



'Composers, Performers and their Audiences': First Results

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Guildhall School of Music & Drama

Collaborators

- Britten Sinfonia
- The Guildhall School
 - Prof. Helena Gaunt, Prof. John Sloboda, Dr Karen Wise, Jane Williams
- The AHRC Centre for Musical Performance as Creative Practice (CMPCP), University of Cambridge
 - Prof. John Rink
- Barbican Centre (Milton Court) as host

Why this project?

- Wish by Britten Sinfonia to explore ways of deepening audience engagement
- Wish by CMPCP (Cambridge) and Guildhall School to partner Britten Sinfonia in research
- Extension of Guildhall's 'Understanding Audiences' programme beyond the School

Aims of 'Understanding Audiences'

- To explore ways in which dialogue may be opened up between audiences and artistic providers (composers, performers, management)
- To facilitate such dialogue as means towards a) enhancing the audience experience and b) allowing artists to gain a direct insight into what audiences value and need
- To investigate the audience experience of engagement activities and the impact on experiences in concert, particularly of new work

Project research questions

- How are audience members' experiences of new work affected when they participate in a final rehearsal process as well as the performance of a piece?
- How do performers experience interactions in small ensembles, in particular when premiering new music?
- How do audience members experience these interactions, and what enhances/detracts from their engagement?
- What kinds of exchange do composers and audiences most value in relation to new work, and how do these inform making and listening processes?

Programme of events

Strings Concert:

Judith Weir: 'I give you the end of a golden string'
Other contemporary pieces
Britten: 'Serenade for Tenor, Horn & Strings'

Wind Concert:

Mark Simpson: 'Geysir'
Beethoven: Quintet in E flat for piano & Winds Op 16
Mozart: 'Gran Partita'

22 Nov '13: Cambridge

Open rehearsal

Pre-concert talk

Research questionnaire
(Post-concert)

24 Nov '13: Milton Court

Open rehearsal

Post-rehearsal discussion

Research questionnaire
(Post-concert)

14 Feb '14: Milton Court

No pre-concert event

Post-concert discussion
(audience participation)

Volunteers
from general
audience

Audience
'Consultants'

RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE (STRINGS CONCERTS)

1st March 2014, GSMD

Questionnaire

Mixture of closed and open questions addressing:

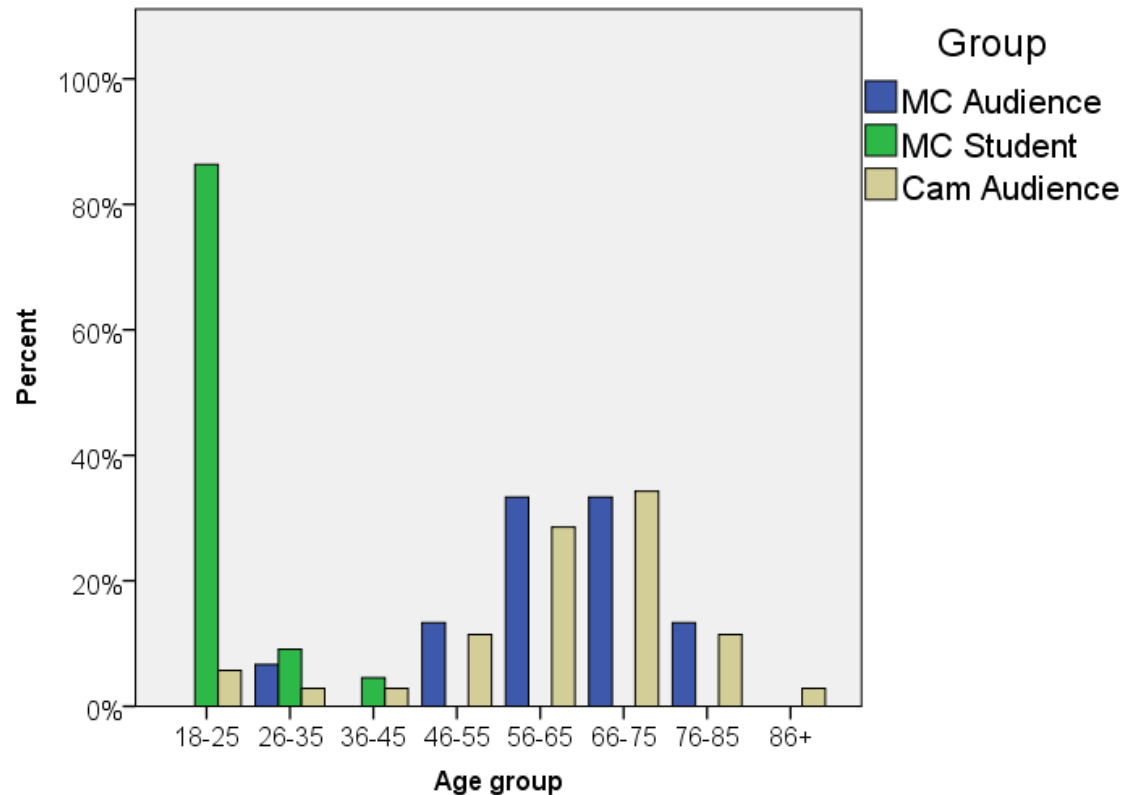
- Frequency of prior attendance at concerts (live classical music; Britten Sinfonia), open rehearsals and pre-concert talks
- Attraction to concert (open)
- Expectations of new work (tick-box)
- Effectiveness of programme (rating and open)
- Reasons for attending pre-concert talks/open rehearsals (tick box)
- Experiences of the pre-concert events (open)
- Responses to new work in concert – as a piece and as a performance event (open)
- Experiences in the concert and how these related to pre-concert events (open)

Analysis

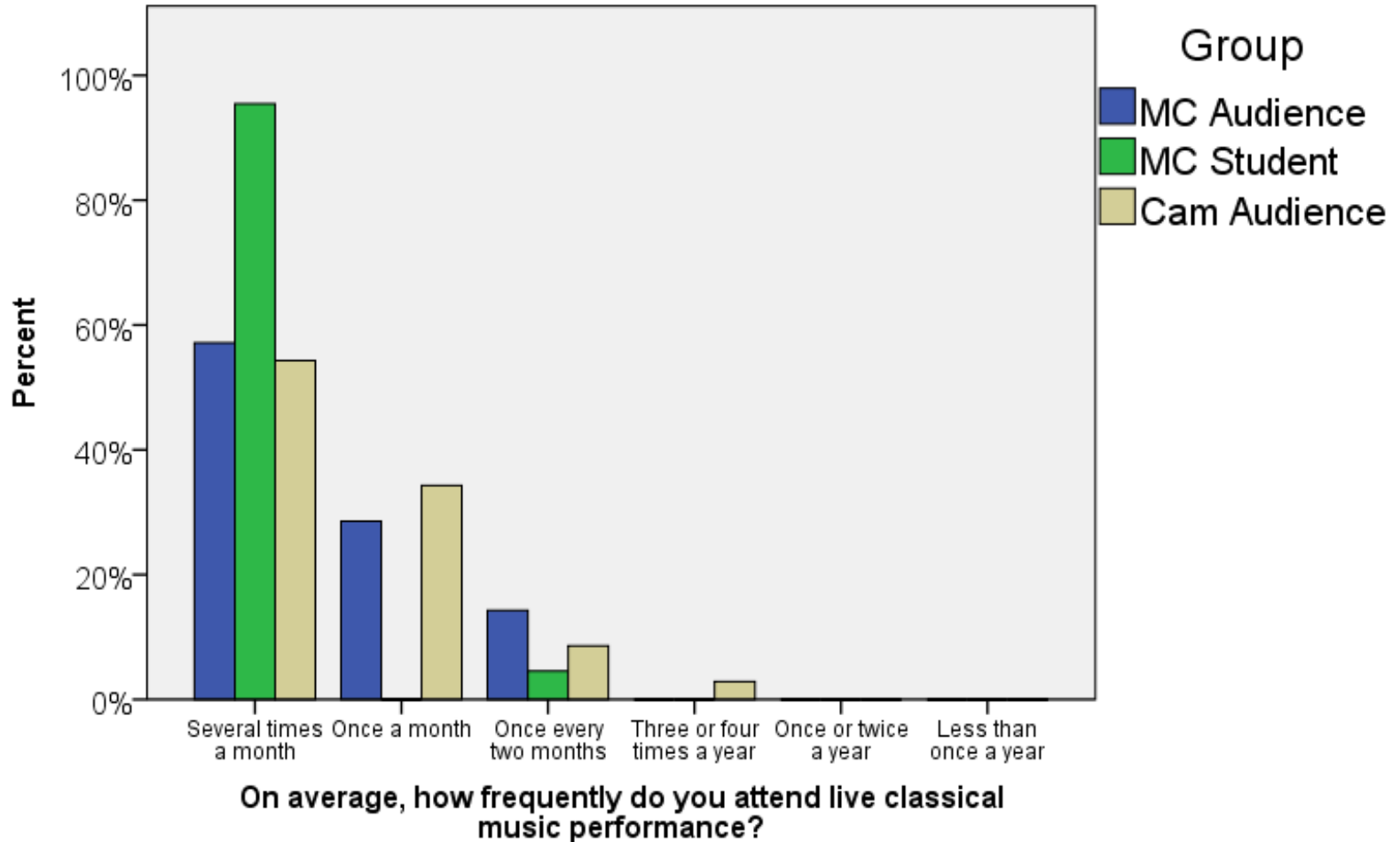
- Descriptive statistics for closed questions and rating scales
- Content (categorical) analysis of 'attraction to the concert'
- Qualitative thematic analysis for open-ended questions about experiences of the events and concert
- Aim: to understand what participants value

Participants

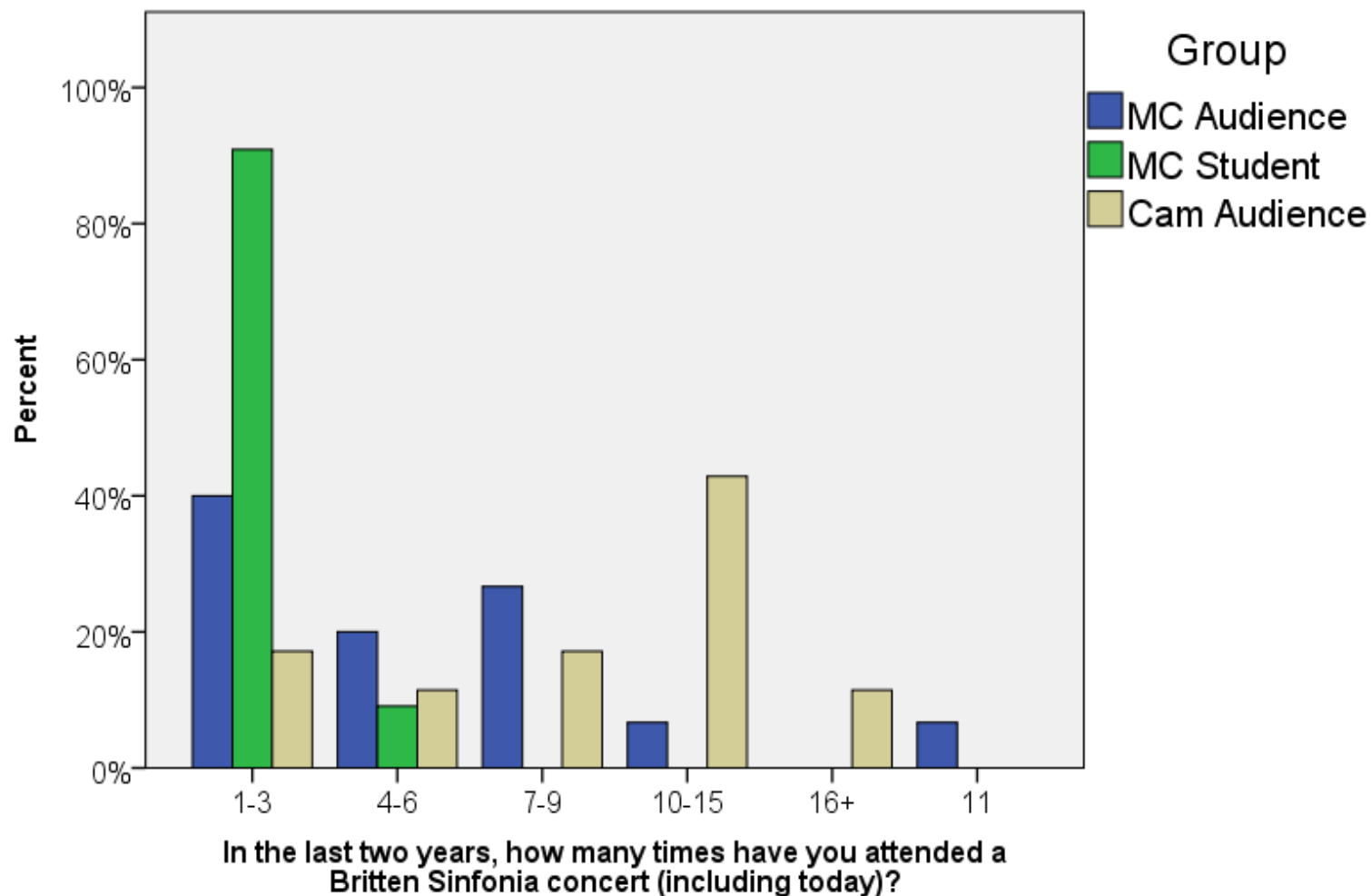
- 37 Milton Court 'Consultants'
 - 15 Audience members (8 male, 7 female)
 - 22 Guildhall students (10 male, 12 female)
- 35 Cambridge volunteers (16 male, 19 female)



Concert attendance: Classical music



Concert attendance: BS



Programme: 22/24 November

Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings

Mark Padmore tenor

Pekka Kuusisto violin/director

Stephen Bell horn

Nico Muhly Three Songs for Tenor & violin (and drone from orchestra)

Bartók Fourth movement from Quartet no. 4

Britten *Now Sleeps the Crimson Petal*

Tuur *Lighthouse*

Judith Weir *I give you the end of a golden string*
(world premiere tour)

Arne Nordheim Individualisierte Höhemessung
der Lagen (from Partita für Paul)

Nico Muhly Material in E flat for violin & drone
from orchestra

Bartók Third movement from Quartet no. 4

Berg arr Schnittke Kanon

Arvo Pärt Cantus in Memoriam Benjamin Britten

George Crumb *God Music* from *Black Angels*

Britten Serenade for Tenor, Horn & Strings



Mark Padmore (c) Marco Borgreve

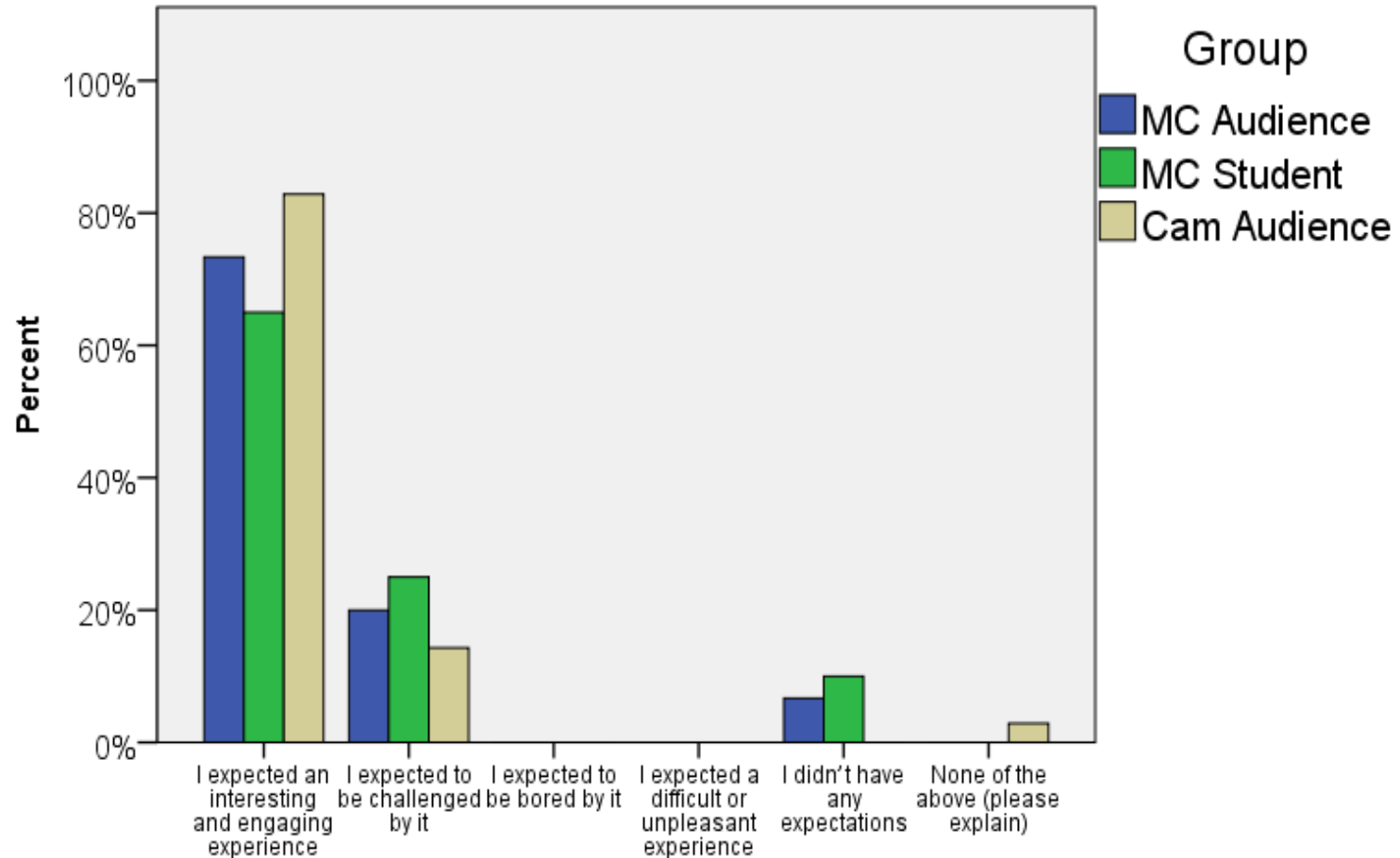
Attraction to the concert

What were the main things that attracted you to the concert?

Categories:

- Programme (39)
 - Britten Serenade
 - Innovative programme: diverse, unusual, exciting
 - Contemporary/Combination of familiar and unfamiliar works
- Soloists (20)
- Britten Sinfonia (31)
 - Reputation and/or participant's previous experience of them
 - Regular subscriber
- For students: Participation in the project (NB audience had bought tickets already) (5)

Expectations of new works



What were your prior expectations when you saw that there would be a première of a new work on the programme? (Please tick the statement with which you most closely identify.)

Effectiveness of the programme: Ratings

- Ratings of effectiveness of pieces chosen as a programme (1= Not at all effective; 5 = Very effective).

Group	Mean (SD)	Min-max
MC Students	4.77 (.53)	4-5
MC Audience	4.53 (.74)	3-5
Cam Audience	4.12 (1.02)	2-5

- Difference between MC Students and Cambridge Audience ratings is statistically significant
- Cambridge audience ratings are also more variable

Effectiveness of the programme: open-ended responses

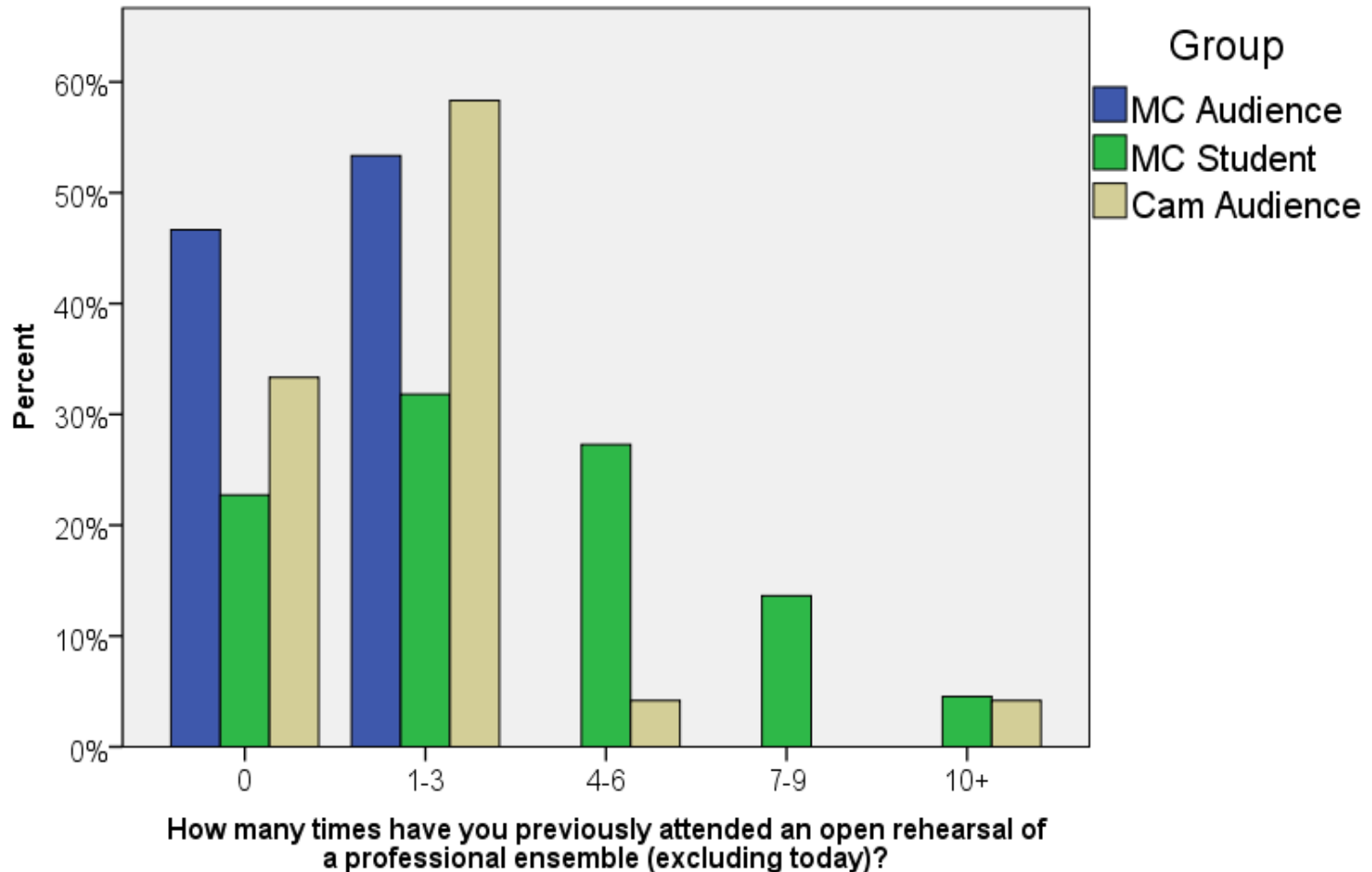
Audience valued:

- Experience of a journey
 - Flow, journey, thread, seamlessness
 - Engaging experience
- Balance and interplay of musical material
 - Links and echoes across pieces (thematically, stylistically)
 - Combination of variety/contrast and consistency
- Appreciating artistic vision
 - Being won over by Pekka's concept of a 'whole'
 - Helpfulness of explanations

Reservations:

- Wanting more space between pieces
- Too bitty/too many short pieces
- Some people didn't perceive thematic/stylistic links
- Ordering of pieces sometimes not ideal

Previous attendance at open rehearsals



Reasons for liking open rehearsals

Item	MC Stu. % (19)	MC Aud. % (12)	Cam Aud. %(19)	Overall % (50)
Gaining insight into the way an ensemble works	89.5	75	78.9	82
An opportunity to see how performers collaborate and relate to one another	84.4	75	84.2	82
An opportunity to gain insights into artists' creative processes	84.4	66.7	73.7	76
An opportunity to gain deeper insight into the music	73.7	66.7	68.4	70
They make the concert experience richer and/or more rewarding	36.8	83.3	68.4	60
A feeling of intimacy in being 'behind the scenes'	52.6	41.7	42.1	46
A sense of a stronger relationship with the performing ensemble	31.6	58.3	47.4	44
An opportunity to meet artists outside the performance context	47.4	16.7	5.3	24
I want to be primed for the performance that is to come	10.5	33.3	26.3	22
An opportunity to learn about the history of the music or the composer	21.1	33.3	10.5	20
Other	15.8	16.7	5.3	12

Open rehearsal reactions

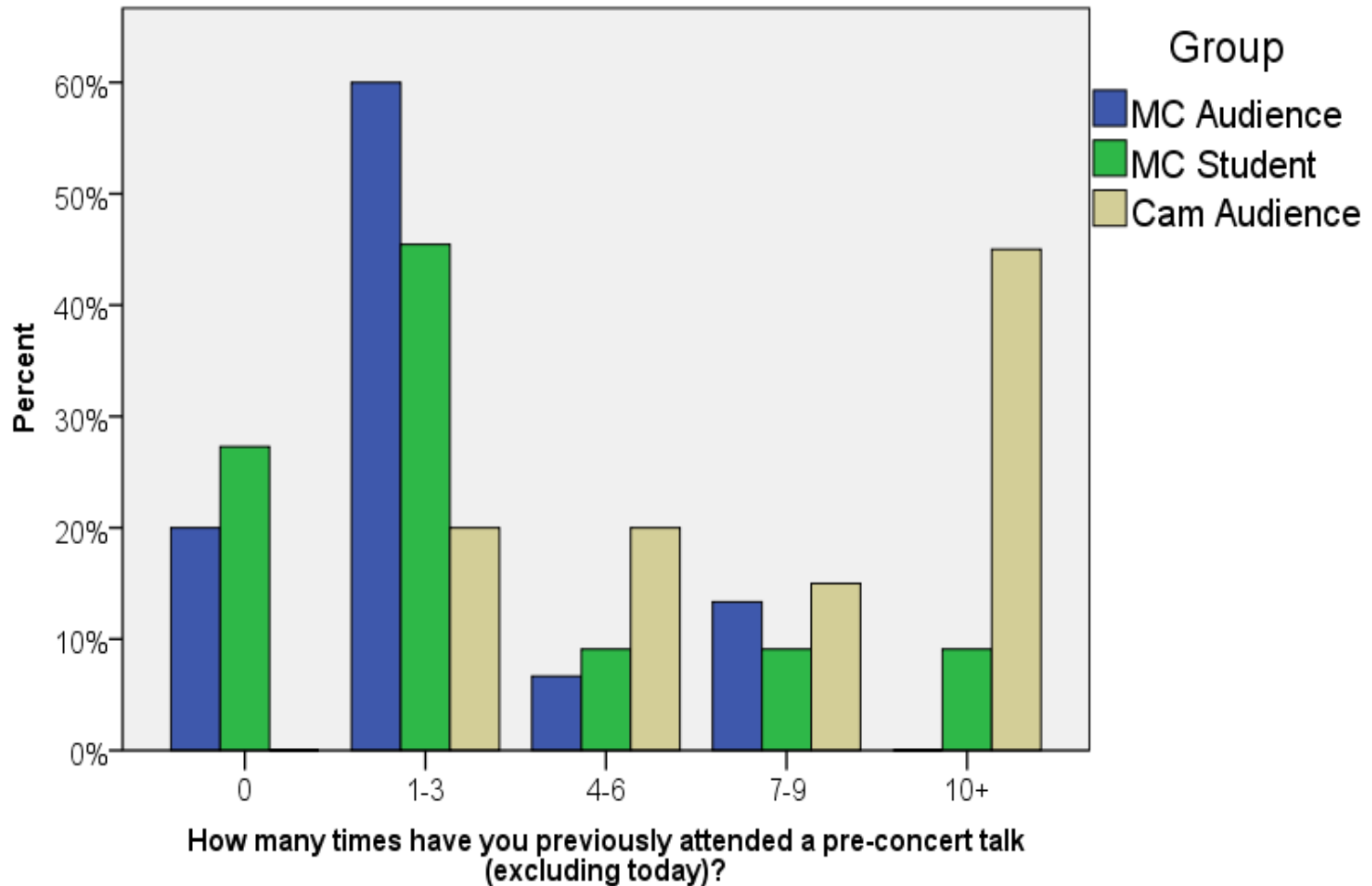
Audience valued:

- Warm human dynamics
 - Democracy and collaboration among players
 - Leadership style of Pekka Kuusisto
 - Rapport, relationships and communication
- Appreciating process of putting a performance together
 - Care put into it
 - Knowing that everyone has made a contribution in the process
- Demystification/humanisation
 - Even the pros have to work at it/ sometimes get things wrong (esp. for amateurs)
 - Seeing players 'in civvies' (Cambridge)
 - Inspiration and insight into a new way of working (esp. for students)

Reservations:

- Not being able to hear what was said
- Some people would have liked to see an earlier rehearsal

Previous attendance at pre-concert talks



Reasons for liking pre-concert talks

Item	MC Stu. % (17)	MC Aud. % (12)	Cam Aud. %(20)	Overall % (49)
An opportunity to gain deeper insight into the music	82.4	75	90	83.7
An opportunity to gain insights into artists' creative processes	52.9	66.7	95	73.5
An opportunity to learn about the history of the music or the composer	82.4	41.7	70	67.3
They make the concert experience richer and/or more rewarding	58.8	41.7	65	57.1
I want to be primed for the performance that is to come	47.1	25	60	46.9
A sense of a stronger relationship with the performing ensemble	23.5	33.3	55	38.8
An opportunity to meet artists outside the performance context	47.1	25	40	38.8
Gaining insight into the way an ensemble works	35.3	41.7	40	38.8
A feeling of intimacy in being 'behind the scenes'	29.4	33.3	45	36.7
Other	5.9	-	10	6.1

Pre-concert talk reactions (Cambridge)

(NB only 15 of 32 Cambridge participants attending the talk answered this question)

Audience valued:

- Insight into Judith Weir's creative process and personality
 - Enhanced appreciation of her piece
- Knowledge about how programme was put together/vision for it
- Pekka Kuusisto's entertaining personality

Reservations:

- Poor sound

Post-rehearsal discussion reactions (Milton Court)

Audience valued:

- Hearing a **variety of points of view** and the interchange between them (player, leader, composer, management)
- **Insight into processes** of:
 - choosing the programme, what it meant (artistic intentions)
 - collaborative working (both in putting programme together and preparing performance)
- **Personal experiences and perspectives** (e.g. player's reactions to piece; accounts of the journey; composer's thoughts on the process)
- **Feeling involved and invited in**

Reservations:

- Would like to be able to ask questions/participate

Responses to the performance

- Participants were asked to nominate a 'memorable' piece from among those by living composers in the programme, and note down up to 4 observations about that piece:
 - As a composition
 - As a performance event
- Challenges with these questions were:
 - Analysis of responses across multiple pieces
 - Many participants not being able to restrict the second part of the question to one piece
- But useful insights can be gained from responses to the second part, about what participants valued in the performance experience

Responses to the performance

Initial themes include:

- Sharing love of music – Communication, engagement and commitment of players
- Unity of ensemble in collaboration – all individuals contributing and valued
- Effectiveness of the performance ‘choreography’ (players’ positions, movement on stage)
- Atmosphere and acoustic/space: ‘filling the hall’ (esp. Milton Court)
- Feelings: Intensity, intimacy, involvement, trust

Impact of attendance at pre-concert events on concert experience

Aspects that enhanced the concert experience

3 Main Themes:

- Orientation
- Connecting with the process
- Connecting with the people

1. Orientation

Subtheme: Familiarity and recognition

‘Both rehearsal and discussion helped towards enjoyment of the concert as growing familiarity breeds enjoyment’ (MC Aud.)

‘Having been in the rehearsal, it was wonderful to have these moments of recognition in the concert.’ (MC Stu.)

Subtheme: Understanding artistic intentions

‘I was aware of the way the programme had been structured and the intentions behind it. It was a good (even necessary) introduction to the concert. I think I would have been puzzled by certain aspects without it - the Crumb piece, for example, with the wine glasses. Pekka's introduction to the concert itself was also helpful.’ (MC Aud)

1. Orientation (cont)

Subtheme: Navigation and attention

‘I understood the programme better having heard the thought process behind it. I didn’t feel drawn to the printed programme during the performance and was able to focus on the music better’ (MC Stu.)

‘The discussion made me attent on the ‘one-piece’ aspect of the concert & the in & outflow of performers during the concert’ (MC Aud.)

‘I could follow the intricacies of the Judith Weir piece more fully after her talk.’ (Cam Aud.)

Subtheme: Increasing opennness

‘The discussion was very helpful in understanding the programming as I tend to be somewhat wary of much contemporary music (Bach & Mozart are my usual fare).’ (MC Aud.)

‘This afternoon rapidly informed me that the concert would be a new and exciting experience. Listening to Pekka especially opened my mind & lulled me into a state where I was able to engage with anything thrown at me.’ (MC Stu.)

2. Connecting with the process

Subtheme: Feeling part of a journey

‘Having listened to the rehearsals/behind the scenes, I felt more connected in some way. Even if they were rehearsing snippets, I felt more involved. I loved hearing them discuss and talk about the process that went towards this concert. I enjoyed it more, having listened to their process, and I felt like I was part of a journey’ (MC Stu.)

Subtheme: Appreciation of performance lift

‘As a singer (of sorts) I was fascinated by Padmore’s physical manner in the rehearsal and the intensity of his final performance. I learned a lot from that’. (MC Aud.)

‘I loved that the performance wasn’t just a more formal version of the rehearsal – I found the walking on and off, the standing and playing, the moving from one piece to another with no applause really added to the performance and the ability of the audience to engage with it’ (MC Stu.)

2. Connecting with the process (cont.)

Subtheme: Deepened awareness of collaborative process

‘I loved feeling that the performance was the result of real input from every musician, having watched the democratic approach in rehearsal.’ (MC Stu.)

‘The democracy within the ensemble was evident verbally during the rehearsal and this allowed me to see it more clearly in the concert. Seeing the performers and composer Judith Weir discuss her piece gave me a deeper insight into their working relationship & how different perspectives can help create an even greater performance’ (MC Stu.)

‘Valuable things are being passed around, and to and from the director, all through the rehearsal. This gets translated into those silent, tiny, meaningful gestures in the concert.’ (Cam Aud.)

3. Connecting with the people

Subtheme: Seeing artists as fallible and human

I found the rehearsal interesting. It made the performers seem more human in the sense of fallible and subject to variation and imperfection. This made the occasion of the concert feel more unique and special, and in fact I felt more empathy with the performers, (with them being less like untouchable perfect gods) and because of that more involved with the whole event. The pre-concert talk was interesting as it explained the rationale behind not clapping until the end, and opened up the processes of Judith Weir's composition process. For some reason, when a composer is alive, one can listen to a piece in a more critical way, and one is less of the impression that That Was The Only Way That Piece Could Ever Be, but rather it is a single option among many various alternatives that the (again more human) composer could have chosen. Hearing Judith in person emphasised this effect. (Cam Aud.)

3. Connecting with the people (cont)

Subtheme: Getting to know them

‘Getting to know Judith Weir’s personality really helped me enjoy her music’
(MC Stu.)

Subtheme: Genuineness

‘What was discussed at the discussion was largely repeated at the opening of the concert; this was a GOOD thing! It demonstrated that the performers really did believe what they said in the discussion, and weren't just saying it because they were in a conference-style setting.’ (MC Stu.)

The rapport in the rehearsal closely matched the feeling of community among the ensemble even though the body language was much more formal. (MC Stu.)

Impact of attendance at pre-concert events on concert experience

Reservations:

- Some people did not feel the rehearsal enhanced enjoyment of the concert (though they enjoyed it for itself)
- Some prefer to experience the events as separate
- Some would prefer not to have a prior glimpse of what is in store but come without any pre-hearing

**POST-CONCERT DISCUSSION: 14TH
FEBRUARY (WIND CONCERT)**

Programme: 14 February

Imogen Cooper and Britten Sinfonia Winds

Imogen Cooper piano/director

Mark Simpson conductor*

Mark Simpson *Geysir* (World premiere tour)*

Beethoven Quintet in E flat for piano and winds,
Op16

Mozart Serenade No. 10 for winds in Bb major,
K361 "*Gran Partita*"

Britten Sinfonia's celebrated wind section, including oboist Nicholas Daniel, takes centre stage in a concert which includes Mozart's *Gran Partita* – a towering masterpiece of the wind repertoire. Pianist Imogen Cooper joins the musicians for Beethoven's piano and wind quintet alongside BBC Young Musician of the Year and composer, Mark Simpson, who has been specially commissioned to write a new work scored for the same forces as the *Gran Partita*.



Imogen Cooper

Post-concert discussion

- Audience Consultants, with Mark Simpson, David Butcher, and Sarah Burnett, chaired by John Sloboda
- Intention was to gain audience perspective on the concert – in particular Mark Simpson's premièred work *Geysir*
- We managed to at least put this process of feedback into motion, if only briefly....
- Other comments were gathered afterwards by email

Initial comments

- *Could you play new pieces twice in the same concert?*
- *Contemporary music is more accessible now and I really enjoyed Mark's piece – we had long years of trying to like new music in the 60s, 70s and 80s.*
- *Can we have someone give introductions to pieces in the concert?*
- Different views on the programme order
- Interest in Mark's choosing of a title after the piece was written
 - 'I was wondering how much the listener interprets a piece of music because of its title and the expectations the title creates. Would I have heard the piece differently if it had had another title?'
- Of the discussion itself: it's hard to offer genuine critique because of the feeling that only positive reactions were wanted/appropriate

What's important about all of this?

An initial idea:

- The audience is invited, and given access in a number of ways, into the artistic *process*, to become companions on a journey, as opposed to simply being receivers of an end product
- Engagement with this process is a potentially powerful way of enriching the audience experience, as well as helping to overcome some of the barriers to engagement with classical music, and new music in particular

*We look forward to continuing the conversation
after the break.....*

Discussion questions

- What are your reactions to the research results?
- What were your experiences of having taken part in the project as a whole, especially with regard to the additional events?
- How might this kind of work be developed?