- From the planning phase onwards: Take a lot of time for communication, for learning from each other and connecting the different disciplines. Plan for this time to be spent on these processes.
- Keep each other updated in frequent meetings.
- Value and respect the other team members and their disciplines. This has prevented some potential conflicts in our collaboration which are prone to occur due to the diverging aims and methods.

For funding agencies

- Regarding interdisciplinary projects that involve academic/scientific research and artistic research/creation, if you value this combination within your programs, then consider a serious budget for both elements.
- Funding agencies need to recognize that true interdisciplinary work takes time. Judge projects not only on their fantastic output promises but take realizability and realistic planning seriously.

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7.1 Acknowledgments

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Archive and links

– The smartphone game prototype 'Listening Space' can be played through the following link:

<https://listening-space.gamelab.tbm.tudelft.nl>

– A video registration of the performance 'Luistermutant 2021' (Listening Mutant) can be viewed at request. Please contact the research department of Codarts Rotterdam through info@codarts.nl or jhstubbe@codarts.nl

– The smartphone game 'Luistermutant' that was a part of the performance is not available anymore, due to the fact it was a student project and the developer accounts are expired.

– Podcast (in dutch) with Micha Hamel about 'Luistermutant 2021' (Listening Mutant).
<https://open.spotify.com/episode/3s9832pfoKDjAktiqCENXY?si=c0643c2180374589>

– The cover photo is made for us by Nichon Glerum and was used as a publicity image for 'Luistermutant 2021' (Listening Mutant). The girl on the photo is a student from the Jeugdtheater School Zuidoost and wishes to remain anonymous.

Relevant links:

<https://www.nwo.nl/projecten/314-99-201-0>

<https://rasl.nu/research/gampsiss/>

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<https://www.facebook.com/GAMPSISS/>

<https://www.emerce.nl/wire/train-oren-luistergame-moet-ervaring-klassieke-muziek-verrijken>

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Appendix: reviews of Luistermutant 2021/Listening Mutant

1. NRC newspaper wrote:

Menu

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Recensie

Theater

'Luistermutant 2021' zit té vol goede ideeën. Chaos en overprikkeling gegarandeerd.

Holland Festival In de interactieve voorstelling 'Luistermutant 2021' luister je vanaf een klimrek, speel je een game op je telefoon en bevraag je het nut van klassieke muziek. Goede ideeën geen gebrek, maar de voorstelling valt weg in overdaad en chaos.

Rahul Gandolahage

21 juni 2021

Leestijd 2 minuten



Scène uit de interactieve voorstelling 'Luistermutant 2021'.

Foto Ada Nieuwendijk

Chaos

Deceptie: de speeltoestellen gebruiken we uiteindelijk maar een kwartier. „Hou je niet van Mendelssohn, luister eens ondersteboven!”, roept Mahler. Leuk idee. Maar daar zit je dan, in je stoffen pak, mondkapje op, bonen te doppen terwijl voor je iemand ligt vastgebonden op een bed. Er klinkt Mendelssohn, maar tijd om aan de bizarre situatie te wennen is er niet. Hup hup, de voorstelling moet door.

De premissen zijn sterk, maar de voorstelling valt totaal weg in zijn eigen chaos. Het nut van klassieke muziek bevragen, leren luisteren naar muziek (met je 'hoofd en lichaam'), naar jezelf (met je hart), naar een ander; alles moet snel. Daarbij is de game op je telefoon te vaag voor zowel de onervaren als de ervaren gamer; ruim twintig minuten moet je naar je eigen telefoon turen, waarop je een poppetje in een grot vol oren antwoord moet laten geven op wezens. Na ettelijke 'game overs' kom je erachter dat antwoorden de richting van de game bepalen. Dat had best even uitgelegd mogen worden, maar helaas, voor instructie was geen tijd. Hoe je nu beter naar een ander luistert, *God knows*.



Lees ook het interview met Micha Hamel

Vol ideeën

Micha Hamel en Arlon Luijten, bedenkers van de voorstelling, zitten duidelijk vol ideeën en nobele doelen en die zijn allemaal ontzettend de moeite waard. Maar ze weten in *Luistermutant 2021* niet van ophouden. De duidelijkste les: met alles willen doen, doe je uiteindelijk niks.

Het enige hoogte- en rustpunt is een nieuw muziekstuk dat componist Bram Kortekaas voor de voorstelling schreef. Het is een veelkleurig, spannend stuk, waarop je het net te snel aangeleerde verschil tussen 'hoofd-, hart- en lichaamluisteren' op mag oefenen. Bij de delen die zich lenen om structuur en harmonie te analyseren ('hoofdluisteren') kleurt de zaal blauw. Bij muziek die beelden en gevoelens moet oproepen ('hartluisteren') rood. En waar de muziek je huid raakt ('lichaamluisteren') groen. Aan het einde mag je zelf je favoriete manier kiezen. Wederom leuk bedacht, en dankzij Kortekaas ook sterk tot uitdrukking gebracht.

Uitkomst na afloop: nog steeds twee oren, allebei suizend.

Holland Festival

Luistermutant 2021. Met Muziek van Felix Mendelssohn en Bram Kortekaas door philharmonie zuidnederland o.l.v. Bas Wiegers. Concept: Micha Hamel en Arlon Luijten. Met leerlingen van Jeugdtheaterschool Zuidoost Amsterdam. Gezien: 20/6, Muziekgebouw, Amsterdam.

Ideeën en premissen

● ● ● ● ●

Uitvoering

● ● ● ● ●

Nieuwsbrief NRC Cultuuraids

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1. Acclaimed music journalist Neil van der Linden wrote on the authoritative culture blog 'Basia con fuoco': 'Mendelssohn, who is for and who is against?'



Tekst: Neil van der Linden



Dit wordt een wat langere beschrijving, omdat er veel verschillende onderwerpen aan bod komen in *De Muziekmutant* van Micha Hamel en regisseur Arlon Luijten, een combinatie van theateraal essay over de functie van muziek, een interactief muzikaal spel met publiek, een cursus in luisteren, een enquête over de betekenis van het muzikaal erfgoed van vorige eeuwen en een wetenschappelijk onderzoek naar de manier waarop klassieke muziek wordt beleefd. Micha Hamel, zelf lector 'Performance Practice' bij de Hogeschool Codarts, werkte hierbij samen met TU Delft, de Erasmus Universiteit en de Willem de Kooning Academie.

Vier jongeren verdedigen samen met een tiental medeleerlingen van de Jeugdtheaterschool Zuidoost verschillende stellingen over het belang van symfonische muziek, met als voorbeeld Mendelssohn. Mendelssohns muziek stamt uit de tijd dat, zoals de makers stellen, deze muziek een maatschappelijke functie had en onderdeel was van een algemeen maatschappelijk verheffingsideaal. Bovendien waren orkestmusici toen goedkoop, dus kon het symfonieorkest, gesubsidieerd door vorst of bourgeoisie, steeds groter worden.

Inmiddels is de maatschappij veranderd, het enorme orkest is relatief kostbaar, terwijl het verheffingsideaal, althans wat de symfonische muziek betreft aan belang heeft ingeboet. Of althans dat is de vraag. Misschien is de muziek nog steeds drager van een belangrijke, misschien wel tijdloze boodschap uit het verleden of een mogelijke brenger van nieuwe boodschappen, terwijl het draagvlak kan groeien als meer mensen er vertrouwd mee zouden raken. Moderne digitale middelen kunnen daarbij een rol spelen, of dat willen de betrokkenen in elk geval onderzoeken.

Mendelssohn is overigens natuurlijk een interessante keuze. Een beetje Biedermeier, maar hij belichaamt ook de volmaakte eenheid in de klassieke traditie, voordat Berlioz en daarna Wagner twijfel begonnen zaaien. Maar zowel Wagner als diens antipode Brahms waren het eens over de genialiteit van Mendelssohn. En Hamel is bewonderaar van Mendelssohn. Stefan Sanders, die Hamel voor een Holland Festival podcast interviewde, trouwens ook; zie bijgaande link.



De voorstelling begon onder de noemer 'Hoofdluisteren' met een overzicht van elementen die de meeste muziek, zoals die van Mendelssohn maar ook de meeste andere vormen van muziek bevatten en waarop je bij het luisteren kunt letten: melodie, ritme, harmonie, timbre. Hierbij speelde de Philharmonie Zuidnederland, onder Bas Wieggers, van elk element een voorbeeld, terwijl het achterdoek blauw kleurde, de kleur van 'Hoofdluisteren'.



In de volgende etappe, 'Hartluisteren', met rood achterdoek, werd onderzocht welke gevoelens muziek kan opwekken, en of je die toch kunt benoemen. Het orkest speelde passages uit Mendelssohns *Italiaanse symfonie*, en werd het publiek gevraagd via de mobiele telefoon te kiezen tussen afbeeldingen op het achterdoek welke het beste bij de passage paste, bijvoorbeeld tussen een alpenweide of een vertrek uit een 18^e eeuwse paleis, een zonnige moderne stad of een ezel (wie zou voor de ezel hebben gestemd? ik! vanwege de associatie met Mendelssohn en *Midsummer Night's Dream*) en een vrouw in wit gewaad of een autoweg maar wel een die zich mooi door een landschap kronkelde. Ik moest wél denken aan de luchtbeelden uit de opening van Haneke's *Funny Games* waarin 18^e en 19^e eeuwse klassieke muziek een rol speelt, voordat metal-geluid van John Zorn de idylle komt verstoren, zoals de film de romantische idylle van de intellectuele bourgeoisie-familie als veilige omgeving onderuit haalt.



'Lijfluisteren' gaat over hoe je muziek fysiek ervaart. Hiertoe trokken de toeschouwers een witte hansop aan en namen plaats in een groengekleurd lusthof vlak voor het orkest, met een elementen waarmee mensen ontspanning of vermaak zoeken: schommelstoelen, speeltuinmeubilair, maar ook wc-potten en een doods-kist. Ik mocht plaats nemen op een massagebed met dildo en condooms binnen handbereik en op groen kunstgras dat een zonneweide verbeeldde, met groene longdrinks bij de hand.

Er is nog een vierde stap in het luisteren, namelijk 'elastisch luisteren', een combinatie van de zojuist genoemde luisterwijzen. Die werd geoefend aan de hand van een fraai nieuw orkeststuk van Bram Kortekaas terwijl de genoemde corresponderende kleuren op het achterdoek werden geprojecteerd, met een cocktail van deze kleuren als aanduiding voor elastisch luisteren. Het idee was waarschijnlijk onbevooroordeeld te kunnen luisteren naar een stuk dat zowel voor regulier als debuterend concertpubliek nieuw was; zij het dat het idioom – tonaal, een beetje impressionistisch, een beetje laten we zeggen Vermeulen-achtig – al wel vertrouwd was voor de klassiek geschoolde luisteraar, maar dat kan bij een nieuw werk ook afleidend werken.

Zou het ook interessant zijn geweest om de ideeën te testen aan de hand van muziek uit de tijd waarin de scheiding tussen traditioneel en niet-elitair maar wel mondiger massa's zich steeds duidelijker aftekende? De tijd ook waarin het idee van 'verheffing des volks' door cultuur gestalte kreeg, dus de eerste decennia van de vorige eeuw. En dan óf in principe toegankelijke muziek, Ravels *Daphnis et Chloé* of Debussy's *La Mer*, óf juist werk waar ook veel klassiek publiek moeite mee heeft, Schönbergs *Erwartung* of een pianoconcert van Bartók, en waarvoor andere oren misschien juist open staan.



Niet alleen muziek beluisteren, maar ook luisteren in het algemeen was onderdeel van het onderzoek. Zo was er een betoog over basale regels voor een luisterend gesprek, door de – geweldige – ceremoniemeester, actrice Lidewij Mahler; de hele cursus empathische vragen stellen uit mijn medicijnenstudie passeerde voor mijn geest.

Vervolgens werd de toeschouwers gevraagd, via de eigen *smartphone*, een computerspel te spelen waarin luisteren naar redeneringen werd getest. In een Alice in Wonderland-achtige setting moesten we ene Eustachius (genoemd naar *de buis van*, onderdeel van ons oor) te bevrijden uit een onderaards gewelf tijdens een virtuele tocht langs allerlei fantasieschepselen die ieder voor zich iets wist over de verblijfplaats van Eustachius en de uitgang van het labrynt. Maar bijvoorbeeld een slak met eindeloze verhalen moest je ook netjes, maar resoluut leren afwimpelen.

Het laatste onderdeel bracht ons terug bij Mendelssohn en de klassieke muziek van de negentiende eeuw: een debatteerwedstrijd waarin vier jongeren ieder een stelling over klassieke muziek verdedigden. De eerste spreker vond dat onze aandacht voor emoties uit de tijd is en dat we aan de slag moeten om de wereld te verbeteren. "Dus nee, muziek die gemaakt is om iets bij te voelen, om navelstaarderig in jezelf te gaan zitten wroeten, daar hoeft niet zo veel tijd, geld en aandacht naar toe." Een andere spreker wees op de helende kracht van muziek. "De meeste componisten van 1840 worden niet meer gespeeld. Mendelssohn wel. Omdat hij een universele kracht heeft. Een kracht die de tand des tijds en de waan van de dag kan doorstaan. En dat is wat we nodig hebben. Juist vandaag. Juist nu."

Beiden werden in de eerste rondes weggestemd. De overblijvende stellingen waren "Geef mij Mendelssohn. Geef mij al die verschillende zoekende stemmen die zich in de 19e eeuw loszongen van de wereld zoals die was en die nog steeds klinken. Stemmen van mensen die niet langer onderworpen willen worden. Want hun zoektocht is dezelfde zoektocht van ons allemaal vandaag. De zoektocht om een vrij mens te zijn. Stemmen die een wereld creëren waarin ik vrij rond mag lopen en mag zijn wie ik wil zijn. Mag denken wat ik wil denken en mag voelen wat ik voel." En daartegenover: "De wereld verandert zo snel, dus moeten kunstenaars snel zijn. Stukken schrijven en weer weggooien. Nieuwe muziek maken en weer weggooien. In dialoog blijven met de tijd. Niet met vroeger. Met vandaag. Verschillende stemmen, ja, maar alsjeblieft: de stemmen van vandaag. Zit de tijd op de hielen, zodat iedereen maar dan ook echt iedereen in de zaal straks kan zeggen: ja shit man, dit gaat over mij."

Een extra spelelement was dat als Mendelssohn zou worden weggestemd, het laatste stuk van het programma, zijn Hebriden Ouverture, voor het laatst zou klinken. Maar die middag won Mendelssohn. Zij het met niet een grote voorsprong. Bij de generale, met veel kennissen van de acteurs van de Jeugdtheaterschool Zuidoost, was hij weggestemd. Dat gebeurde ook 's avonds, zo vertelt Hamel. De luisteroefeningen hebben daar blijkbaar weinig verandering in kunnen brengen.

Ik weet niet of onderzoek met deze beperkte aantallen publiek statistisch significante waarden oplevert. Maar de uitkomsten zijn toch iets waarvan orkesten kunnen leren, vindt Micha Hamel. Rest de vraag hoe een én/én optie als vijfde stelling het er vanaf zou hebben gebracht, én klassiek én nieuwe vormen van muziek in de concertzaal?

Podcast gesprek tussen Stephan Sanders en Micha Hamel:

https://open.spotify.com/episode/3s9832pfoKDjAktiqCENXY?si=WsU7fhwET6Cg_QtWjBu5mg&dl_branch=1

