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Gender and music: Can we hear a difference between female and male composers and performers?

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GENDER AND MUSIC:
CAN WE HEAR A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FEMALE
AND MALE COMPOSERS AND PERFORMERS?

A Thesis Submitted
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Designation
University Honors

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GENDER AND MUSIC

This Study by:
Arianna Edvenson

Entitled: Gender and Music: Can We Hear a Difference Between Male and Female Composers
and Performers?

has been approved as meeting the thesis or project requirement for the Designation University
Honors.

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GENDER AND MUSIC

Abstract

This research investigates whether or not gender is perceptible in classical music. In order to test this hypothesis, different ideas such as the history of women in music, the various roles they have or have not played, and different characteristics of music that are considered “masculine” or “feminine” were examined. A survey was used to determine if these characteristics were audible. Specifically, participants were asked to try to identify the gender of the composer and performer of five different audio clips. This data was then broken down into categories that include the participant’s gender, age, and amount of musical experience. This thesis will discuss how the past has impacted music today and how this can be seen through the results of the survey. It will show that correctly identifying gender is random, but various characteristics in the music make the listener lean a certain way.

Introduction

Over the past several centuries, women have had the opportunity to become more involved in music in both composing and performing. These opportunities were influenced by society's views at various points in history, and these views have impacted women and how their musical activities are viewed today. While women are involved in music now more than ever, biases from the past have shaped how women are seen and have created barriers that make it difficult for them to be able to enter the musical canon and be taken seriously as professionals. These biases have led to various musical characteristics being labelled "feminine" and "masculine" and because of these, people in today's society still associate music and gender in this way. In an effort to see just how prevalent this association is, the author conducted a survey that allowed participants to answer questions regarding five different audio clips to see if they could hear the gender in each, as well as asking what characteristics made them have these opinions. Participants' responses provided evidence that while people may not be able to correctly identify gender by ear, there are certain gender-specific characteristics that have become so ingrained in society that they cause the listener to assume the gender of the composer or performer, even if the assumption is incorrect. The views of society today have been affected by women and their role throughout music history and the gendering of musical characteristics. This influenced the results of the survey, and these things, as well as how this impacts the future of women in music, will be discussed in this paper.

Literature Review

History of Women in Music

Throughout history, women have continually had a lower status than men in social, economic, and even academic environments. Because of this, they were not able to have the same exposure and opportunities to music. Starting back in the days of ancient Greece, women, who were not even considered citizens because of their gender, were only musically able to participate in choruses. Tick writes, “From classical Greece also comes a legacy of beliefs linking musical aesthetics with sexual difference.”¹ Women were only able to start gaining a musical education at convents, and the first piece of surviving music by a female composer comes from a woman named Kassia who learned how to compose musical chant there. She was born in the year 810 and lived in the Byzantine Empire. Being able to sing and compose within the convent allowed these women “an opportunity for self-expression and some scope in leadership and education.”² This ability allowed for Abbess Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) to compose chant that was written specifically for the women in her convent, and this music allowed her to be the sole woman composer of sacred music during the Middle Ages.³ While music was available in convents in the Christian religion, Jewish women had more difficulties in learning music or even using it as worship, as the males were afraid of being sexually drawn to the women. This led to women not being able to lead worship or even be seated near the males.⁴ During the 1300s, French women were able to become more involved in courtly life by participating as amateur musicians who were allowed to sing or play stringed instruments such as

¹ Judith Tick et. al., “Women in Music,” *Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy.lib.uni.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/52554pg1#S52554.1> (accessed 4/25/2017).

² Carol Neuls-Bates, ed., *Women in Music* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1996), 6.

³ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁴ Tick et. al., “Women in Music.”

GENDER AND MUSIC

the harp, lyre, or fiddle.⁵

As the Renaissance started, women were able to participate more in music, but their main role was to please and entertain men. This was to be done with “gracious conversation, charm, and modesty.”⁶ Women were expected to “sing or choose her instrument in accordance with the ideal of feminine gracefulness,” and this was because men were essentially scared to see women doing anything manly or aggressive because “their stridency buries and destroys the sweet gentleness which embellishes everything a woman does.”⁷ Music did start to become more accessible to women throughout the Renaissance leading into the Baroque era, in aspects such as performing and composing, and many women started to write their own songs and play and sing in salon concerts. However, this was still really only accessible to higher class women. As Pendle writes about women during the Renaissance, “Though wealthy or titled women during the early modern period were expected to be able to read music, to sing, to dance, and to play at least one instrument, they were also expected to limit their music making to home or court.”⁸ The only place that allowed women and girls outside of the wealthy upper class to learn music was at one of the four Italian *ospedali* that existed, which were technically orphanages but allowed other girls from all over Europe to come and study.⁹ These girls were able to gain performance experience, play in orchestras, and receive training in voice or many instruments.¹⁰

During the 17th and 18th centuries, women were able to enter the opera scene as performers, but composing was still not common. This was because the female voice was finally

⁵ Neuls-Bates, *Women in Music*, 28.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 37-39.

⁸ Karin Pendle, “Musical Women in Early Modern Europe,” in *Women and Music: A History (Second Edition)*, ed. Karin Pendle, (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001), 60-61.

⁹ Neuls-Bates, *Women in Music*, 65.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

GENDER AND MUSIC

recognized as being separate from other higher voice options (such as boy singers or castrati) and allowed for development of the voice in madrigals as well as opera.¹¹ The Classical Era allowed for more women to receive musical education, but this was still mainly restricted to upper class women. Music was mainly meant to be a “social ‘accomplishment’” that allowed women to fill their leisure time and make younger women seem like a good potential wife.¹² This training that women received was so vital that it was one of the main forms of employment among musicians. This training and leisure time led to women giving salon concerts, which is where they would give small, private concerts within their own or other elites’ homes. These same women were also able to start composing, as they had the wealth and privilege to start doing so amateurly.¹³

During the 19th century, women in the middle class were able to start participating in music as well, although it was still only amateurly.¹⁴ However, near the later part of this century, women were able to join state music schools and get an education, but their curriculum was different from the males.¹⁵ An example of this would be at the Leipzig Conservatory, where “boys took a three-year course in theory, girls a two-year course, ‘especially organized for their requirements.’”¹⁶ Essentially, men did not want women to be on the same level as them, and they did not believe women ever could be. George Upton, a Chicago music critic, stated in 1880 in his book *Woman in Music* that,

The emotion is a part of herself, and is as natural to her as breathing. She lives in emotion, and acts from emotion. She feels its influences, its control, and its power, but she does not see these results as man looks at them. He sees them in their full play, and can reproduce them in musical notation as a painter imitates the landscape before him. It is probably difficult for her to express them as it would be to explain them. To confine

¹¹ Tick et. al., “Women in Music.”

¹² Neuls-Bates, *Women in Music*, 73.

¹³ Tick et. al., “Women in Music.”

¹⁴ Nancy B. Reich, “European Composers and Musicians, ca. 1800-1900,” in *Women and Music: A History (Second Edition)*, ed. Karin Pendle, (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001), 147.

¹⁵ Tick et. al., “Women in Music.”

¹⁶ Ibid.

GENDER AND MUSIC

her emotions within musical limits would be as difficult as to give expression to her religious faith in notes. Man controls his emotions, and can give an outward expression of them. In woman they are the dominating element, and so long as they are dominant she absorbs music.¹⁷

While women were at least able to receive some education at this time, they were only expected to be musicians in a few specific ways. This meant that they could perform if they were a singer, pianist, or harpist, but other than this, they were expected to have private studios at home; they were not expected to become professors, conductors, or composers.¹⁸ This segregation of women can be seen throughout the 1800s, and can be seen when Grove published his first *Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (1879-89) and he only included 29 female composers compared to the over 900 entries that were published in it in 1994.¹⁹

Throughout the early 20th century, women were mainly known as music teachers more than anything else. This was because, “Once women left the conservatories they were stranded, excluded from professional orchestras, from conducting posts, from positions in universities and from the professional musical life of the church.”²⁰ This exclusion led to various women’s groups being formed, mainly women’s symphony orchestras. These were meant to give educated women jobs and experience since they were not allowed to be in most of the established orchestras at this time.²¹ Women had to fight for the right to be in these orchestras, writing in letters to the editor for various newspapers to discuss why they should be allowed in these groups.²² However, it was World War II that finally allowed women to enter into major orchestras, as many of the men had been called into duty and their spots needed to be filled.²³

¹⁷ Neuls-Bates, *Women in Music*, 207.

¹⁸ Tick et. al., “Women in Music.”

¹⁹ Tick et. al., “Women in Music.”

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Neuls-Bates, *Women in Music*, 247.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

GENDER AND MUSIC

After this, women were slowly able to become a valid part of various orchestras across the world, although some have only recently gotten rid of their policy about being exclusive to males.²⁴ The “second wave” of feminism that happened in the 1960s also allowed women to become a larger part of music, as there were more educational classes about women musicians and more women started to be able and willing to become historians, composers, and performers. However, a bias still exists, and this has led to things such as anonymous composition competitions and to blind auditions for orchestra chairs.²⁵ Women have been able to become a part of music now more than ever, even though it has been and remains a challenge.

Women in the Musical Canon

Becoming a part of the musical canon has been a challenge for many years, as the canon has been mostly composed of, as well as decided by, men. The Germanic canon is a big contributing factor to this, as it contributes male composers from “Bach through Beethoven to Brahms and Wagner.”²⁶ Citron says, “Canonicity exerts tremendous cultural power as it encodes and perpetuates ideologies of some dominant group or groups. These exemplary values establish norms for the future.”²⁷ This quote shows that men have dominated musical fields for years and, because of this, their works are accepted as part of the norm. This lack of access and recognition is part of the reason works by women composers have had a difficult time being accepted into the musical canon. This is very interesting as music, “was seen a particularly ‘feminine’ art, and yet one in which women themselves were incapable of achieving the highest forms of

²⁴ Tick et. al., “Women in Music.”

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Sophia Fuller, “Dead White Men in Wigs,” in *Girls! Girls! Girls!: Essays on Women and Music*, ed. Sarah Cooper (Washington Square, NY: New York University Press, 1996), 22.

²⁷ Marcia J. Citron, *Gender and the Musical Canon*, (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 9.

GENDER AND MUSIC

expression.”²⁸ Women were also at an unfair advantage, as they were expected to write simple, graceful music and only write in certain genres, such as piano pieces or songs.²⁹ This has made it hard for large works by women to be performed or included in the canon, as few women were writing them and when they did they were not taken seriously. Another issue that has caused women to have a hard entry into the canon is because the music of the past is so prevalent. Citron says, “In perpetuating music of the past canons have made conditions that much more difficult for the creation and acceptance of new music.”³⁰ Many composers struggle to have their new music accepted, let alone performed more than one time, and finding groups to do this is very difficult as the canon has imposed and made it so many groups feel like they must only perform those works. The audience also plays a role in what works are allowed to enter the canon. Many orchestras program their music based off their typical audience, and this older pieces that have been a part of the canon usually prevail over new works.³¹ Women are starting to take a hold now in the musical canon, but it has and will take time. However, “the increased presence of women in musicology and the substantial number of studies devoted to women and feminist issues are diverting disciplinary canons away from exclusive focus on male subjects and a positivist approach to history. In particular, the subtle link between musical women in the present and the past should not be underestimated for its potential in effecting change.”³² However, while more women from the both the past and present are being added to the canon, Citron brings up a concern. She states, “It resembles what Karin Pendle has termed ‘add and stir’: the addition of a few new women to the old historiographic recipes, a technique that does not

²⁸ Fuller, “Dead White Men in Wigs,” 24.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 31.

³⁰ Citron, *Gender and the Musical Canon*, 23-24.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 28.

³² *Ibid.*, 41.

GENDER AND MUSIC

significantly change the batter of the finished product.”³³ Does adding women from the past really affect the canon? This has caused debate, but these works are generally accepted as long people understand the context and conventions in which they were formed.³⁴ Citron also states, “I conclude that there are no stylistic traits essential to all women nor exclusive to women.”³⁵ In her opinion, this means that women have been able to emulate the style of canonic works by men. However, while she says this, many traits have been identified as belonging to women, even if that is not necessarily true.

Characteristics and Their Gender

There have always been characteristics that many people have considered to be either “masculine” or “feminine.” These qualities have been used to portray different characters in music, whether that be with mood and style of a piece or an actual character that is on stage. This idea first appeared in classical Greece, where Plato discussed “musical aesthetics and sexual difference” by warning men to not write music that expressed grief as to not appear feminine and weak.³⁶ Susan McClary also discusses these ideas in her book, *Feminine Endings*. She says that music has always been used as way to show arousal and desire, and from 1600 to 1900 music was really the only way to do that.³⁷ The type of music that was written to show this was usually written with feminine characteristics, as it was meant to represent a woman. There were also musical eras where the music produced was considered more feminine, such as the Romantic Era. Male composers were using more characteristics that had been labelled feminine, so

³³ Ibid., 42-43.

³⁴ Ibid., 43.

³⁵ Citron, *Gender and the Musical Canon*, 11.

³⁶ Tick et. al., “Women in Music.”

³⁷ Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 12.

GENDER AND MUSIC

composers turned to modernism to “masculinize” music again by trying to get rid of these feminine characteristics.³⁸ This has led to women not having their own compositional voice, so many of the techniques they use are similar or the same as men, rather than letting their gender shine through.³⁹ This could be because “the main reason a woman composes is the same reason a man chooses to compose: women have something to express, and expressing it in musical terms is important.”⁴⁰ This idea of women not being able to compose with their own voice has caused issues, and around 1900 probably caused stress for women, as they had to spend extra energy and effort on making their music sound like a male’s composition would.⁴¹ However, while McClary says that there is not a difference in compositional style necessarily, there are many characteristics that can be categorized into “feminine” or “masculine” based on their use throughout time. Some characteristics that are considered “feminine” include:

- Cadences that occur on a weak beat, which usually happens in romantic styles.⁴²
- Music that is generally seen as “weak” or “abnormal.”⁴³
- Endings where “the final sonority is postponed beyond the downbeat.”⁴⁴
- Music that has minor or unnatural keys used.⁴⁵
- The second theme in Sonata-Allegro form has been considered “feminine.”⁴⁶
- Laments are usually performed by women.⁴⁷
- Characters or themes that usually lose control and show pain generally are feminine and

³⁸ Ibid., 18.

³⁹ Ibid., 114.

⁴⁰ Citron, *Gender and the Musical Canon*, 58.

⁴¹ Ibid., 68.

⁴² McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 9.

⁴³ Ibid., 10.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 11.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 13.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 46.

GENDER AND MUSIC

have tragic endings.⁴⁸

- Chromatic slippage/modulations are used continuously.⁴⁹
- In the Romantic Era, the use of imagination rather than reason was considered feminine. Notes continually being played on the weaker beats was also considered feminine during this era.⁵⁰
- Nineteenth-Century symphonies would have lyrical, feminine themes that would be taken over by the main, masculine theme.⁵¹
- Weaker chords, such as vi of the scale, always resolve to stronger chords.⁵²
- Movement by thirds, which is considered weak.⁵³
- Music that lacks force.⁵⁴
- Music that has “emotional and rhetorical excesses.”⁵⁵
- Coloratura and repetition has been used to signify hysteria.⁵⁶
- Works that have “Pacing [that] seems to be more organically a function of evolving material, breathing seems longer, and the architecture seems more fluid in contour.”⁵⁷
- Lyricism used with connected and long lines.⁵⁸
- Music that was graceful and delicate, as well as being filled with melody.⁵⁹
- Music that is written in small-scale forms, such as piano music and songs.⁶⁰

⁴⁸ Ibid., 47.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 62.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 103.

⁵¹ Ibid., 156.

⁵² Ibid., 157.

⁵³ Ibid., 77.

⁵⁴ Citron, *Gender and the Musical Canon*, 56.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 26.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 73.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 162.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Neuls-Bates, *Women in Music*, 223.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

GENDER AND MUSIC

- Music that “gives rise to sensuality, excitement, passion, or madness.”⁶¹
- Using Mixolydian and “intense Lydian” modes as they were associated with women in ancient Greece. Using these keys was also said to lead to the composer suffering from “drunkenness, softness, and sloth.”⁶²
- Aristotle identified Phrygian mode with the goddess Cybele, and because of this it should not be allowed because it created harmonies that are “both violently exciting and emotional.”⁶³
- Pieces with complex rhythms or harmonies, and those that use chromatic movement.⁶⁴
- Music that is highly ornamented and unstable.⁶⁵
- Minor modes represent characteristics considered feminine, such as melancholy, hesitation, and indecision.⁶⁶

There are also many “masculine” characteristics that McClary and others point out, including:

- Cadences that have the final chord on the strong beat of the measure.⁶⁷
- Music that sounds strong, normal, and objective.⁶⁸
- The main theme in sonata-allegro form is considered masculine, as it is the most important and the most emphasis is placed on it. It is also generally aggressive.⁶⁹
- The hero of the work is always male, and the obstacle is almost always personified as a woman.⁷⁰

⁶¹ Renée Cox Lorraine, “Recovering Jouissance: Feminist Aesthetics and Music,” in *Women and Music: A History (Second Edition)*, ed. Karin Pendle (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001), 4.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 6.

⁶⁷ McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 9.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 10.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 13.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 14.

GENDER AND MUSIC

- Movement by fifths is considered strong and masculine.⁷¹
- Music that sounds like it was composed with reason rather than imagination.⁷²
- Tonic and dominant triads are strong, and therefore masculine.⁷³
- Wide leaps and jagged rhythms that are meant to signify heroism and courage.⁷⁴
- Music that is, “Powerful in effect and intellectually rigorous in harmony, counterpoint, and other structural logic.”⁷⁵
- Music that have large forms, such as symphonies and operas.⁷⁶
- Broad and virile sound has a masculine quality.⁷⁷
- Music that has reason, restraint, and order.⁷⁸
- Socrates said that “he preferred a harmony that ‘would fittingly imitate the utterances and the accents of a brave man who is engaged in warfare or in any enforced business.’”⁷⁹
- Aristotle believed that “Dorian harmony is more sedate and of an especially manly character.”⁸⁰
- Melodies that have “orderly, spondaic rhythms.”⁸¹
- Orderly music that is straightforward.⁸²

All of these traits that have been identified play into how people hear and process music. This can be seen through the results of the survey, which sought to discover if these traits could be

⁷¹ Ibid., 77.

⁷² Ibid., 103.

⁷³ Ibid., 157.

⁷⁴ Citron, *Gender and the Musical Canon*, 73.

⁷⁵ Neuls-Bates, *Women in Music*, 223.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 225.

⁷⁸ Lorraine, “Recovering Jouissance”, 3.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 4.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

GENDER AND MUSIC

heard in various music clips, as well as if the composer's and performer's gender could be identified by them as well.

Methodology

Survey Overview

To answer the research question, the author sent out a survey entitled, "Gender and Music: Honors Thesis Survey" and it was constructed to help discover if gender can be heard in music or not. This survey was designed to determine if an audible difference can be heard between male and female composers, and, if one can be heard, if factors such as age, gender, or musical experience play into being able to identify the gender. The survey started with a page for participant consent to follow the Institutional Review Board's (IRB) protocols before asking a series of background questions to help analyze the data. These questions included what gender the participant identified as, what age they were, and how much musical experience they have had. Next, participants listened to five YouTube audio clips. Each audio clip had a different piece, and each had three questions following it. These questions were whether or not the participant thought the composer was a man or a woman, whether the performer was a man or a woman, and the last question was if there were any characteristics that made them have this opinion. Out of the five works that the participants were asked to listen to, there were two pieces that had both female composers and performers, one piece that was a male composer and female performer, one that was a female composer and male performers, and then a piece that had both male composer and performer. The author wanted to be sure the answers to these questions were not obvious, so she picked modern pieces by living composers for four of the questions, and the fifth was composed about 200 years ago during the Romantic Era in an effort to avoid obvious

GENDER AND MUSIC

stereotypes posed by McClary and others. There were a total of 70 responses; results will be broken down based on the piece and then there will be a summary of how the participants' demographic characteristics impacted the results.

Results by Piece

The first piece was Krzysztof Penderecki's *Three Miniatures for Clarinet and Piano*. This selection was the first movement, entitled "Allegro," and is played by Sabine Meyer. Penderecki is a Polish composer who was born in 1933. He studied at the Academy of Music in Krakow, and he wrote this piece in 1956 while he was still in school there. He was especially interested in sonorism, which is where the music is more considered on the timbre, and this is accomplished with things such as texture, articulation, and dynamics. Sabine Meyer is a German clarinetist who was born in 1959, and she is known throughout the world for being the first woman to be principal clarinetist of the Berlin Philharmonic, an orchestra whose membership has been notoriously all male. The author chose this recording because this piece is not necessarily well known. Sabine Meyer was selected as the performer because she is a woman and is musical and artistic with her performances, as well as being one of the highest caliber clarinetists in the world.

The overall results for this piece leaned generally towards the correct answer. Out of the 70 participants, 46 (or 65.7%) correctly answered that it was composed by a man, and 40 (or 57.1%) correctly answered that the performer was a woman. Some of the reasons that people gave for answering that the composer was male included:

- Composers are generally male, and therefore they assumed.
- They are not aware of many female composers.

GENDER AND MUSIC

- It sounded sharp and harsh.
- The short staccatos made the participant think of a man.
- It was aggressive.
- The bounce and pace of the piece made the participant believe it was a man.
- The quickness and lightness in the piano part reminded the participant of Liszt, which made them assume it was a man.
- It was fast.
- It seemed like it was in disarray and chaotic.
- It had a jagged rhythm.
- It was busy and not pleasing to the ear.

Some reasons that the participants gave for answering that it was a female performer include:

- The playing was light and delicate.
- It sounded like the player had nimble fingers.
- The playing was not aggressive enough to be a man.
- Women are better at the clarinet and the participant knew of more women clarinet players.
- It was playful, lively, and interesting.
- It had bravado and movement.
- The style with which it was played seemed feminine.
- It was played with light articulation.

A few of these characteristics agree with the ones found during research such as: (1) the chaotic feelings relating to the feminine characteristic of losing control, (2) the use of key is unnatural, therefore feminine (it does not have a key), (3) and it was aggressive, which is a male

GENDER AND MUSIC

characteristic.

The second piece on the survey was a piece entitled *Chinese Ancient Dances: Ox Tail Dance*. This piece was composed by Chen Yi, who is a Chinese composer who was born in 1953. She studied at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, where she was the first woman to be awarded a PhD in musical composition in China, as well as Columbia University. She currently teaches at the University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory of Music and Dance. This piece was written in 2004. The recording of the piece that was used was by members of the Divan Consort, which is a Los Angeles-based group that features a piano, flute, clarinet, violin, and cello. All of these members are women except for the cello player, so for this piece the author specifically asked for the participants to identify the gender of the clarinet player. This piece was chosen because it is a recently composed piece that also gives the listener this impression as it uses extended techniques that only recently became common. This helps to make the gender harder to assume as well.

For this piece, there were 69 total responses. Out of these, 29 (or 42%) of people correctly stated that it was a female composer, and only 27 (or 39.1%) of participants put that it was a woman performer. Some reasons that people put for it being female composer and performers include:

- It sounded less traditional.
- It sounds sad and romanticized, and generally has a lot of emotion.
- The crescendos and pace reminded them more of a woman.
- A few participants listened to the breathing of the performer to figure out that it was a woman.
- It “shows a greater range of expression which seems very sensual in nature.”

GENDER AND MUSIC

- It had a dark tone but was played lightly.
- It was emotional and drawn out.
- The clarinet player was expressive and it sounded “multifaceted.”

The characteristics that lined up between the survey and research include: (1) the piece sounded sad and lamenting, which is feminine, (2) it is modal rather than being in major or minor, which could lead to it being considered unnatural, which is a feminine quality, and (3) it uses extended techniques which allow for it to not sound normal, which makes up a feminine quality.

The third piece that was chosen was Joan Tower’s *Fifth Fanfare for the Uncommon Woman*, and it was performed by The American Brass Quintet, which is an all-male group. Tower wrote this piece in 1993, and it is the fifth fanfare out of six total. It was written for Joan Harris, and was commissioned by the Aspen Music Festival. Tower’s definition of uncommon women is, “women who take risks and are adventurous in their actions and goals.”⁸³ The American Brass Quintet was founded in 1960, and they have commissioned many works as well as having served in residence at The Juilliard School since 1987 and the Aspen Music Festival and School since 1970. This recording was chosen because Joan Tower one of the most famous female composers, and the American Brass Quintet has an impressive resume and they are very skilled. This combination of composer and performers provided an excellent audio clip for the survey.

Out of the 69 people who answered, 21 (or 30.4%) thought the piece was composed by a woman, and 44 (or 63.8%) said that it was being performed by men. There was actually one participant who was able to correctly identify that the composer was Joan Tower, which was

⁸³ “Joan Tower: Fanfare for the Uncommon Woman (No. 5) (1993),” accessed April 1, 2017, <http://www.musicalesclassical.com/composer/work/33992#>

GENDER AND MUSIC

very interesting to see. There were only a few reasons given to why people thought that it was a woman composer versus a man, and these include: (1) multiple styles and expressions with quick switches between the two, as well as a layered texture, (2) regal sounding (although this reason was given as reasoning for both men and women), and (3) it was light, airy, and high pitched. However, many people gave reasons as to why they believed there were male performers including:

- It was bold, boisterous, and strong sounding.
- Trumpet players are usually males.
- It was regal but also chaotic sounding.
- The performers produced a stiff sound.
- It sounded patriotic and had a military vibe.

This piece did not line up with the gendered characteristics that were discovered quite as much as the other two pieces. This piece was stiff and objective sounding, which led to it being identified as strong and objective, and therefore masculine.

The fourth piece was a piece entitled, “Chaconne” by Sofia Gubaidulina, and it was performed by Yulia Chaplina. Gubaidulina is a Russian composer who was born in 1931. Chaplina is a Russian pianist who was born in 1987, and she has performed in multiple competitions and with various orchestras throughout Europe. The author chose this recording for the survey because she thought that Gubaidulina’s gender would not be obvious through her style because her music is not easily identifiable. Chaplina was picked as the performer because she had a beautiful interpretation of the piece and the author wanted another piece where the composer and performer were both female.

Out of the 69 people who answered the questions about this piece on my survey, 25 (or

GENDER AND MUSIC

36.2%) of participants said it was a female composer, and 41 (or 59.4%) said that it was a female performer. Some of the reasons for it being a female composer and performer include:

- It had a lot of emotion that came off as feminine.
- The confidence of the pianist made the participant identify it as a woman.
- It was very delicate with sound and in performance.
- It was passionate and told a story.
- It was grounded but delicate.
- It had extreme emotionalism and a huge range of expression while still being controlled and restrained.
- It was light and bouncy.
- There was lots of attention to detail.

The characteristics in this piece that line up with the found gendered characteristics include: (1) being strong and aggressive, which is masculine, (2) sounding like it is losing control, which is feminine, and (3) being atonal, which could have been considered an “unnatural” key when the old standards, and would therefore be considered feminine.

The fifth and final piece on the survey was a piano piece entitled *Papillons, Op. 2: VII. Semplice*, which was written by Robert Schumann and performed by Andor Foldes. Robert Schumann is a German composer who lived from 1810 until 1856, and he is generally considered one of the greatest composers from the Romantic Era. He composed this piece in 1831, and it has 12 movements. Andor Foldes was a Hungarian pianist who lived from 1913 until 1992. He studied at the Franz Liszt Academy of Music in Budapest. This piece was chosen because the author was interested to see how people would answer this question, as Robert’s wife Clara Schumann was also a composer and their compositional style has similar elements.

GENDER AND MUSIC

Foldes was chosen as the performer because he was a well-known pianist and this provided an example that had males as both composer and performer.

Out of the 69 people who answered the questions about this piece, 23 (or 33.3%) said that it was a male composer, and 30 (or 43.5%) said that it was a male performer. Some reasons that were given for why the composer and performer were male include:

- It was the participant's gut instinct.
- The piece sounded a bit chaotic, so it was a male composer.
- The playing seemed weightless.
- The performer had a "glib" performance, so they thought it was a male. This participant also thought that it might be a Schumann, but they thought it was Clara rather than Robert.
- The flow of the piece seemed masculine.
- It sounded like it was an older piece.

For this final piece, there were quite a few characteristics that lined up with the feminine gender characteristics discussed earlier such as: (1) being filled with emotion and beauty since it is from the Romantic Era, (2) having notes repeated on the weak beats, as it is in a triple meter but is felt in one and the repeated notes are not on the strong beat one, and (3) it is gentle and calm, which could be seen as weak.

After the survey had been up for a little over a month, the author closed it so that results could start to be analyzed. One of the main things that the author wanted to find out from this survey was if different groups could hear gender in music better than other groups. This was done by first asking what gender the participant identified as, what age they were, and how much musical experience they had. Before the survey was sent out, the author hypothesized that the

GENDER AND MUSIC

participants would be able to hear their own gender better, that younger people would not hear gender as much in the music since they have not had as much time for stereotypical characteristics to be instilled, and that people with more musical experience would be able to identify more answers correctly. The findings will be broken down by category and piece.

Results by Category: Gender

In evaluating results by gender, there were 20 male participants for the first question and 19 for the other four. For females, there were 49 total participants. For the first piece, the percentages correct can be seen in figure 1, while the percentages correct for pieces 2, 3, 4, and 5 can be seen in figures 2, 3, 4, and 5, respectively.

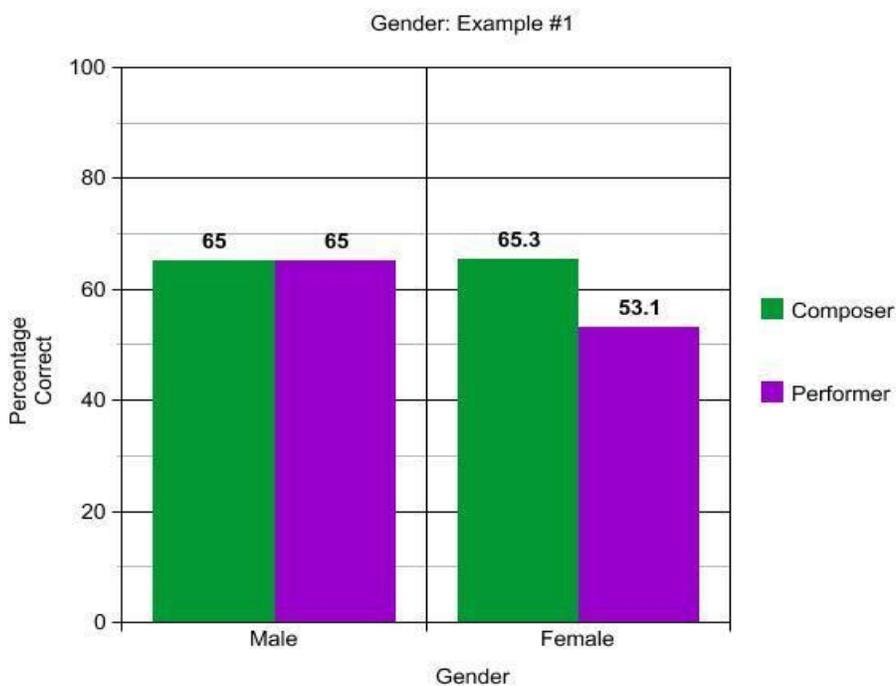


Figure 1

GENDER AND MUSIC

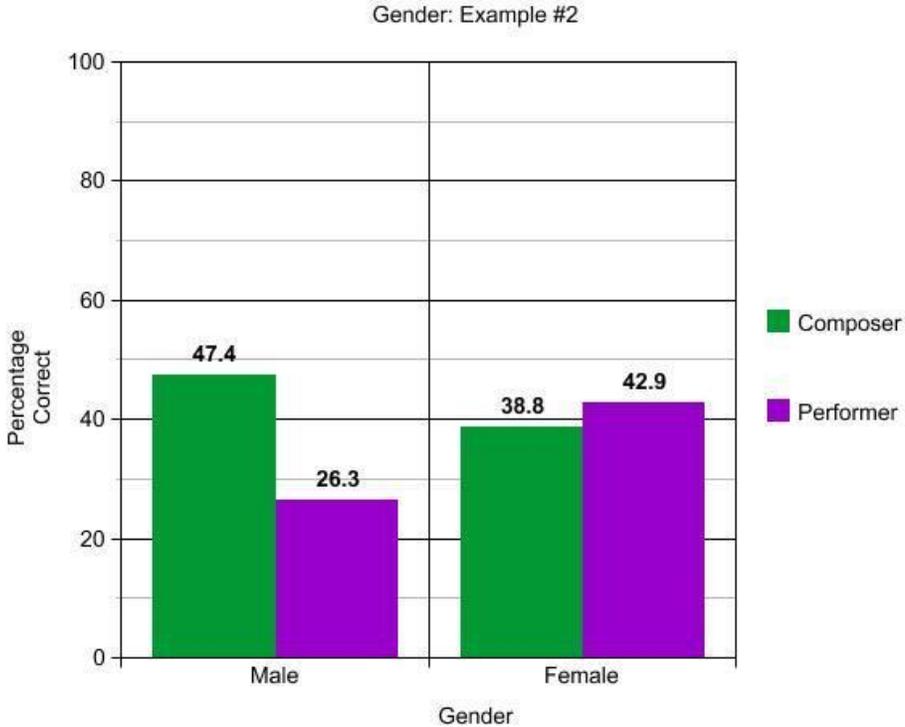


Figure 2

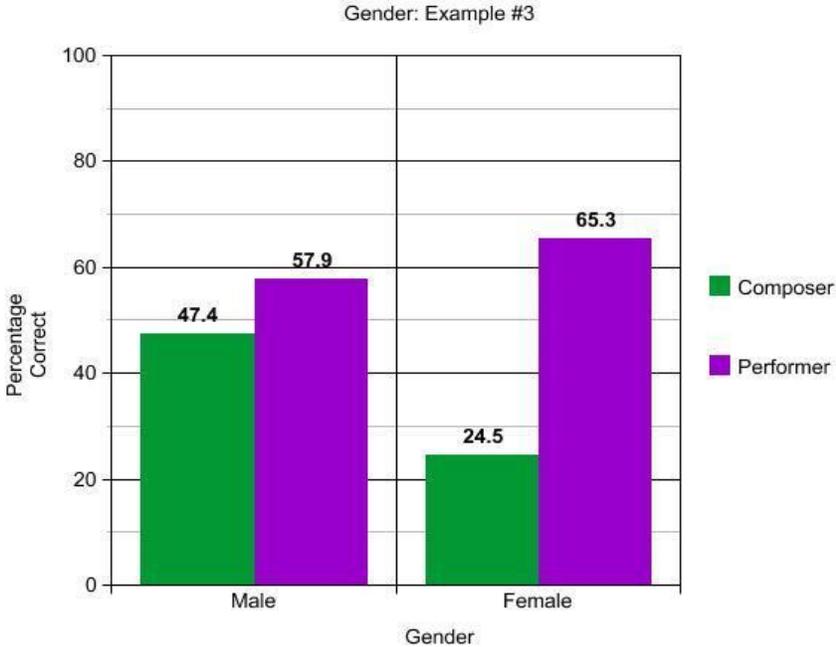


Figure 3

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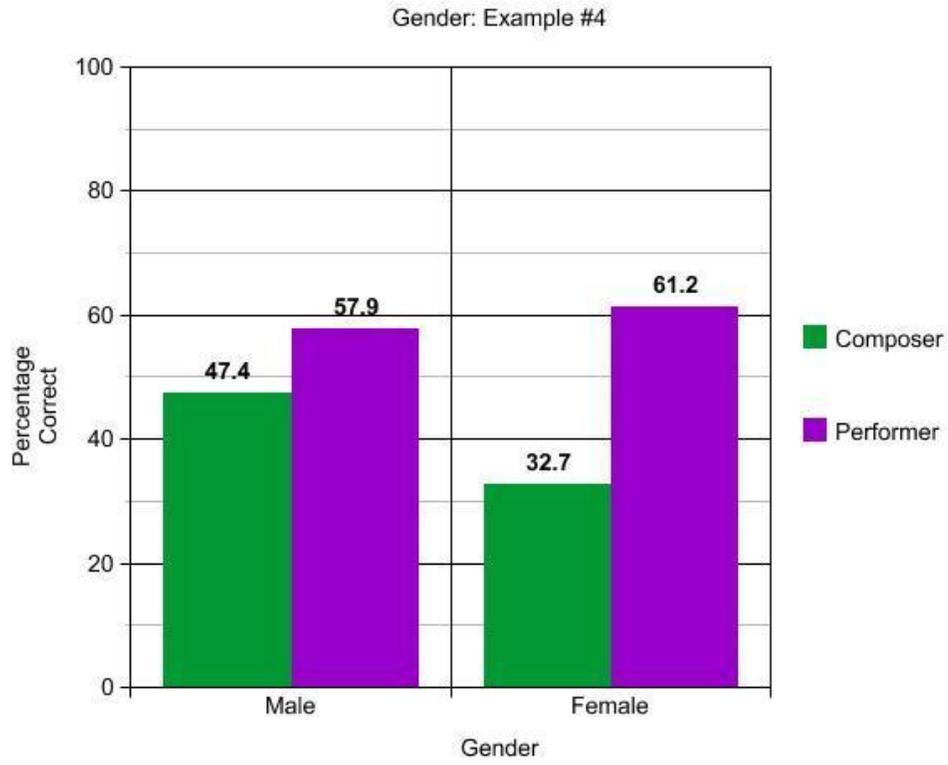


Figure 4

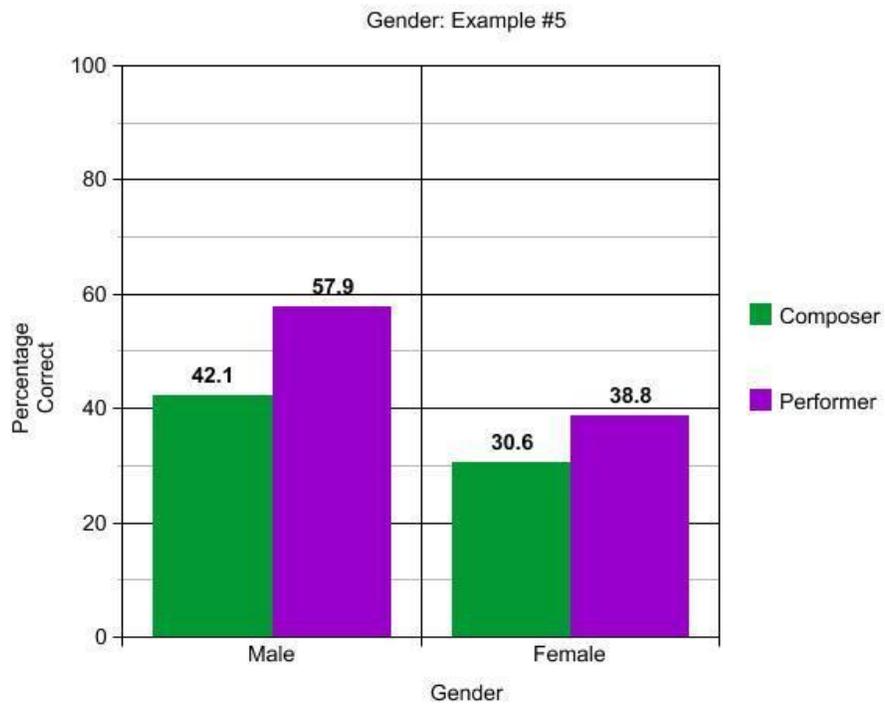


Figure 5

GENDER AND MUSIC

The results of the gender category are intriguing. Out of the ten total questions, the majority of males assumed it was a male composer or performer on seven of the questions. This follows the hypothesis that the author previously stated that people can hear their own gender better. However, a majority of females assumed that it was a male composer or performer on six of the ten questions, which does not follow the hypothesis at all. Of these four questions that they did lean towards women on (performer of example 1, performer of example 4, and composer and performer of example 5) the total majority also leaned towards women. The three questions that the males leaned towards women for (performer of example 1, performer of example 4, and composer of example 5) were also the ones that females and majority believed were women. This is intriguing, and this indicates that the natural assumption still is that it is a male composer. For performers, however, the participants assumed less because they leaned towards males on fewer questions than they did for performers.

Results by Category: Age

For the age category, the author went through and divided up the results and ended up having 36 participants for the first questions and then 35 for the last four for the age group of 18-20 years old, 24 total people for ages 21-24, 1 person age 25-34, 1 person age 35-44, 5 people for ages 45-54, 2 for ages 55-64, and 1 person 65 or older. For the first question, the percentages of people in each category that answered the questions correctly can be seen below in figure 6. The results for questions 2, 3, 4, and 5 can be seen in figures 7, 8, 9, and 10, respectively.

GENDER AND MUSIC

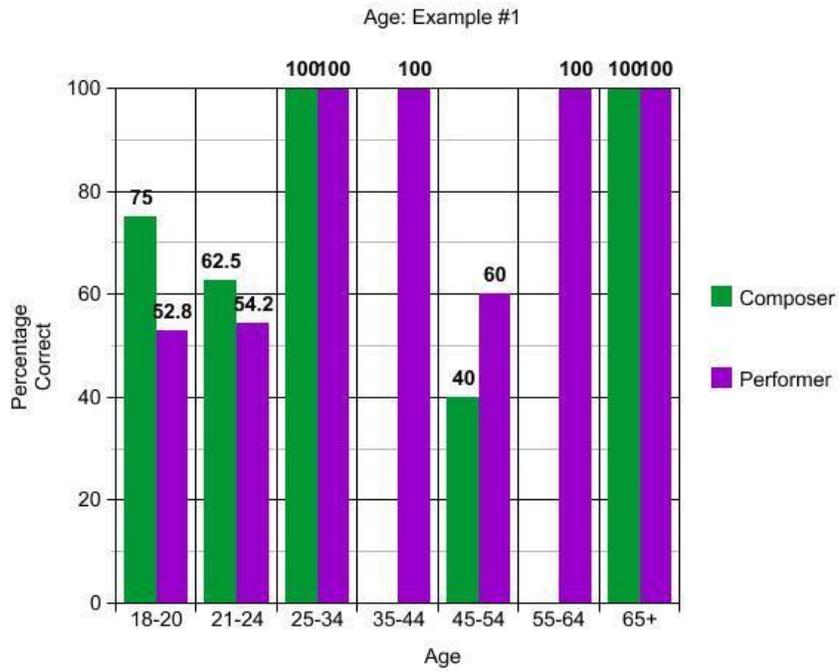


Figure 6

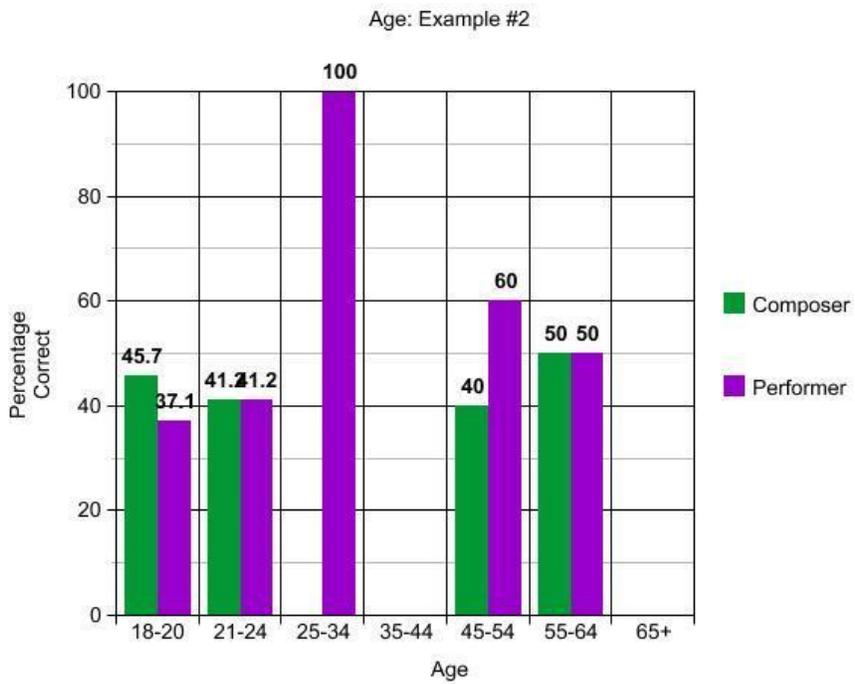


Figure 7

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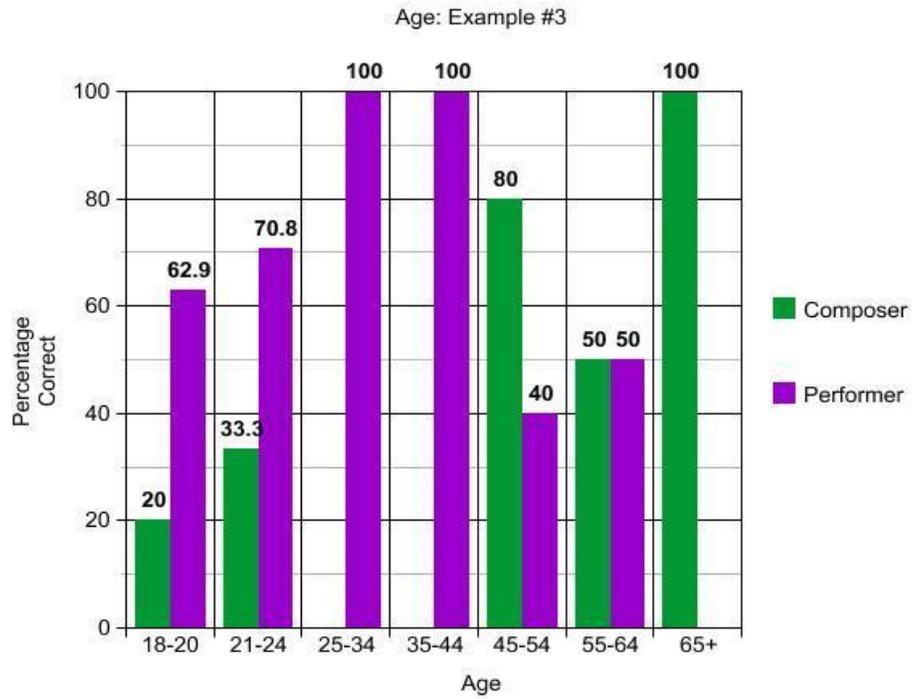


Figure 8

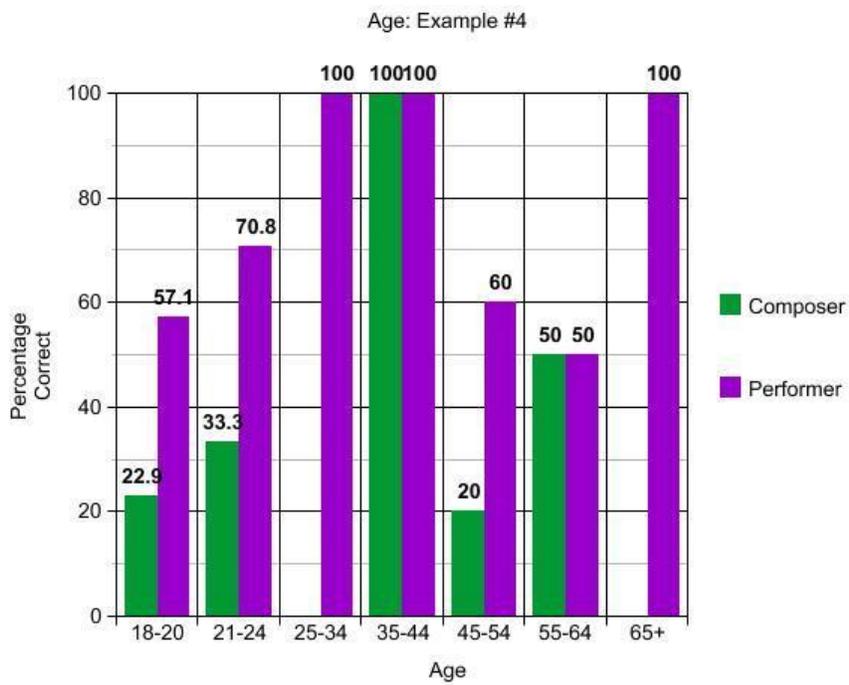


Figure 9

GENDER AND MUSIC

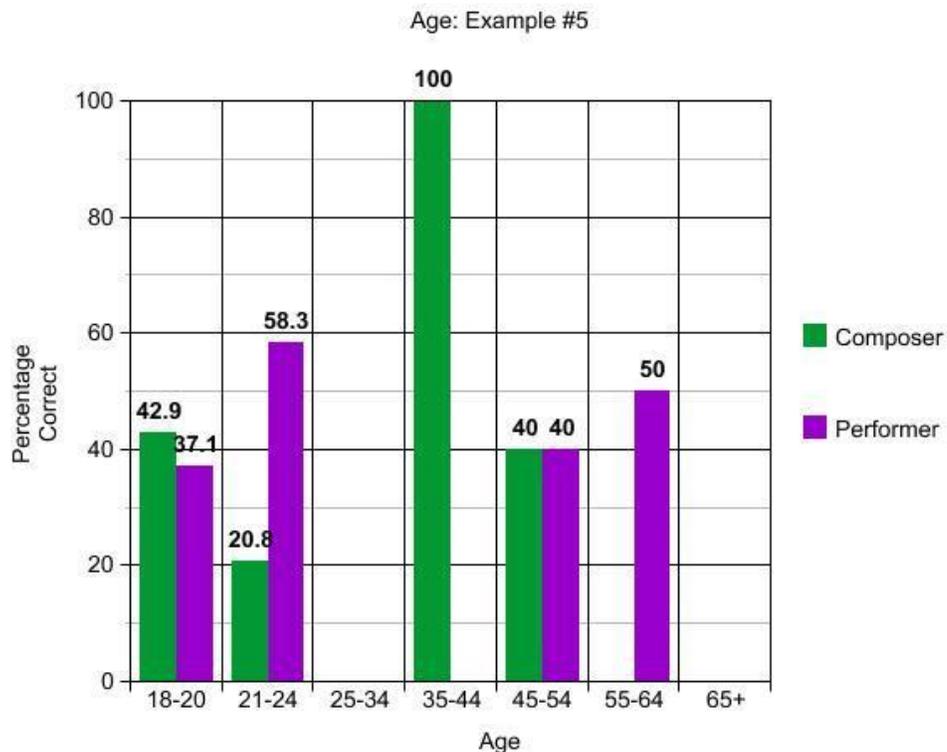


Figure 10

When breaking up these results by age, the author noticed that for the category or age 18-20, the majority leaned towards males on six of the questions, and towards females on four of them. Of the four questions for which this age category leaned toward female, all four questions were the same ones on which female participants leaned toward female (performer of example 1, performer of example 4, composer and performer of example 5). For ages 21-24, the majority picked men for five questions and women for the other five. Of these five questions, they were the same four that ages 18-20 and females leaned toward, as well as the composer of example 4. The one participant that was age 25-34 also was split, choosing male for five answers and female for the other five, with these five again being the same that the women participants leaned towards plus the performer of example 2. For the one participant who was 35-44, their answers leaned the exact same way that the ages 21-24 category did. The other categories in the age

GENDER AND MUSIC

section do not favor the same questions as being female. The category for ages 45-54 had seven questions leaning towards being a woman composer or performer, and the three that did lean towards men were the composer and performer of example 2 and the composer of example 4. There were only two participants age 55-64, and for seven of the questions they were split on the answers, while the other three (composer and performer of example 1 and composer of example 5) all favored women. The one person age 65 or older chose female on six of the ten questions (performer of example 1, composer and performer of example 3, performer of example 4, and composer and performer of example 5). As with the gender category, the main assumption tends to be that the composers are male, although not quite as drastically as seen in this category. However, the same favor towards women can be seen as many of the same questions in the age and gender categories.

Results by Category: Musical Experience

The final category that the results were divided up into was the amount of musical experience. There were 3 participants who had no musical experience, 2 that had less than a year, 5 with 1-2 years, 7 with 3-5 years, 3 with 6-7 years, 11 with 8-9 years, 28 participants for the first question and then 27 for the remaining questions for the category of 10-15 years of experience, 10 with 16-20 years of experience, and then 1 participant who had 30 or more years of musical experience. The results for the percentage who answered correctly can be seen in figure 11 for example 1, figure 12 for example 2, figure 13 for example 3, figure 14 for example 4, and figure 15 for example 5.

GENDER AND MUSIC

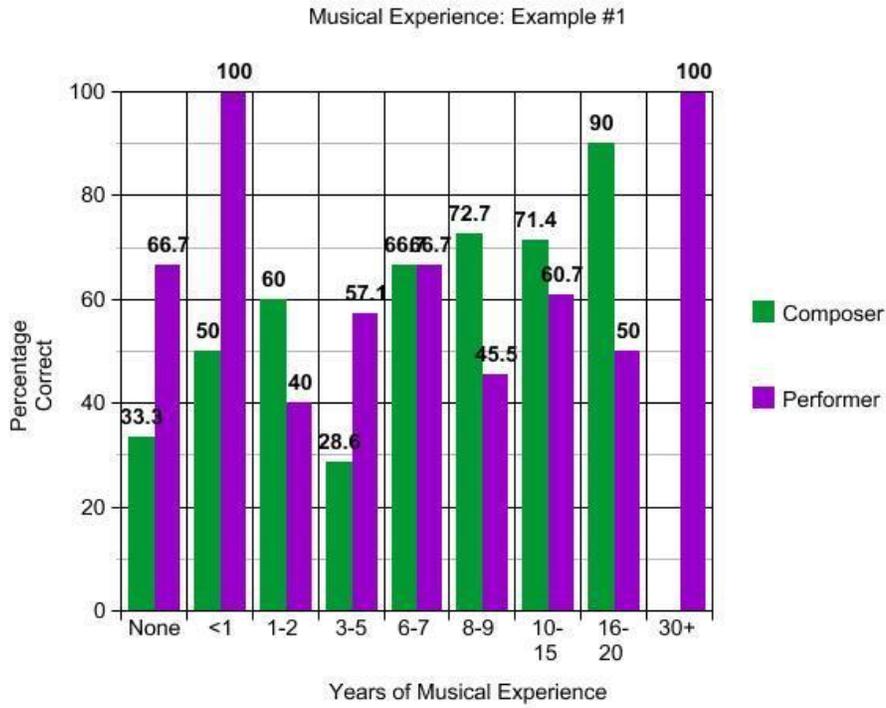


Figure 11

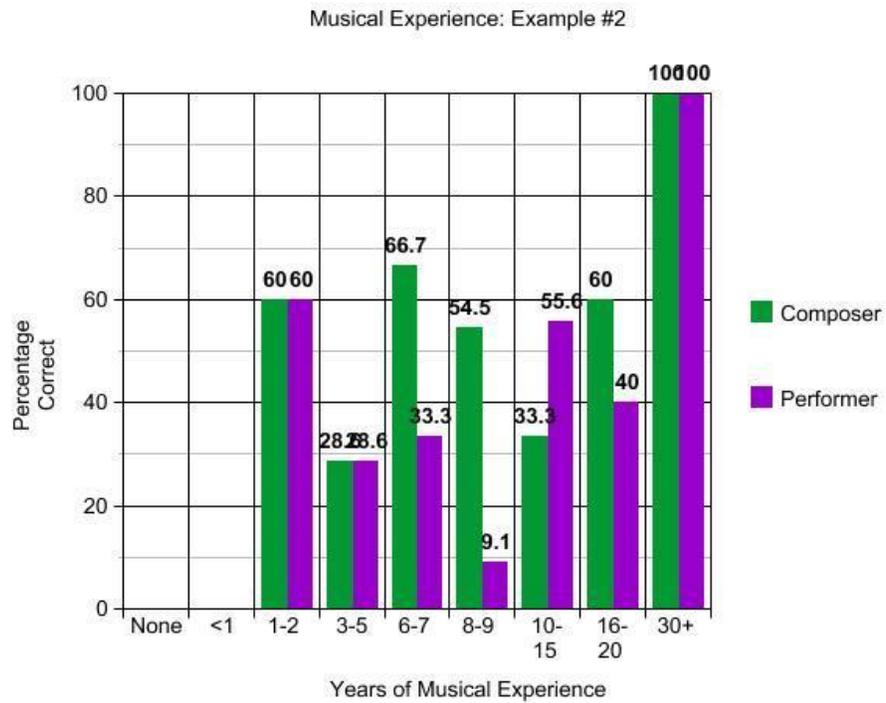


Figure 12

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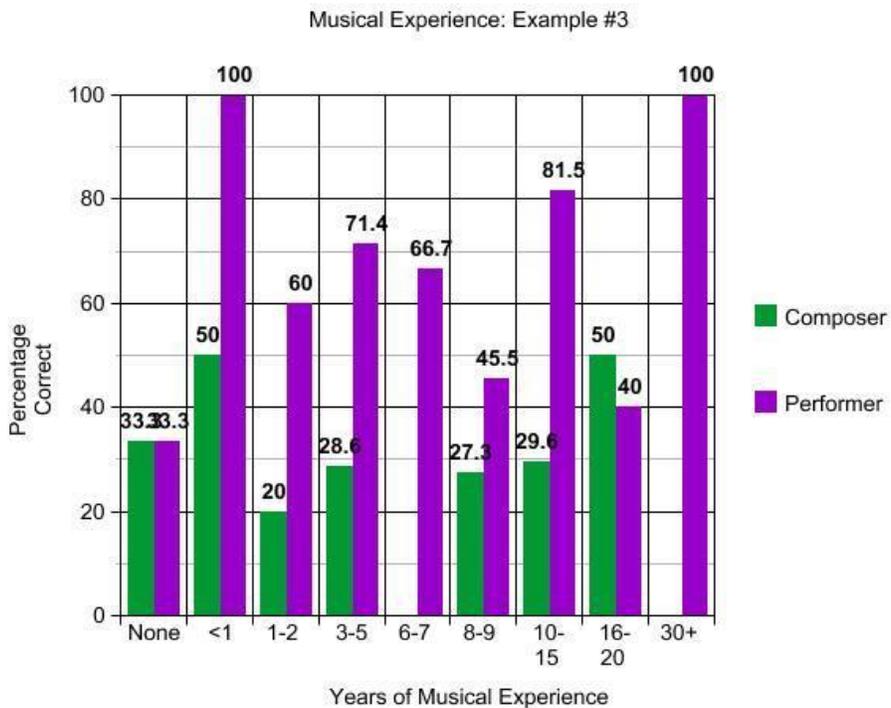


Figure 13

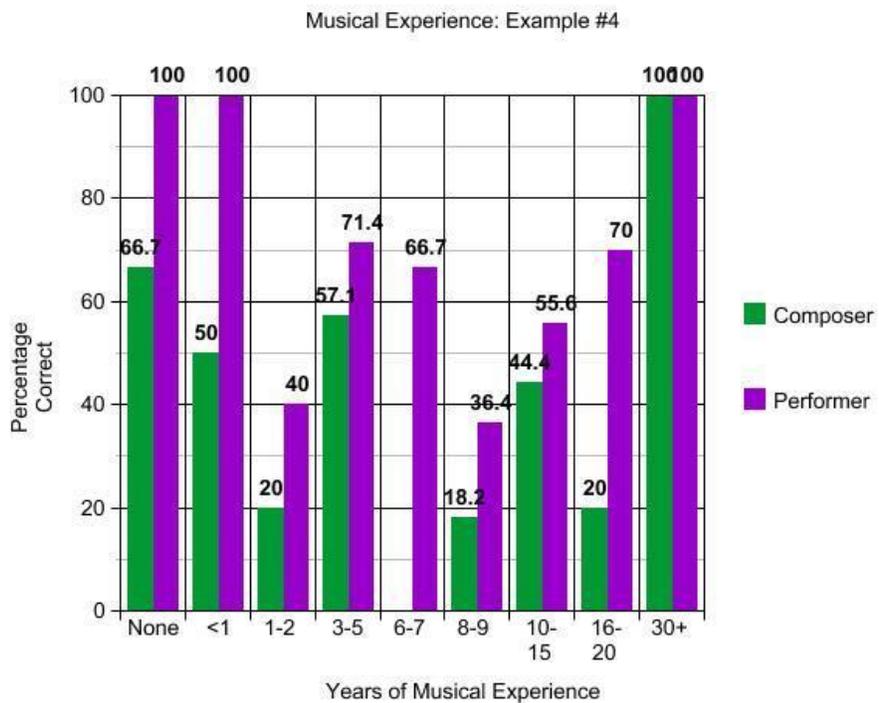


Figure 14

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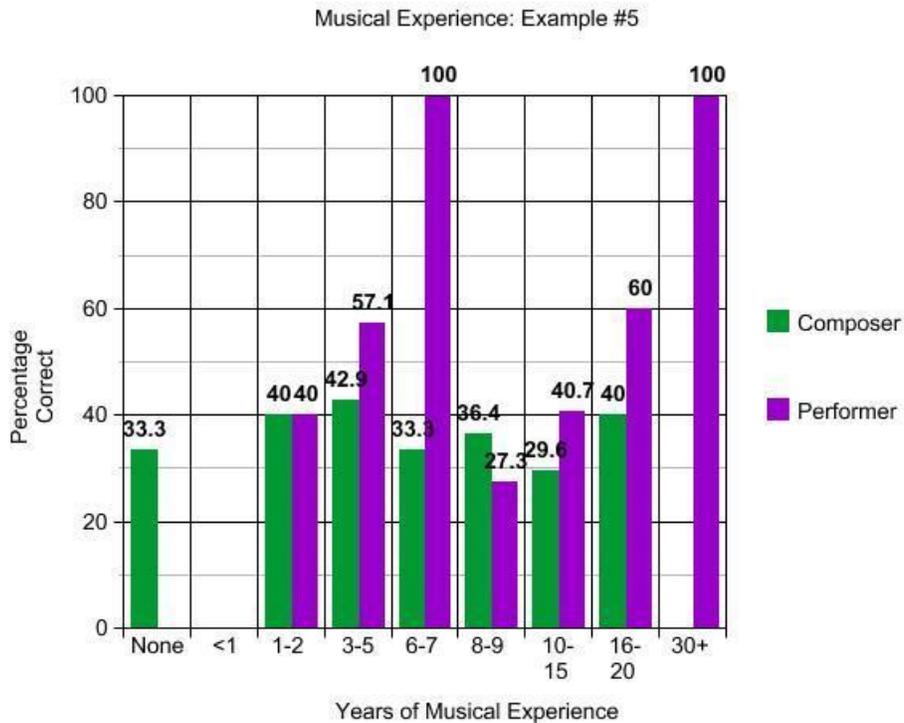


Figure 15

The results of the musical experience category differ from the gender and age categories, but the results between each line up. For the participants who had no experience, a majority chose female on seven of the ten questions. Of these, three of these were composers (of examples 1, 4, and 5) and four were for performers (all but example 2). For the less than a year category, three of the questions were split evenly, three favoring males, and four favoring females. These four questions that favored women were the same as the ones that women participants leaned towards, as well as some of the age groups (performer of example 1, performer of example 4, and composer and performer of example 5). For the 1-2 years category, six of the ten questions leaned towards men, while four leaned towards women. The four questions that female was preferred on were the composer and performer of example 2, and the composer and performer of example 5. For years 3-5, it was evenly split with five questions each being male and female. The five questions that the majority picked female on were composer and performer of example

GENDER AND MUSIC

1, composer and performer of example 4, and the composer of example 5. The questions that favored female for the 6-7 years category are the performer of example 1, composer of example 2, performer of example 4, and the composer of example 5. The 8-9 years of experience category leaned towards women on the composer of example 2, performer of example 3, and composer and performer of example 5. The questions that the majority picked as being women for the 10-15 years of experience category were the performer of example 1, 2, and 4, and the composer and performer of example 5. For the 16-20 year experience category, the answers leaned towards women on the composer of example 2, performer of example 3 and 4, and the composer of example 5. Finally, for the 30 years or more category, the questions that preferred female were the composer and performer of example 1, 2, and 4, as well as the composer of example 5. Out of all of the questions that the different age groups leaned towards, every single one leaned towards the composer of example five being female. Another result that the majority of these categories leaned towards was the performer of example 4, which 7 of the 9 age categories had a majority believing it was a woman.

Discussion of Survey Results

When looking at if the participants could accurately answer if the pieces were composed and performed by either males or females, there was no conclusive evidence that pointed towards people being able to correctly audibly hear gender in music. Many people said that they guessed based on prior knowledge when asked “What characteristics made you have this opinion?” There was no evidence to support that any of the categories such as gender, age, or musical experience influenced the likelihood of the participants answering correctly, and this helps show that the answers and results received are purely random. However, while the participants could not

GENDER AND MUSIC

correctly identify the gender, there were different characteristics in each that led to them strongly leaning towards certain genders on some of the questions. There were four questions that the majority of participants in each individual category leaned towards because of the “feminine” qualities they had, which were the performers of pieces 1, 4, and 5 and the composer of 5. These performances and composition all had characteristics that have been gendered as being feminine such as: (1) being light and delicate, (2) not being aggressive, (3) being romantic and filled with emotion, and (4) the players were nimble and weightless. What this demonstrates is that different characteristics of music have been gendered for so long that it is essentially ingrained into everyone’s musical lives. Whether or not people want to say something is “feminine” or “masculine” does not truly matter because these gendered qualities have been taught to us since birth.

Conclusion

From ancient times until today, women have come a long way and have become a standing force in the musical world. Women have been able to gain the same education as men, as well as being able to slowly start entering the musical canon alongside of them. The gendered characteristics created over time have been ingrained into music for years, and even though women are nearly equals now and feminism has had an impact on women in music these characteristics still are relevant and can be seen in society’s views towards women composers and performers today. The survey conducted demonstrated that participants cannot accurately identify the gender of the composer or performer, but there is a certain leaning to identify pieces with characteristics that have been identified as feminine as being created by a woman. Where do women go from here? These characteristics will continue to make it difficult for women to continue growing in the musical world, and because of this, the impact that it has on women

GENDER AND MUSIC

musicians, and the views that they have caused people to have, these gendered characteristics need to be gotten rid of. Going forward into the future, it will be fascinating to see whether or not these characteristics and the gender they seem to inhibit now will stay relevant, or if this will become a thing of the past and people will start to hear women composers and performers for what they are: just composers and performers.

GENDER AND MUSIC

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