

Collectively classical: Social connection at a classical concert

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Disciplinary background A. This research is primarily situated in the discipline of music cognition. This research project aims to understand the influence of musical piece and listening context on the audience's perception of a classical music concert.

Disciplinary background B. This research is also situated in the disciplines of social psychology and emotion science. We aim to understand the outcomes of social connectedness and the emotion of feeling moved.

Abstract

We aimed to examine the difference between live and livestreamed concerts, the influence of musical piece, and participant characteristics such as empathy and fan-status on audience social connectedness and feeling moved.

Concerts are fundamentally social experiences in which an audience and musicians gather to witness and create an aesthetic experience. Concerts and the music featured there may facilitate connectedness and the sociorelational emotion *kama muta* (frequently labelled “feeling moved”) through a variety of mechanisms. Recent research suggests that in virtual concerts, both concert characteristics (e.g. liveness, technological platform) and individual characteristics (e.g. empathy, loneliness, concentration) influence feelings and behaviours associated with social connectedness (Swarbrick et al., 2021; Onderdijk, Swarbrick et al., 2021). Social bonding during collective music listening has previously been demonstrated in the context of dance (Tarr et al., 2016). Questions remain on how concert and personal characteristics influence social connectedness at a live concert and how the effects of live and virtual concerts differ.

MusicLab Copenhagen was a concert experiment in which the Danish String Quartet performed to a live (n = 91) and a livestreaming audience (n = 45). Participants responded to questions on their personal characteristics and their social and emotional concert experiences using a questionnaire in response to three distinct pieces of music. Specifically, participants reported feelings of social connectedness that they felt towards the performers and the other audience members, and they responded to the *kama muta* scale.

Although the live audience members felt more socially connected to other audience members than the virtual audience members, both live and virtual audience members felt similarly connected to the performers. There was also a main effect of the piece of music for both social connectedness and feeling moved such that these outcome measures were highest for the folk, then Beethoven, and then Schnittke. When examining awe, the main effect of piece was also present however with awe presenting an opposite trend, with Schnittke producing the highest levels of awe followed by Beethoven and then folk. This research has helped us understand the experience of live and virtual classical concert audiences. Furthermore, this research contributes to a burgeoning field comparing the effects of live and virtual experiences and the implications of their differences on our social well-being.

Interdisciplinary implications. The MusicLab Copenhagen project was an interdisciplinary collaboration between psychologists, technologists, musicians, and philosophers. This project offered meaningful perspectives on the challenges and advantages of conducting research on such an interdisciplinary team. The MusicLab Copenhagen model could be employed by future research teams to get the most out of a concert experiment. In this particular study, we combine disciplinary expertise in social psychology and music cognition to better understand participants' social experience of concerts.

References

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