



First Year's Tastes. What Beginning Conservatoire Students Listen To – A Pilot Study Report.

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Summary

In this paper the first phase of a descriptive research project on musical preferences and music listening habits of first year's conservatoire students is presented. The paper presents the background of the research project, the construction of a survey and the first results of this survey, which indicate that musical preferences and music listening habits of first year's conservatoire students are highly varied. Possible refinements for the survey are discussed. The paper ends with first notions on how to not only use the findings for descriptive ends but also put them in the broader perspective of more general research on musical preferences.

Introduction

A couple of years ago one of the colleagues of the first author of this article said in a discussion about student-centered education: “Are you aware that students musically often live a multiple musical life? My own daughter is now studying at the conservatoire, and I see it happen with my own eyes: she studies all the classic pieces from the great composers with tremendous joy. But when she travels home and puts her walkman on, she listens to rock or to singer-songwriters, and when she goes out with her friends she visits dance venues where they play incredible loud dance music. What a difference from my own period of study!”

The “multiple musical life” my colleague referred to can be demonstrated by a host of anecdotic material. Recently I sat in on a presentation of groups of conservatoire students who

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were preparing for giving a school concert. One of the ensembles played their own version of Vivaldi's "The Four Seasons" when suddenly a mobile phone started ringing. Or actually "ringing" is not quite the right word – it started booming in a subdued volume, some kind of techno ring tone, becoming louder and louder. With some embarrassment one of the violin players of the ensemble, a frail young woman from one of the Eastern European countries, left the ensemble and put her phone off. And then rejoined to indulge in playing *L'inverno* again.

Of course observations like these are not very revolutionary. There is, however, a certain actuality to it. It seems a fact that many people are, in our late-modern society, perpetually surrounded with all kinds of musics and often are musical omnivores, as Peterson & Kern (1996) suggest⁴, or at least have a more varied musical diet than even they themselves are aware of. One might ask whether this phenomenon, which I call – for want for a better term - "multi-musicality", also counts for conservatoire students, and if so, what happens psychologically with them when they enter a conservatoire to intensify an often rather "mono-musical" training, a training directed towards the highest forms of specialization in one genre, or even sub-genre, in an organization with a culture which in all kinds of direct and indirect ways propagates this specialization (on conservatoire culture, see e.g. Nettl 1995 and Kingsbury 1988). Will some students feel the process of musical specialization as a form of narrowing down? Do some struggle with that?

We do not know. And we are not even going to begin answering those kinds of questions in this paper. This paper does no more than describe the first step of a research project that tries to find empirical evidence for the hunch – hypothesis, if you want - that many conservatoire students when they enter the conservatoire are maybe highly specialized performers but also very multi-musical listeners. They have, as it were, a double musical identity: as a performer they are very specialized, as a listener they are broad.

This double musical identity matches in a way with the description of breadth and depth in conservatoire education by Burt-Perkins and Lebler (2008), who especially focus on the possibilities to use breadth for opening up specialized conservatoire education towards the demands of the changing musical society, and with Mills, Williamon and Burt (2004) on the musical breadth of conservatoire students of classical music. The latter article concludes that third-year classical music students of the Royal College of Music, London, "do not (...) listen to music from other genres on a regular basis" (Mills, Williamon and Burt 2004: 177), and that only a minority of students demonstrate "a certain amount of individual preference" (id., 176). Our question, roughly, is whether first-year classical music students at the Prince Claus Conservatoire, Groningen, show the same characteristics.

But the background of our desire to know how "multi-musical" students enter the conservatoire is actually not informed by a curiosity for the development of music preferences and listening habits during conservatoire training. It comes from another direction: a desire to know more about the relationship between professional musicians and their audience. The first author of this paper carries out a PhD research project on "the audience", the natural counterpart of today's and tomorrow's musician – and for many conservatoire students a kind of "unknown other", "an ostensibly anonymous public audience", as Kingsbury (1988: 17) states.

Although acknowledging the fact that much research is carried out on musical audiences, much of that research has a problem: it is mainly large-scale (semi-)quantitative research, often carried out in the framework of music marketing, and aiming at pinpointing specific audiences as abstract "target groups" for musicians in specific styles. This type of research for

⁴ It is to be seen whether it is true that this is mainly a trait of elite musical taste, as Peterson and Kern suggest.

example tends to state that the classical music audience on average is higher educated and gets older and older (see for a nuanced article in this line of thought Roose 2008), and that musicians either should adjust their “product” to this target group or should come up with specific strategies to attract young and/or less well educated people to their concerts in order to keep gaining a living.

This type of research is connected to the idea that an abstract “average” listener, or average listeners per musical genre, can be constructed, and that those constructs then serve as orientation points for the activities of musicians in real life. This in essence must be based on the idea that it is fruitful for the professional music practice to gain insight into highly abstract audience categories. I think this is a mistake. Musicians generally do not cover huge “markets” but work mostly with rather small-scale audiences. Ideas about the behavior of these audiences might not best be sought in the results of large scale quantitative research.

In order to get a view on what moves listeners and on how musicians can adequately relate to their audience, I am convinced that one needs to turn to the individual level (cf. Lamont and Greasley 2009: 162-163). Why do individuals listen to music? Why do they come to concerts? What do concerts mean to them? What do they expect to get out of it – why is visiting a concert a meaningful musical experience? How often do different individuals go to concerts? How “broad” do they listen? This matches with Roose’s observation that “of course surveys cannot disclose the in-depth knowledge and rich data that [e.g.] (...) in-depth interviews, in which the attender’s/listener’s own narratives and metaphors are recorded, are able to discover” (Roose 2008: 250).

Our suspicion is that today’s listeners are basically very broad listeners; much broader than marketing categories of average listeners imply. If that is the case, this may mean that for example classical musicians have in theory a much wider possible audience than the higher educated ageing category. But it also means that musicians must have the will and the capacity to really find out about who and where their possible audience members are – and they probably must be willing to give up many of their ideas about how their music practice should look like in order to furnish their possible audience with “meaningful musical experiences”. Needless to say, this not only goes for classical musicians – it goes for jazz, for pop and rock, for world music, for any kind of musician.

If musicians must adapt themselves to the idea that a possible very big audience is waiting just around the corner, offering their ears to them as long as they are able to provide them with meaningful musical occasions, the question is: how do we get professional musicians aware of this fact of modern life? That is where the importance of a research project on listening behavior of beginning music students comes in.

What do first year music students listen to? Where do they listen? Does their listening behavior vary over the genre they study in (e.g. do classical music students listen differently than jazz students?), or even over the instrument they study? Answers to these kind of questions may lead to two important findings:

- it may show that the listening behavior of starting music students may not differ dramatically from that of other (categories of) listeners – musicians and their audiences maybe have more in common than we suspect, and this may be the starting point of an education in which students are learning to think about their audiences as people very much like themselves – and, probably, the other way around, of themselves as ordinary listeners in everyday life;
- but it may also show where exactly the differences in listening behavior lie; it may well be that music students are just like other listeners in some – or many – respects but differ in a few crucial points which may be very important for them.

Both findings will enable students, as well as conservatoires as organizations, to reflect on the relationships between musicians and listeners in our society.

Research questions, research design and execution of the research

The research project, which basically has a descriptive aim (showing the variation in music preferences and music listening habits in beginning conservatoire students) will be carried out in three consecutive years (2010-2012) by sending at the beginning of the school year, early September, an electronic survey to all first-year's students of the Prince Claus Conservatoire. This paper discusses the first step of this project: the development and testing of the survey and the first empirical results.

At the end of 2009, the first author of this paper approached the Applied Psychology program of his university, Hanze University Groningen, with the question whether it was possible to set a group of students to work constructing, testing, evaluating and adjusting the survey as part of their studies. A group of students was found who in the framework of a module "Practice-Oriented Research" could carry out this task – they are the co-authors of this paper⁵.

Work started with the students producing a research proposal which was discussed and then slightly adjusted. The project had a double aim: to design, test and eventually redraft the survey, and, in order to do that, to gather enough data to answer the specific research question the survey was devised for. In the latter respect, the students formulated as general research question:

How diverse are music preferences and music listening behavior of the first year's students of the Prince Claus Conservatoire?

We deliberately encompassed music preference as well as music listening behavior, as they are two separate phenomena. Asking about music preference means asking about what someone *would like* to hear, asking about music listening behavior gives an insight in what people *actually* hear. Especially given the omnipresence of music in modern western society, music listening behavior will be partly determined by individual music preference, but partly also by more contextual factors: being in situations where music sounds which one did not actually choose to listen to.

As sub-questions the students formulated the following questions, with specific hypotheses linked to them:

- Sub-question 1: how much and to which musical genres do first year's students of the Prince Claus Conservatoire listen? Hypothesis: First year's students listen to more than one musical genre.
- Sub-question 2: is there a correlation between playing a specific instrument and the music that first year's students of the Prince Claus Conservatoire listen to? Hypothesis: there will be a correlation between the instrument played and the genres students listen to.
- Sub-question 3: is there a correlation between the chosen specialization and the music preferences of first year's students of the Prince Claus Conservatoire? Hypothesis: there will be a correlation between the chosen specialization and the genres students listen to.
- Sub-question 4: how much time do first year's students of the Prince Claus Conservatoire spend making music? Hypothesis: students will spend 68 hours per week making music: 40 hours of study and an additional 4 hours per day on top of that.

⁵ Many thanks to Charlotte de Wolff MSc, university lecturer at the Institute of Social Studies, Hanze University Groningen, who coached the student group during the project.

- Sub-question 5: is there a correlation between the situation first year's students of the Prince Claus Conservatoire are in and the music they listen to? Hypothesis: the situation influences listening behavior.

Sub-question 4 was specifically introduced on the wish of the students.

Some of the terms in the sub-questions need clarification. In sub-question 1, reference is made to *musical genres*. We decided to design a list on the basis of earlier research carried out by Rentfrow & Gosling (2003) who designed the Short Test On Musical Preferences STOMP⁶, adapted to the Dutch situation by Delsing et al (2008) and consecutively slightly adapted to the situation in the North of the Netherlands AD 2010 by ourselves. The resulting list of genres is included in addendum I of this paper (for a nuanced view on working with rating scales and musical genres, see Lamont and Greasley 2009: 163). The *specialization* chosen by students, mentioned in sub-question 3, refers to one of the following five: Classical Music, Jazz, Composition/Music Production/Studio Production, Conducting (choir/band), or Classroom Teacher Training⁷. Within the classical music, jazz and classroom teacher training specializations students choose a specific main instrument⁸. With the *situation* students can be in, mentioned in sub-question 5, the following options were given: when you are alone; together with friends; while traveling; when going out into town; while studying; at work; while sporting.

The group of students produced a first draft of the survey which was adjusted after discussion. The resulting survey was, given the multi-national character of the student population (about 40% of the students are non-Dutch), translated into English. Both versions of the survey were then by the Staff Office of Education and Research of Hanze University transferred into an electronic survey using Snap survey software. In addendum II of this paper the English language version of the survey is included. We deliberately chose for working with the Staff Office because they have great expertise in constructing electronic surveys (e.g. for curriculum evaluation throughout Hanze University, an organisation providing 25.000 students with higher education), they are part of the organization the researcher works for and the students study with and therefore easily accessible, and as they form part of a big and stable organization they a form of guarantee of continuity for the three-year period of the research project.

With help of the Student Administration and with consent of the conservatoire leadership we got a list of email addresses of 82 first year's students of the Prince Claus Conservatoire. They were divided over the specializations as follows:

- Classical Music: 35;
- Jazz: 25;
- Composition/Music Production/Studio Production: 8;
- Conducting (choir/band): 2;
- Classroom Teacher Training: 12.

These students received an email in Dutch and English with a link to the surveys on March 8, 2010, the day the survey was opened for filling in. Students were asked for their co-operation by filling in the survey, and promised that amongst those filling in the survey two gift

⁶ For the revised version we used, STOMP-R, consult the internet page [homepage.psy.utexas.edu/HomePage/Faculty/Gosling/scales_we.htm#Short Test Of Music Preferences \(STOMP\)](http://homepage.psy.utexas.edu/HomePage/Faculty/Gosling/scales_we.htm#Short%20Test%20Of%20Music%20Preferences%20(STOMP)), last visited May 12, 2010.

⁷ On the basis of Dutch legislation, a formal distinction is made between the level of "program" and "specialization". The conservatoire formally offers two programs: Music and Classroom Teacher Training. Within the Music program, four specializations are offered: Classical Music, Jazz, Composition/Music Production/Studio Production and Conducting (Choir/Band). For simplicity's sake, in this article we consider Classroom Teacher Training as being one of the five specializations within the Prince Claus Conservatoire.

⁸ For a list see www.hanzeuniversity.eu/home/International/Schools/Prins+Claus+Conservatorium/.

vouchers of 40 € each would be raffled. Two reminder emails were sent on March 10 and March 12, 2010; the survey was closed at March 15, 2010, at noon. That same afternoon, the results of the survey were sent in the form of an SPSS-file with raw data, to the students for analysis.

Results

Eventually 26 students filled in the survey, a response of 32%. This is a normal response rate for a digital survey (cf. Brinkman 2000: 105), especially given the fact that the survey only stood open for one week. We will in this paragraph give the results by answering the five sub-questions

Sub-question 1

The first sub-question was: how much and to which musical genres do first year's students of the Prince Claus Conservatoire listen? The hypothesis was that first year's students listen to more than one musical genre. The hypothesis was confirmed by the results. A first impression is obtained by looking at the answers given to question 8 of the survey, in which respondents could indicate on a Likert-scale how often they themselves had put on music from the various genres. The results are given in table 1.

1 Frequency of playing the various genres last year (n=26; shortened version)

	Never	Hardly ever	Sometimes	Regularly	Often
	Percentage of total	Percentage of total	Percentage of total	Percentage of total	Percentage of total
Classical	0,0%	11,5%	19,2%	11,5%	57,7%
Contemporary classical	15,4%	23,1%	23,1%	7,7%	30,8%
Jazz	7,7%	19,2%	26,9%	7,7%	38,5%
Latin	42,3%	15,4%	26,9%	7,7%	7,7%
Pop/Top 40	19,2%	19,2%	15,4%	11,5%	34,6%
Hardrock/Heavy Metal	46,2%	15,4%	15,4%	7,7%	15,4%
Punk/Hardcore/Grunge	61,5%	26,9%	3,8%	3,8%	3,8%
Reggae/Ska	45,8%	16,7%	20,8%	4,2%	12,5%
Rap/Hip-hop	57,7%	19,2%	15,4%	3,8%	3,8%
Dance/Trance/Techno	61,5%	15,4%	7,7%	7,7%	7,7%
New Age	61,5%	19,2%	15,4%	0,0%	3,8%
Cabaret	42,3%	34,6%	19,2%	0,0%	3,8%
Dutch Language	53,8%	23,1%	11,5%	7,7%	3,8%
Band	42,3%	11,5%	26,9%	3,8%	15,4%

It was found that all genres (also the genres not mentioned in the table above) are listened to by at least one respondent. Classical music is the only genre that is listened to by all respondents, its frequency followed by jazz and pop/top-40; dance/trance/techno and new age is never listened to by over 60% of the respondents. The results indicate that respondents on average listen to three different musical genres.

Answers to question 10 from the survey reinforce this finding. In this question respondents were asked which genres were present at their MP3-player at the time of filling in the survey. The results are given in table 2. Again, classical music figures the most (in 80% of the cases), followed by jazz (60%) and pop/top-40 (52%). On average 7,32 different musical genres figure on the MP3-players of respondents. Compared to the extreme expectation that students

only would listen to the genre they study, this is a significant difference (the reliability interval with a reliability of 95% delivers a score of 4.88 – 8.07 genres).

2 Genres present on MP3-player respondents (n=26)

Genres	Reactions	
	Absolute number of respondents	Percentage of the respondents
Classical Music	20	80,0%
Contemporary Classical Music	9	36,0%
Opera	7	28,0%
Jazz	15	60,0%
Blues/Country/Americana	8	32,0%
Folk	8	32,0%
World/Ethnic	12	48,0%
Latin	7	28,0%
Pop/Top 40	13	52,0%
Hardrock/Heavy Metal	8	32,0%
Punk/Hardcore/Grunge	3	12,0%
Reggae/Ska	7	28,0%
Alternative Pop & Rock	11	44,0%
Funk/Soul/R&B	9	36,0%
Rap/Hip-hop	5	20,0%
Dance/Trance/Techno	7	28,0%
Religious/Gospel	7	28,0%
New Age	2	8,0%
Cabaret	3	12,0%
Dutch Language	4	16,0%
Band	4	16,0%
Choir	7	28,0%
Musical	7	28,0%
Total	183	732,0%

Another indication for the variation of listening habits delivers question number 9, where respondent are asked to which musical genre they listen most. The results are given in table 3.

3 Genres most listened to (n=26)

	Absolute number	Percentage of total
Classical Music	9	34.6
Contemporary Classical	1	3.8
Jazz	6	23.1
Pop/Top 40	3	11.5
Hardrock/Heavy Metal	1	3.8
Alternative Pop & Rock	3	11.5
Funk/Soul/R&B	1	3.8
Religious/Gospel	1	3.8
Band	1	3.8
Total	26	100.0

It shows that classical music and jazz are, as expected, most listened to, but that roughly one third of the respondents listen most to musical genres not related to the core genres taught in the conservatoire.

Overall we can say on answer to sub-question 1 that first year's music students within the Prince Claus Conservatoire listen most to classical music, jazz and pop/top-40 music, but that many other genres are listened to. The complete list of musical genres is found back on the MP3-players of the students; on average each student has 7 different musical genres included on his MP3-player. And for at least one third of the students, the genre most listened to is not the core genre they are taught in the conservatoire.

Sub-question 2

The second sub-question was: is there a correlation between playing a specific instrument and the music that first year's students of the Prince Claus Conservatoire listen to? The hypothesis was that there will be a correlation between the instrument played and the genres students listen to.

Sadly, of the 26 respondents, only 12 responded to the item asking which instrument they played. The item response of 14,6% (12 out of 82) and the distribution of responses over the various instruments make it impossible to say anything significant on answer to this sub-question.

Sub-question 3

Sub-question 3 was: is there a correlation between the chosen specialization and the music preferences of first year's students of the Prince Claus Conservatoire? The hypothesis was that there will be a correlation between the chosen specialization and the genres students listen to.

The sub-question is answered by relating the answer on question 7 to the specialization of the respondents. For that goal, answers on the 7 point scale of question 7⁹ were clustered in three:

- dislike: 1-3 (dislike strongly/moderately/a little);
- like nor dislike: 4;
- like: 5-7 (like a little/moderately/strongly).

The answering of the sub-question was further confined by looking only at the musical genres classical music and jazz, as the two musical genres characterizing the specializations within the conservatoire most as well as most figuring in the answers on sub-questions 1. The results are shown in tables 4 and 5.

⁹ In this case a 7 point scale, and not a 5 point scale, was chosen because in the research of Gosling & Rentfrow a 7-point scale was used. This makes comparison of results in the future easier.

4 Music preferences related to specialization: classical music genre (n=26)

	Specialization					Total
	Classical Music	Jazz	Conducting	CMS	Classroom Teacher Training	
Dislike classical music (1-3)	1 9%	1 20%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	2 8%
Like nor dislike classical music (4)	0 0%	2 40%	0 0%	0 0%	2 29%	4 15%
Like classical music (5-7)	10 91%	2 40%	1 100%	2 100%	5 71%	20 77%
Total	11 100%	5 100%	1 100%	2 100%	7 100%	26 100%

5 Music preferences related to specialization: jazz (n=26)

	Specialization					Total
	Classical Music	Jazz,	Conducting	CMS	Classroom Teacher Training	
Dislike jazz (1-3)	2 18%	0 0%	0 0%	1 50%	0 0%	3 12%
Like nor dislike jazz (4)	3 27%	0 0%	0 0%	1 50%	0 0%	4 15%
Like jazz (5-7)	6 55%	5 100%	1 100%	0 0%	7 100%	19 73%
Total	11 100%	5 100%	1 100%	2 100%	7 100%	26 100%

From both tables we can conclude the following. All classical music students except one (91 %) indicate they like classical music; the exception has answered he dislikes it strongly, which seems a contradictive answer. With the jazz students the picture is even more unequivocal: 100% indicate they strongly like jazz. However, it is clear that many students from the other specializations than classical music also like classical music (roughly 65%), whereas the other way around also around 65% of the students from other specializations than jazz like jazz.

We can conclude there is a correlation between the chosen specialization and the music preference, but the picture is not overwhelmingly conclusive.

Sub-question 4

Sub-question 4 was: how much time do first year's students of the Prince Claus Conservatoire spend making music? The hypothesis was that students will spend 68 hours per week making music: 40 hours of study and an additional 4 hours per day on top of that.

15 respondents answered this question. The minimum number of hours mentioned was 7, the maximum 40. On average the answer was 22,07 hours, with a standard deviation of 8,68. The hypothesis therefore is refuted.

Sub-question 5

Sub-question 5 was: is there a correlation between the situation first year's students of the Prince Claus Conservatoire are in and the music they listen to? The hypothesis was that the situation influences listening behavior.

To answer this question, we made use of question 12 of the survey. We looked into all possible combinations of situations (a total of 21 coupled situations) and looked each time how often the musical genre between the two coupled situations were the same, expressed as a percentage. If the hypothesis would be confirmed, the percentages would differ considerably between coupled situations.

The results of this analysis looks like this:

6 Coupled situations with matching music genres played (n=25)

Situations	Percentage of respondents
Alone and together with friends	38,5%
Alone and while travelling	61,5%
Alone and when going out	50,0%
Alone and while studying	61,5%
Alone and at work	46,2%
Alone and while sporting	30,8%
Together with friends and while travelling	30,8%
Together with friends and when going out	30,8%
Together with friends and while studying	30,8%
Together with friends and at work	26,9%
Together with friends and while sporting	11,5%
While travelling and when going out	30,8%
While travelling and while studying	42,3%
While travelling and at work	42,3%
While travelling and while sporting	34,6%
When going out and while studying	34,6%
When going out and at work	34,6%
When going out and while sporting	30,8%
While studying and at work	46,2%
While studying and while sporting	19,2%
At work and while sporting	19,2%

Indeed percentages differ considerably, which means there is a correlation between situations and musical genres listened to. The highest convergence of musical genres in situations is when people are alone per se and when they study and when people are alone per se and when they travel – the two latter situations of course may be characterized as being alone for a specific reason. The lowest convergence is that between being together with friends and while sporting. Generally, the situation in which one is with friends differs the most with all other situations.

Conclusions

Conclusions based on analysis of the data

The general research question was:

How diverse are music preference and music listening behavior of the first year's students of the Prince Claus Conservatoire?

As a first answer we can conclude that music preference and music listening behavior amongst first year's conservatoire students are diverse. Preferences for musical genres differ widely from student to student, and students generally have no preference for only one genre.

Concrete answers to the sub-questions may read as follows:

- Sub-question 1: how much and to which musical genres do first year's students of the Prince Claus Conservatoire listen? Hypothesis: First year's students listen to more than one musical genre.
On the basis of the survey we can conclude that classical music, jazz, pop/top 40, alternative pop & rock and (slightly less) contemporary classical music are most listened to.
- Sub-question 2: is there a correlation between playing a specific instrument and the music that first year's students of the Prince Claus Conservatoire listen to?
Hypothesis: there will be a correlation between the instrument played and the genres students listen to.
No answer can be given on this question due to the low response on the items concerning this question.
- Sub-question 3: is there a correlation between the chosen specialization and the music preferences of first year's students of the Prince Claus Conservatoire? Hypothesis: there will be a correlation between the chosen specialization and the genres students listen to.
Not completely surprising, there is a correlation between the preference for classical music and jazz and being a student in classical music or jazz, although the picture is as yet not very decisive. For other genres, additional analysis should be carried out.
- Sub-question 4: how much time do first year's students of the Prince Claus Conservatoire spend making music? Hypothesis: students will spend 68 hours per week making music: 40 hours of study and an additional 4 hours per day on top of that.
There is a great discrepancy between the expected answer (68 hours) and the given answer (22 hours), leading to doubts on the validity of the results on this question.
- Sub-question 5: is there a correlation between the situation first year's students of the Prince Claus Conservatoire are in and the music they listen to? Hypothesis: the situation influences listening behavior.
Again not completely surprising, there is a correlation between situations and music listening behavior. Specifically there is a difference between those situations where students are more by themselves and situations where they are in the company of others.

Our results in a way seem to contradict the results obtained by Mills, Williamon and Burt (2004), mentioned already in the introduction of this article. They found that at least listening habits amongst their respondents are much more narrow. Four possible explanations for this difference:

- whereas our respondents in this pilot were students halfway their first year, the students they researched were third year's students. It is a possibility that in their students started as much broader music listeners but "narrowed down" in the course

of their conservatoire study. This phenomenon of narrowing down could quite easily be researched by adding a longitudinal element in our own survey; if this would be proven to be the case, it would seriously damage the possibility to use breadth in listening habits as an instrument to bring an element of breadth in an otherwise very specialized conservatoire education (cf. Burt-Perkins and Lebler 2008);

- the differences noted may simply be due to differences in cultural background; findings in London may not simply replicate in Groningen¹⁰;
- differences may also be due to differences in the formulation of the questions to students;
- finally, differences are not so much the result of difference in fact but of difference in analysis.

Further study is required to decide which of the explanations is fitting.

Conclusions based on the evaluation of the constructed survey as research instrument

Although above we have discussed conclusions on the basis of the outcomes of the survey, the main goal of this research project was actually not generating empirical evidence for the research question and sub-questions. We are very much aware that the results presented in this paper are based on a (too) limited number of respondents. Also, the survey has not been filled out at the beginning of the academic year, the fact that students already have been exposed to a “conservatoire culture” for at least half a year may already have influenced their music preferences and music listening behavior. The conclusions presented above therefore are very much in brackets – only after we have gained more and better empirical data, a good analysis of first year students’ listening habits can be produced.

The goal of the research project was to formulate the questions and sub-questions, to devise an instrument to collect empirical data, and to test and evaluate the instrument. The actual data collecting will start when the revised survey will be handed out to the first year’s students of 2010-2011 in September 2010. We will then at least for three years gather data. If the response stays approximately 30% and the number of first year’s students approximately 85, then after three years we will have gathered the answers of about 75 respondents. Raising the response rate, though, must be possible; the time slot for answering can be prolonged from one to two weeks, and students can be approached more direct, e.g. via the student counselors or a select number of teachers who together teach all first year’s students. The aim is to eventually collect answers from about 100 first year’s students. The aim is also to roughly collect responses so that the distribution over the various specializations is representative for the population as a whole; in the test described in this paper e.g. students from the jazz specialization were underrepresented whereas students from the classroom teacher training course were overrepresented.

The research project definitely has given input for redesigning the survey. It may be that the order of questions will change slightly, especially in order to raise the response to the question on the instrument played by the respondents; although another option would be to delete that question altogether and analyze only to the level of specialization, and not to specific instruments. The question on the number of hours spent actively with music will probably be deleted, as the validity of the answers seems to be low. There seems to be a certain amount of doubling in the questions 8-11, all related to actual music listening behavior. Dropping one or more of these questions may be an option. Finally question 11, relating music behavior to situations, generates an enormous amount of empirical data. Further thinking about the need of posing this question as it was posed now is necessary.

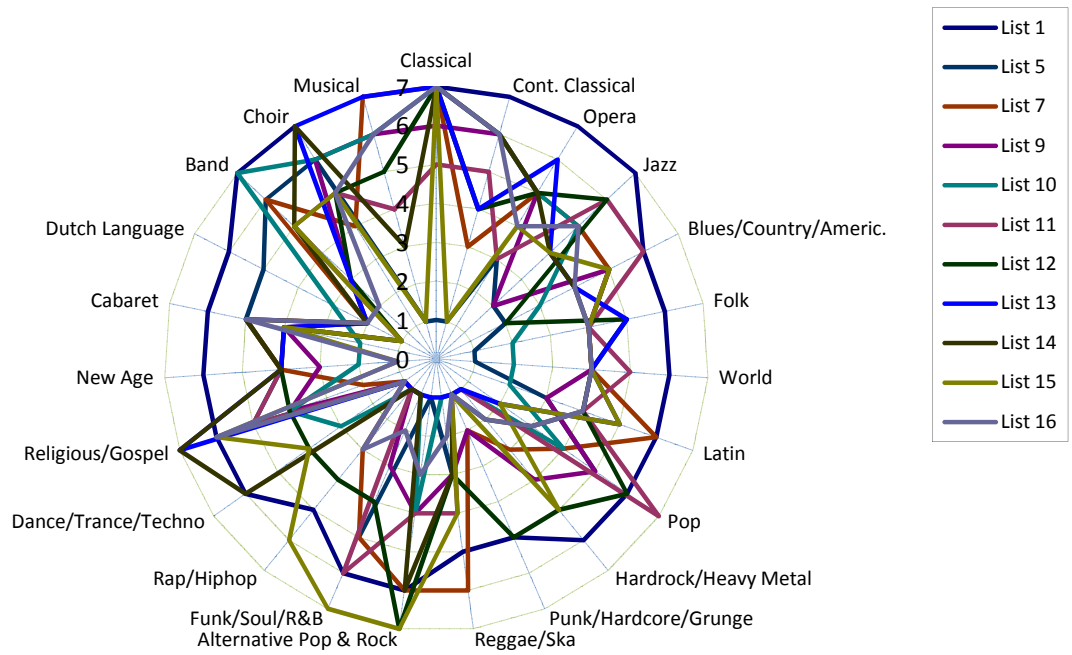
¹⁰ Although the title of their article refers to “western classical music performers”, actually their research is exclusively based on a sample of students from the Royal College of Music in London.

Discussion

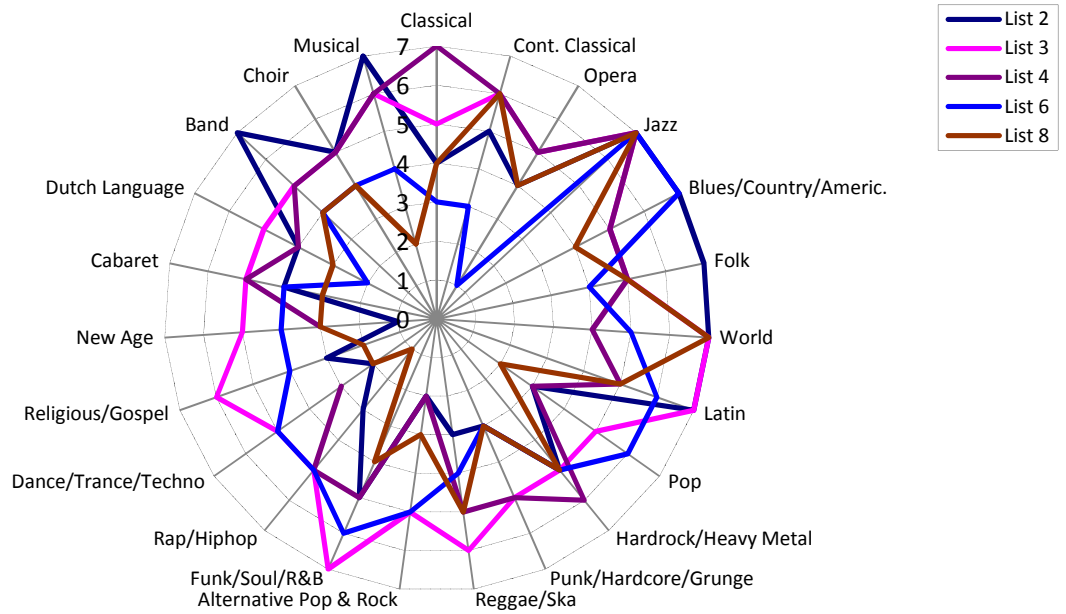
As stated in the previous section, the principal aim of this research project was to construct a survey which would enable us to describe the variety in music preferences and listening behavior amongst beginning conservatoire students in Groningen. However, in the test phase the draft survey has generated data, and although the data generated in the future by the revised survey will no doubt be different, it already is interesting to reflect on the possibilities to link a further analysis of the data to existing literature on theories of music preference and listening behavior.

So let us start with the main point about the data: the variety of individual listener's preferences. Our data, e.g. the answers given on question 7, show that there is a huge variety in music preferences among first-year's conservatoire students. A further analysis could e.g. lead to the question whether or not there is a relationship between musical preference and musical specialization. One way to visualise this is to put the individual scores of various categories of students who answered question 7 in spider charts. A first try, limited to only the classical music students (n=11) and jazz students (n=5) who answered this question, results in charts 7, 8 and 9 below.

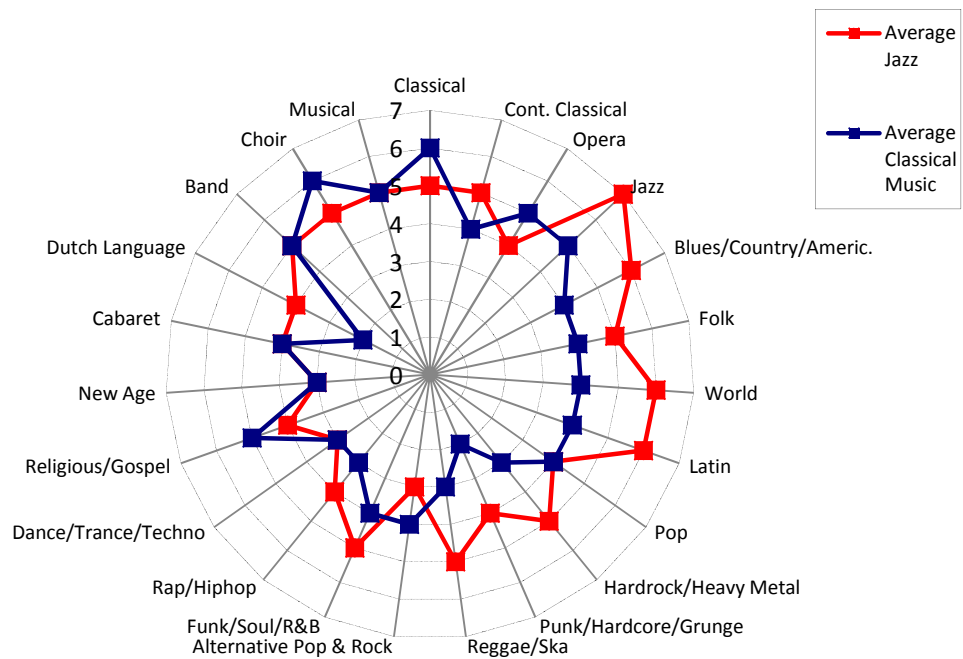
7 Preferences students classical music (n = 11)



8 Preferences students jazz (n=5)



9 Average preferences of classical music and jazz students compared



The first two charts clearly show how big the diversity in music preferences amongst individuals is. They also show that there may be a difference between the groups of students of classical music and jazz students who responded to the survey. Bearing in mind that a score of 4 in this question is neutral (“like nor dislike”), that scores 5-7 are positive and that scores 1-3 are negative in respect of the music genre, it is quite clear that classical music students have the tendency to rate more musical genres as negative than their fellow jazz students. The image of only the average scores for both groups in chart 9 makes this immediately clear. Are beginning classical students on average more outspoken in their tastes? Are beginning jazz

students more broadly interested in musical styles, but less outspoken in their valuing of styles? Are they to a greater extent “musical omnivores”? Or is it just a coincidence?

A further tentative analysis brings us close to the earlier cited article by Rentfrow and Gosling. In their article, ‘The Do Re Mi’s of Everyday Life: The Structure and Personality Correlates of Music Preferences’ (2003), they describe a series of studies on music preferences. They begin with a study about lay beliefs on the importance of music, and continue with a study on how music preferences for certain genres can be organized into more overarching clusters of genres. They describe how the four clusters they found can be understood on the level of properties of the music (general, textual and specific musical), and finish with relating music preferences to personality, using a.o. the Big Five Inventory (BFI), a test that scores a large amount of items on five very broad personality domains.¹¹

It may, just as a first form of further interpretation, be worthwhile to see if there are differences between jazz students and students of classical music regarding their rating of the four clusters indicated by Rentfrow and Gosling. Their formation of clusters is the following:

- Reflective & Complex: Classical, Jazz, Blues, Folk;
- Intense & Rebellious: Alternative, Rock, Heavy Metal;
- Upbeat & Conventional: Country, Pop, Religious, Sound Tracks;
- Energetic & Rhythmic: Rap/hip-hop, Soul/funk, Electronic/Dance.

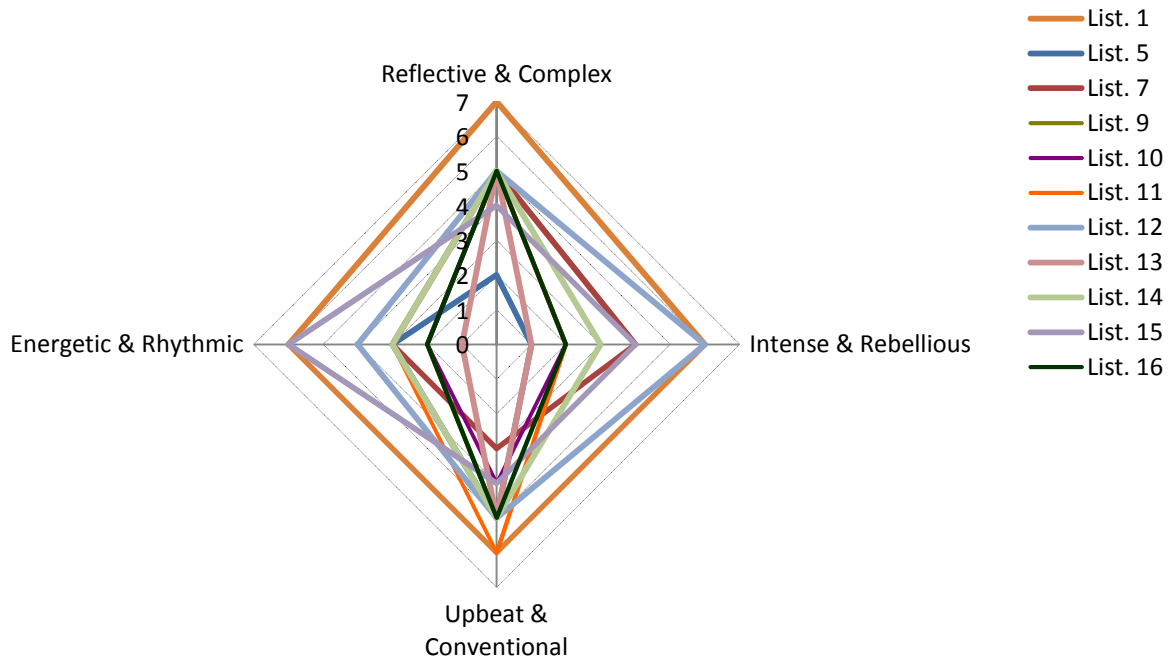
Although we used a slightly altered list of genres because we had to adapt the list to the Dutch situation anno 2010, rather than the American (Texan) situation of about 2000, we can in a limited way order our list of genres in the same clusters as Rentfrow and Gosling did. We did choose those genres out of our list which were the same as, or easily comparable to, the genres used by Rentfrow and Gosling; the rest we left out. This resulted in the following clusters:

- Reflective & Complex: Classical, Contemporary Classical, Opera, Jazz, Folk;
- Intense & Rebellious: Hardrock/Heavy Metal, Punk/Hardcore/Grunge, Alternative Pop & Rock;
- Upbeat & Conventional: Pop/Charts, Religious/Gospel;
- Energetic & Rhythmic: Rap/Hip-hop, Funk/Soul/R&B, Dance/Trance/Techno.

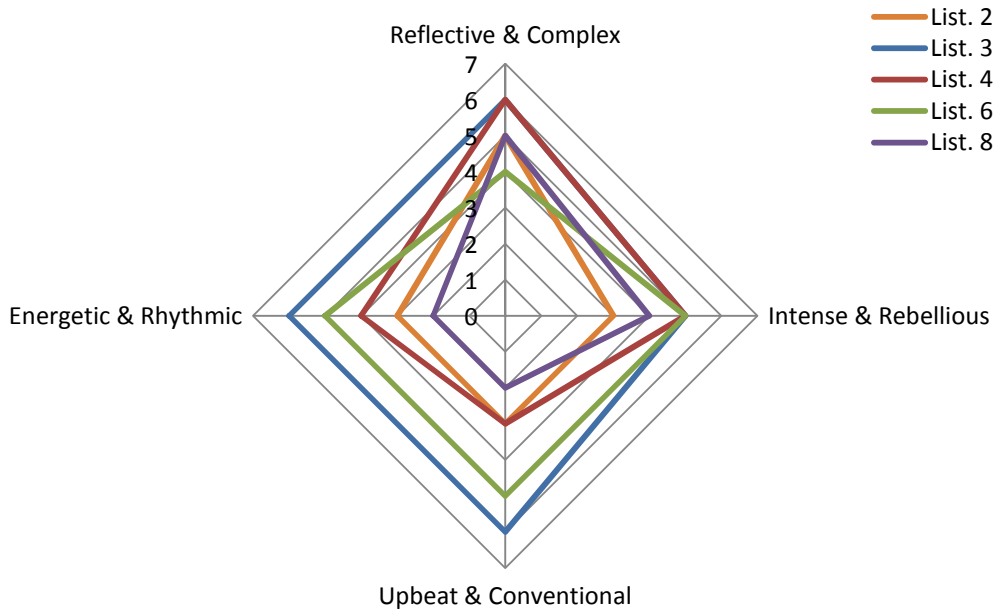
We then calculated an average score on each of the four clusters for all individual jazz and classical music students (charts 10 and 11) as well as averages for both groups (chart 12).

¹¹ Many remarks can be made on Rentfrow and Gosling’s investigations. Interesting as it is, one may pose questions on the generalizability of their findings as there seems to be for example a certain bias towards the higher educated sections of society and a restriction to the United States (cf. Delsing et al 2008: 110, 112). For the first author of the current paper, Rentfrow and Gosling’s work seems a bit unarticulate on the musicological side. Interesting is the importance they attach to the lyrics of songs as a musical attribute; this may be more straightforward in a society where the English language is the mother tongue of many, but in the Netherlands one can question whether e.g. the lyrics of songs in the popular domain are of similar importance. On a deeper level, one may question the labeling of certain musical genres as “complex”, “reflective” or “rebellious” – it at least should lead to a more substantial discussion on where “meanings of music” reside: are they objective characteristics of the music (something Rentfrow and Gosling seem to suggest), individual constructions of listeners, or do they lie in the interaction between listener and music?

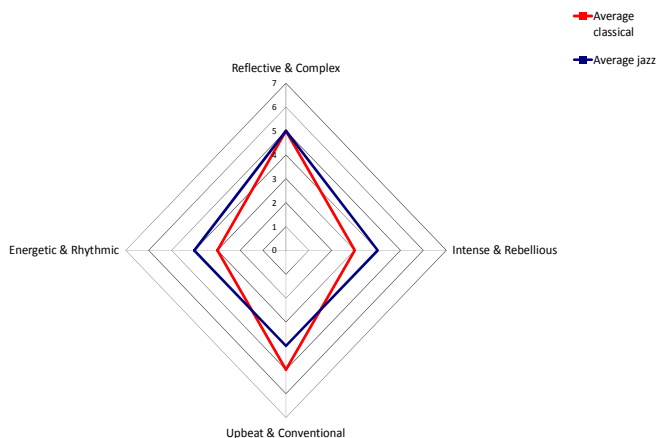
10 Individual preferences for musical clusters –classical music students (n = 11)



11 Individual preferences for musical clusters – jazz students (n = 5)



12 Average preferences for musical clusters



The images above, of course of a very limited value given the very small number of respondents, may lead to posing questions. If Rentfrow and Gosling's claim is true that their findings "are the first to suggest that there is a clear, robust, and meaningful structure underlying music preferences" (Rentfrow & Gosling 2003: 1250), leading to assertions such as "individuals with an athletic self-view preferred vigorous music" (id., 1251), must we then assume that the differences shown above are the result of e.g. different personality traits in the different groups?

There is no way to answer these questions yet. However, when in a few years' time we have gathered more data, it may be worthwhile to not only use the data in a descriptive way in order to give an overview of the music preferences and listening habits of students entering the Prince Claus Conservatoire. We may also try to relate the data to larger quantitative research projects on music preferences, trying to find out whether the results of our small scale, located research project are easily put into the broader context of large-scale quantitative research, or that the findings are impossible to relate. If the former is the case, it shows that small-scale research such as ours may contribute to large scale quantitative research. If the latter is the case, however, one may ask oneself if large scale quantitative research actually has only limited explanatory power on the level of local practice.

The relationship of large-scale and small-scale research is relevant. As stated in the beginning of this paper the main reason for the wider research project on music audiences is that there is a feeling that the use of marketing ideas about music preferences, music markets and "target groups" – often derived from larger scale quantitative research types - is actually not directly relevant for the mostly small- or medium scale music practice of most musicians graduating from conservatoires. Incongruity between large scale quantitative research on music preferences and the same sort of research on a much smaller scale which tries to shed light on highly specific situations may lead to caution about applying more abstract results of research into concrete situations – something that is implicitly done when musicians think about their audience in terms of "target groups".

We hope to report in a few year's time further on this matter. For now, we feel (albeit slightly) confirmed in our suspicion that beginning conservatoire students may, as performers, be very different from many other people engaged in music making, but that as listeners they have much in common with their fellow listeners. That observation could be the starting point for fruitful manners of bridging the gap often observed between current professional musicians and the individuals that make up their audiences.

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Addendum I: List of genres used

<i>STOMP-Revised</i>	Adaptation NL	Dutch translation
<i>Classical</i>	Classical	Klassiek
	Contemporary Classical	Hedendaags klassiek
<i>Opera</i>	Opera	Opera
<i>Jazz</i>	Jazz	Jazz
<i>Blues</i>	Blues/Country/Americana	Blues/Country/Americana
<i>Country</i>		
<i>Bluegrass</i>		
<i>Folk</i>	Folk	Folk
	Singer-songwriter	Singer-songwriter
<i>International/foreign</i>	World/Ethnic	World/Ethnic
	Latin	Latin
<i>Pop</i>	Pop/Charts	Pop/Top-40
<i>Rock</i>	Rock	Rock
<i>Heavy metal</i>	Hardrock/Heavy Metal	Hardrock/Heavy Metal
<i>Punk</i>	Punk/Hardcore/Grunge	Punk/Hardcore/Grunge
<i>Reggae</i>	Reggae/Ska	Reggae/Ska
<i>Alternative</i>	Alternative Pop & Rock	Alternative Pop & Rock
<i>Funk</i>	Funk/Soul/R&B	Funk/Soul/R&B
<i>Soul/R&B</i>		
<i>Rap/Hip-hop</i>	Rap/Hip-hop	Rap/Hip-hop
<i>Dance/Electronica</i>	Dance/ Trance/Techno	Dance/ Trance/Techno
<i>Religious</i>	Religious/gospel	Religieus/Kerkelijk/Gospel
<i>Gospel</i>		
<i>New Age</i>	New Age	New Age
	Cabaret	Kleinkunst
	Dutch	Nederlandstalig/Levenslied
	Band	Harmonie/Fanfare/Brassband
	Choir	Koor
	Musical	Musical
	Diverse	Diversen
	Other:	Anders, nl.:
<i>Oldies</i>		
<i>Soundtracks/theme songs</i>		

Addendum II Survey – English version

Questionnaire on Music Preferences

What is your musical taste?

That is what we want to know, and that is the reason why you are reading this questionnaire now. We are five students from the Applied Psychology program of Hanze University who have constructed this questionnaire for Mr. Evert Bisschop Boele, teacher at the conservatoire. Answering the 13 questions takes about 5-10 minutes, and from among those who have filled in the questionnaire we will randomly select two who win an Iris-cheque of € 40!

All results will of course be dealt with confidentially.

Doesn't that sound like music to your ears?

1. What is your gender?

1. Male
2. Female

2. What is your age?

3. What is your nationality?

4. In which program are you studying?

1. Music – Classical Music
2. Music - Jazz
3. Music – Conducting
4. Music - CMS
5. Docent muziek (music teacher)

5. What is your main instrument?

.....

6. How many hours per week on average do you spend on actively making music (performing, composing)?

... hours

7. How do you rate the following musical genres on a scale from 1 to 7?

- 1 = Dislike strongly
- 2 = Dislike moderately
- 3 = Dislike a little
- 4 = Neither like nor dislike
- 5 = Like a little
- 6 = Like moderately
- 7 = Like strongly

Genres	1 Dislike strongly	2	3	4	5	6	7 Like strongly
Classical							
Contemporary classical							
Opera							
Jazz							
Blues/Country/Americana							
Folk							
World/Ethnic							
Latin							
Pop/Top 40							
Hardrock/Heavy Metal							
Punk/Hardcore/Grunge							
Reggae/Ska							
Alternative Pop & Rock							
Funk/Soul/R&B							
Rap/Hip-hop							
Dance/Trance/Techno							
Religious/Gospel							
New Age							
Cabaret							
Dutch language							
Band (e.g. brassband)							
Choir							
Musical							

Other: ...

8. Indicate from each of the following musical genres on a scale from 1 to 5 how often you have listened to this music by your own choice.

Genres	1 Never	2 Hardly ever	3 Some- times	4 Regularly	5 Often
Classical					
Contemporary classical					
Opera					
Jazz					
Blues/Country/Americana					
Folk					
World/Ethnic					
Latin					
Pop/Top 40					
Hardrock/Heavy Metal					
Punk/Hardcore/Grunge					
Reggae/Ska					
Alternative Pop & Rock					
Funk/Soul/R&B					
Rap/Hip-hop					
Dance/Trance/Techno					
Religious/Gospel					
New Age					
Cabaret					
Dutch language					
Band (e.g. brassband)					
Choir					
Musical					

Other: ...

9. Which of the musical genres above do you listen to the most often? (1 answer possible)

...

10. Which of the following musical genres are on your MP-3-player at the moment? (more than 1 answer possible)

Genres			
Classical		Alternative Pop & Rock	
Contemporary classical		Funk/Soul/R&B	
Opera		Rap/Hip-hop	
Jazz		Dance/Trance/Techno	
Blues/Country/Americana		Religious/Gospel	
Folk		New Age	
World/Ethnic		Cabaret	
Latin		Dutch language/	
Pop/Top 40		Band (e.g. brassband)	
Hardrock/Heavy Metal		Choir	
Punk/Hardcore/Grunge		Musical	
Reggae/Ska		Alternative Pop & Rock	

Other: ...

11. To which radio stations have you listened to by your own choice last week?

1. Qmusic
2. 3FM
3. Skyradio
4. Radio538
5. Radio Veronica
6. SlamFM
7. FunX
8. Arrow Classic Rock
9. Arrow Jazz FM
10. Classic FM
11. Concertzender
12. Radio 1
13. Radio 2
14. Radio 3
15. Radio 4
16. Radio Noord
17. 100% NL
18. BNN
19. Regional stations
20. Non-Dutch stations
21. Other: ...

12. To which musical genre do you listen to the most often in the situations below? Please give only one answer per situation.

1. When you are alone
2. Together with friends
3. While travelling (car/public transport/bike)
4. When going out into town
5. While studying
6. At work
7. While sporting

Genres	1. Alone	2. Friends	3. Travel	4. Going out	5. Study	6. Work	7. Sport
Classical							
Contemporary classical							
Opera							
Jazz							
Blues/Country/American							
Folk							
World/Ethnic							
Latin							
Pop/Top 40							
Hardrock/Heavy Metal							
Punk/Hardcore/Grunge							
Reggae/Ska							
Alternative Pop & Rock							
Funk/Soul/R&B							
Rap/Hip-hop							
Dance/Trance/Techno							
Religious/Gospel							
New Age							
Cabaret							
Dutch language/							
Band (e.g. brassband)							
Choir							
Musical							

Other: ...

To have a chance to win one of the Iris-cheques, please fill in your student number below!

13. What is your student number?