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M U S I C A L I N T E R E S T
C H U R C H A T T E N D A N C E
A N D
P E R S O N A L I T Y

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- Allan Ross Wards -

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ABSTRACT

WARDS, A.R., 1980, Musical Interest, Church Attendance and Personality, M.A. thesis, Massey University, New Zealand. This study set out to investigate whether any relationships might exist between an individual's personality, his/her secular status, and involvement in music performance. It was hypothesised that Groups differing in church and musical interests will vary in personality characteristics as measured by the PRF (for motivational variables) and the NSQ (for level of stability). Ten Groups were studied: Church Choir, male and female; Church non-Music, male and female; non-Church Instrumental, male and female; non-Church non-Music, male and female; Salvation Army Band, male; Pipe Band, male. Ten subjects, drawn from the City of Palmerston North, formed each group. Analysis of results took two forms: Profile analyses of all groups in the possible comparisons of groups; Q-type factor analysis of group and subject differences. It was concluded that such an approach to the study of groups and interests is practicable, but that the measuring instruments used in this study were too blunt, and that caution must be used in interpreting results.

PREFACE

The author wishes to thank all who have made work on this thesis possible: my wife, for bearing with me; my Supervisor, for patient help and assistance; my Subjects, for their willingness; my Church, for its interest and support.

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(Please note that profile analyses and tables are not listed separately here, as these form an integral part of the text.)

MUSICAL INTEREST,
CHURCH ATTENDANCE
AND PERSONALITY

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

Some years ago, a friend and I chanced in discussion to come upon the subject of the meaning of music. From our limited reading, it seemed to us that there had been very little attempt to study music per se, as distinct from the psycho-physical aspects of music. Similarly, it seemed to us that there had been little study of the relationship between personality and response to music.

Accordingly, in a Psychology stage III project at Victoria University, we tried to analyse people's responses to music. For this task, we played pre-recorded one-minute pieces of diverse kinds and origins to a number of subjects, giving them instructions something like this:-

"You will be played twenty one-minute extracts from various kinds of music. While each piece is playing, or after each piece, will you please write down what you feel when you hear this piece, or, if a story or memory comes to mind, will you write this down. Please try not to give me just a description of the music - I want you to tell me about your reactions to it."

From our knowledge of the subjects used, we attempted to match up factors in the responses given with the subjects themselves. Also, using code-marked copies of the responses, we asked friends of the subjects to match names with responses, to see if known people were readily identifiable in their music responses.

The results were most disappointing, and seemed

incapable of analysis. Firstly, it was not even possible to distinguish between Form II children and university music students on the basis of stories given or feelings recorded. Secondly, apart from just a few responses, the big majority of the responses gave no indication to us or the other analysers who the subject was. One of the few "good" responses was the following, to a piece of Gregorian chant, by a teenager known to us to be worried about her weight:-

"I can see an old grey stone church, a fat monk sitting sleepily in the front of the church. He has on a brown robe and wears a wide leather belt round his waist, drawn tight in an effort to control his girth."

In itself, the recording of just positive instances is not a valid approach: needs for frequency distribution and the like are evident.

Over the years, continuing as a keen amateur musician, it came to my attention that there are very few practising musicians among either academic or clinical psychologists. In eleven years' work in the Justice Department Psychological Service, I knew of no other practising musician in that group. In fact, I know of only two other psychologists who performed music at all, these being a psychology professor (since deceased) who played the piano very well, and an educational psychology lecturer who played the cornet exceedingly well. Many other psychological-world acquaintances enjoy music, but none performs. The question comes - why is this so? It seems intuitively plausible that analytic answers could be given, but I have been able to find no studies nor theorising on the topic. The relevance of this observation to the present study is that there may be certain personality factors required in music performance as an active interest which correlate negatively with academic and practical interest in psychology. Further, it seemed possible to me that this may be an explanation for the lack of studies on the meaning of music: such a question

may not readily occur to non-music-oriented psychologists.

The composer Felix Mendelssohn (d.1847) was once told by a friend that emotions aroused by music are so deep that they are unable to be described. Mendelssohn retorted immediately that this was not so: it is the fact that emotions aroused by music are so close to the surface that precludes their being described. Whichever is correct, it is evident that varieties of music, rhythmical and otherwise, play a great part in most cultures of the world and in our own not least.

Without much thinking on the topic, it would occur to most people that it is possible that people attracted to pop music may in some personality characteristics be different from those who profess no understanding of, nor interest in, music of any description, and that they may be different again from those who are attracted to classical church music. Perhaps these differences might be charted if tests were given to various groups of subjects with expressed music interests, for or against.

Working at various stages with people in both medical and mental hospitals, it seemed to me that Christian people may have some differing personality characteristics from those who profess no faith; I had certainly felt that Christian patients in medical hospitals seemed, on the whole, to be more cheerful and hopeful than non-Christian patients. A small, unpublished study, carried out for personal interest, used ten subjects in each of two groups (Christian and non-Christian) to whom Frankl's Purpose-in-Life Test was administered. The results generally confirmed this hypothesis. Post-hoc explanations could easily be given: for example, a person who has faith in an after-life need not be as frightened of dying as a person who believes in his own total annihilation at death.

These earlier results led to the idea that it might

be worthwhile to chart personality profiles of those who are church-goers and those who are not, to see if the groups differ. The question arises immediately, of course, to ask whether people of certain personality characteristics become Christians, or whether their faith shapes their personalities in some way. It may be that both of these interact.

These have been thoughts developed over the past two decades, with only casual reference to books and periodicals to see if these questions have occurred to others. Studies surveyed gave no definite information, one way or the other. The thought arose, then, whether it might be possible to use both musical interest and expressed church-going as variables in a study of personality characteristics of different groups within the community. This is the area of interest for the present study.