



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG  
ACADEMY OF MUSIC AND DRAMA

---

Listening to classical music - experiences and attitudes.

Aleksandra Liubomirova



---

Degree Project, Master of Fine Arts in Music,  
Symphonic Orchestra Performance  
Spring Semester 2014

Degree Project, 30 higher education credits  
Master of Fine Arts in Music, Symphonic Orchestra Performance  
Academy of Music and Drama, University of Gothenburg  
Spring Semester 2014

Author: Aleksandra Liubomirova

Title: Experiencing listening to classical music.

Supervisor: Maria Bania

Examiner: Ole Lützow-Holm

## ABSTRACT

Why do we play music? Why do people listen to it? What does it do to us?

This master thesis is an attempt to get a clear yet diverse picture of the effects that classical music has on a listener. It is a broad subject that has been discussed in philosophy and psychology for centuries.

In the first chapter this work briefly goes through the history of the question, starting in the ancient Greece and finishing in our time. Its second chapter is an experiment with a small group of people that share their experiences in listening to classical music. The subject is looked into considering different points of view.

Key words: classical music effects, reactions on music, catharsis



## Table of content

- Introduction.....	5
- Chapter 1. <i>From the history of the subject. Theoretical study</i> ....	6
- Chapter 2. <i>The experiment. Interviews</i> .....	15
- Chapter 3. <i>Discussion</i> .....	19
- Afterword.....	23
- List of literature.....	24

## **THE MUSICIAN.**

**The musician played the violin, and I looked into his eyes.  
It was not that I was curious, I was flying in the skies.  
Not because I found it boring, I just tried to understand:  
How on earth such sounds could be ever made by human hand  
From a simple piece of wood, and from a string, a cord of a kind,  
From a fantasy, ideas, he was true to, in his mind.**

**He must also penetrate us, light a fire, burn  
our soul.  
After all, why should he care, why should he spare us at all?**

**Happy is a home where violin puts us wise and bids us best,  
Give us hope and inspiration; we'll take care of the rest.  
Happy is an instrument that to the clumsy shoulder's pressed,  
Now I happen to be flying by its magic music blessed.**

**Happy is the one whose path is short, who plays by sleight of hand,  
The musician that has made out of my soul a burning brand.  
And a burnt soul, as is known, (there's no doubt about that),  
Is more righteous and more fair, more benign, in point of fact.**

***Bulat Okudzhava***

## **Introduction.**

Music has always been an essential part of people's life. From the ancient times it was believed to have magical powers. It was thought that melodies and rhythms could cure diseases, change characters and behavior.

Influence of music has been a broad subject of study in different art related sciences, but also in medicine. It is thought to have a cathartic, aesthetic, ethical, educational effect on people, to penetrate their souls, give hope and much more. This discussion has been going on for centuries.

In my exam project I decided to explore which effects music has on a variety of listeners, I tried to find out what kind of feelings and emotions it awakens. I was particularly interested in people with different backgrounds and experiences.

My research is limited to western classical music. Since I am a professional classical violinist this is a type of music that I am most competent and also most interested in. As well I limited it to perception without a particular purpose, such as medical for instance. I will not touch music therapy and so on.

This thesis consists of two parts: a theoretical, where I research related literature and a practical, which is done by interviews and talking to people about their experiences from listening to music. In the end I compare and discuss both.

I chose to do this because I believe that it is extremely important to know what exactly your profession is. We spend enormous amount of time and energy preparing concert programs, but do we know what the purpose of it is? Knowledge of listener's reactions can raise the awareness of what I am doing, help me to understand the meaning of my profession better.

My goal is not to get a one and only concrete answer to the question. This subject is universal and eternal, it will always stay open for discussion. I never expected to discover something new, what was never said before. The point of this work is to discuss this subject from my own point of view, learn new things, broaden my views and hopefully develop as a musician. I suppose it can be useful and interesting for others as well.

## **Chapter 1. From the history of the subject**

To the ancient Greeks - Aristotle, Plato, Pythagoras and their followers - music was a tool to balance the external side of life with the psychological state of the person. According to this tradition catharsis is the (desired) result of musical effect. The ability to influence people in general was also mentioned in connection to ethics and education. The literal meaning of the Greek word *catharsis* is purification. In the antique aesthetics it was used to describe the purification of the soul with the power of art. Originally this idea was applied to music, later Aristotle extended it to theatre.

The semi-mythical Orpheus was thought to be the founder of music; the "orphics" (his followers) believed that music frees the soul from the dungeon of body.

Pythagoras was practicing musical healing. With specially chosen melodies he would free his pupils from emotions that lead to spiritual disharmony: anger, sadness, jealousy, fear etc. (Iamblicus 1905:42-43).

Good music would make a person better and bad music - worse. According to Plato there should be a musical law, clear modal, rhythmical, metrical canon and a list of allowed instruments (Kalmykova 2001). Later Aristotle broadened this to the ancient tragedy. According to him public would unconsciously identify themselves with a character of tragedy and their feelings would refine and ennoble through compassion and fear.

Catharsis occurs because the human world, which is incarnated in art, will shock the listener/ viewer (in theatre) and this shock will resolve in freeing from painful affects into universality (Aristotle 1788:57).

With the vanishing of the ancient world the phenomenon of catharsis has been forgotten. An interest in it came back during the Renaissance, when the "Poetics" by Aristotle, which had been unknown in the Middle Ages, was introduced.

The Baroque theory of affects was probably the first in Christian history that concerned the true impact of music on a listener. It is a rationally-"tempered", typologically constructed canon of feelings portrayal. "The purpose of music is to give us pleasure and awake various affects"- Rene Descartes writes in his early treatise *Musicae Compendium* in 1618. Already in 1617 the Italian Biagio Marini published a collection of violin pieces that consisted of dances, variations and "symphonies" named *Affetti Musicali*. Parallel classifications of affects appeared in Germany (Kudryashov 2006:48). Music received a new meaning. If before the rhetoric techniques in instrumental music principally played a role of hidden-symbolic comments to a text or event, now they became an incarnation of musical *Klangrede* (eng. sound-speech), excited, filled with bright contrasting affects (Kudryadhov: 154). Also musical instruments were judged according to their ability to represent individual human emotion. Take, for instance, Johann Joachim Quantz and his treatise *On playing the Flute* where, according to Lydia Goehr, he expressed a belief that each instrument symbolizes a certain human passion (Goehr 1992:164).

Here is an example of characteristic signs of eight main affects in J.S.Bach researched by Galina Leonova a couple of years ago:

<i>Affect</i>	<i>Mode</i>	<i>Tempo</i>	<i>Interval types</i>	<i>Musical rhetoric figures</i>	<i>Characteristic rhythm, type of movement</i>
<i>Moderation</i>	Major	Moderato, adagio, cantabile	Consonant, diatonic	fundamentales	Measured walk
<i>Suffering</i>	Minor	Adagio, lento	Dissonant, chromatic	Passus, durius-culus, saltus duriusculus, parrhesia, pathopoeia	-
<i>Sorrow</i>	Minor	Adagio, andante	Dissonant, several chromatismes	Ellipsis, gradation, katabasis, circulation	Syncopations
<i>Love</i>	Major, minor	Andante	Several dissonants	Katabasis	Syncopations, measured fluent movement
<i>Holiness</i>	Major, minor	Moderato, grave, maestoso	Mostly consonant, diatonic	Fundamentals, circulatio	-
<i>Majesty</i>	Major	Moderato	Consonant, diatonic	Fundamentalis, circulatio	Change of long and short notes (older style)
<i>Anger</i>	Minor	Allegro, allegretto	Dissonant, chromatic	Exclamation, interrogation, tirata	-
<i>Courage</i>	Major (rare Minor)	Allegro (rare moderato)	Consonant, diatonic, arpeggio, repetitions	Anabasis	-
<i>Joy</i>	Major	Allegro, presto	Consonant, diatonic	Anabasis, fuga	Almost no syncopations

(Kudryashov: 49)



Also in modern times there are various classifications made to show what type of emotions music can awake in an unprepared listener. Here are some examples:

1) slow tempo + minor mode - sad, sorrowful, tragic, dreamy character;

2) slow tempo + major mode - contemplative, calm, good-tempered character;

3) fast tempo + minor mode - dramatic, excited, passionate, protesting, rebellious, aggressive, character;

4) fast tempo + major mode - joyful, happy, jubilant character. (Medushevsky 1976:45)

This is, of course, very primitive. While placing a musical composition in such a system, we must keep in mind how difficult, unstable and complex the expressed emotions usually are.

Probably the biggest change in meaning that the concept of music has undergone throughout the history is that which moved musical understanding away from “extra-musical” towards “musical”. Before 1800 the theory, the conditions of production, the forms of criticism and appreciation of music were usually shaped by the functions music served in powerful institutions like the church or court. But this changed. Though the extra-musical understanding of music continued after 1800 to influence both the theory and practice of music, a new understanding was incorporated. “The basic question “what is music?” was treated in connection less with extra-musical ideals than with that, which came to be regarded as “specifically musical” ideals.”(Goehr 1992: 122). Until the late 18<sup>th</sup> century music attributed to specific “extra-musical” meanings and was expected to be a worthy contribution to a moral, rational and religiously upright society. It was believed to have the ability to influence and empower a person’s religious and moral beliefs and to imitate the nature of people and the world. The new romantic aesthetic allowed music to mean its purely musical self, at the same time as it meant everything else without imitating it. (Goehr 1992: 152)

Arthur Schopenhauer's position about music is notable from the later history. According to him music gets into the quintessence of life, not specific events themselves. It doesn't reflect a certain specific joy or sadness, but an abstract joy or sadness in general and shows its substance. Still, we are able to understand it. This means that music is "a perfectly universal language, the distinctness of which surpasses even that of the perceptible world itself" (Schopenhauer 1818: § 52). It expresses the heart of things. Music lets a person to intuitively enter the essence of reality (Schopenhauer 1818: §52).

The desired (positive) effect can be reached on two conditions: music, which is able to cause it and the listener who is able to receive it. The same piece of music does not necessarily influence every listener in the same way. It is important to understand why it is like that.

Production and perception of music is an act of communication. The musician (composer, performer) is the sender of a message. The listener is the recipient of the message. The message can be accepted and read, if the communicator and the recipient are compatible. This means that they must be somehow similar (similar does not mean equal). Similarities attract each other; a person will enjoy music as much as it suits his/her character and mood. And level of musical culture.

The important part in the perception of music is a setting, unconscious willingness or unwillingness to accept something, to view something in this way and not otherwise. A great illustration can be an English children verse about a cat who went to London but only noticed a little mouse there. Nothing else got any attention from the cat, not because there was nothing else to see, but because the cat was unable to.

Setting plays a crucial role in the perception of music as well. It is based on the experience of a person, his/her system of aesthetic values at that time. The compatibility has two sides - the spiritual/emotional and concerning a level of musical preparation of the listener.

The perception of music is an emotional process, it's the relation of the listener to what he/she hears. The level of musical experience certainly plays a role in it, but how big is it?

In the emotional effect of music we "select" what is similar to the familiar *life emotions*, we find something that is not reduced to them although undoubtedly related. Numerous studies by supporters of opposing aesthetic trends have shown that listeners can be divided into two main groups. The first finds life analogous to musical experiences, the

second does not do it, however not preventing them from having pleasure in the musical perception, though.

It is appropriate to mention an episode from the history of musicology - the controversy surrounding the so-called "pure music." The "purists" classify the listeners mainly in two groups: those who hear the music as "pure", without any "emotional meanings" or associations; and those who hear it as an expression of emotion or some extra-musical content. The more experienced a listener becomes, the more likely it is for him/her to join the first group (Hospers/ Rader 1957:301).

This point of view is presented in musicology of the 19th century by Edmund Gurney and Eduard Hanslick. Gurney says that music "does not mean anything," and quotes Schumann: "The critics always want to know what the composer can not tell them <...> Take the fifths, but leave us alone" (Rader 1957:296). Based on the same, Hanslick writes that musical effects are not achieved by "the beat of the composer's heart, but by the timpani tremolo, not by sadness of his soul, but by the use of chromatism <...> So an educated musician will better understand the nature of the composition, which he/she had not heard if he/she is told that there are, for example, diminished seventh chords or too much or too little tremolo, than if someone would in the most poetic colors describe the feelings experienced by the listener."(Rader 1957: 297,304) So according to Hanslick "feelings" are playing a dominant role when it comes to a listener without knowledge of musical techniques, while for the educated musician feelings remain completely in the background.

If we return to the subject of catharsis, a question would rise: is it possible to speak of purification and sublimation of the soul if there is "no heartbeat, but only timpani tremolo", if feelings don't play a dominant role? Do we need to conclude that the musical catharsis can only be experienced by musically uneducated people, who don't know about the tremolo and intervals? It is doubtful that such a conclusion would satisfy the purists, and we can only assume that they mean something else with the use of the word "feelings". It is unlikely that they thought of music as of an emotionless art. Which feeling exactly did they were "keep out" from the musical content? Gurney says it quite clearly: those "which belong to life outside music (for convenience I call them extra-musical kinds of feelings)" (Rader 1957:298). So, is the existence of musical feelings accepted? It should be, without a doubt.

Opponents of the purists believe that non-musical experiences are connected to music, that purists talk about music "as if it just consists of schemes" (L.A.Reid/ Rader

1957:305) While listening to great music, we are "...communicating with a great spirit, and not just with great musical ability" (J.W.N.Sullivan/ Rader 1957:307).

Even if there is a similarity between musical and "life" emotions is not a doubt, it is not identical. Or as the musicologist John Hospers puts it: "emotions that are experienced under the influence of works of art that are different from the emotions outside of this work, "sorrow" in life is not "sorrow" of the 2 movement of Beethoven's Eroica Symphony." He adds: "unless, of course, we are not dealing with the frivolous listeners who use music just to stimulate a memory of life experiences; but in this case there is nothing specifically musical" (Rader 1957:319). For these people, music is not something that should be listened to, but only a background to sentimental memories. On the other hand, a person who is able to analyze the technique and architecture of the music but does not feel any emotions misses the point for which it was created. "Each of these listeners is an extreme type because of lack of a certain element in their reaction to music" (Hospers/Rader 1957:319).

Vernon Lee also writes that people's response to music can be of two different kinds: *listeners* and *hearers*. The first kind implies a certain "listening" activity and occurs when a person is focusing on "that what moves and changes", this process causes a complex intellectual and spiritual activity. On the contrary, *hearers* tend to daydream and their attention carries far away from the music. Instead of concentrating the musical experience so that all external thoughts would be excluded, the moments of active attention emerge as islands flooded by various thoughts, memories, associations, visual images and emotional states. They float around more or less clear musical impressions in such a way that one is participating in another creating a homogeneous and kind of dreamy mood. (Lee 1932:113)

This classification is based on self-observations and verbal reports of many music lovers. It still retains its relevance, the view on musical perception from other sources does not contradict these conclusions.

Leonid Bochkarev agrees that types of listeners commonly acknowledged in musical aesthetics mainly match with the above. There are two major ways to communicate with music, two strategies of consciousness in relation to it: intra-musical – entirely directed to the understanding of music itself and extra-musical – based on a variety of associations outside music and less clear experiences. (Bochkarev 1997:98)

A well-known researcher of musical perception Boris Teplov summarized the results of many psychological experiments in two statements:

1/ Musical content cannot be comprehended in an emotionless manner.

2/ Perception of music goes through emotions, but does not end with emotions: through them we explore the world. (Teplov 1985:72)

Musical experience is interpreted by him as a mature, substantial, involving understanding of language of art and content of the musical work itself.

According to the German psychologist Richard Müller-Freienfels perception of, for example, a tragedy is based on the duality of depression and excitement and a fact that despite its oppressive nature the tragic experience is "one of the highest rises that human nature is capable of, because a feeling of triumph that is caused by spiritual overcoming of the deepest pain does not have equals." (R.Müller-Freienfels/Vygotsky 1968:269). This explains one of the major differences between artistic and ordinary emotions that are experienced in daily life. Emotions can be positive or negative, in art - only positive. It is especially evident in the aesthetic effect of the tragedy. "The deepest sorrow, the hardest experiences cause listeners, readers, viewers positive emotions, but of a special kind. Their feelings are being transformed for real and it can be called catharsis" (Rappoport 1972:130).

Lev Vygotsky also presents an episode of Leo Tolstoy's novel "The Kreutzer Sonata" and analyses a position towards classical music that is expressed there. Here is one moment from the analysis. The main character of the story who killed his wife out of jealousy tells a random passengers about his perception of the Beethoven sonata.

Among other things he says:

"Do you know the first presto? Do you know it? Ah! A terrible thing is that sonata, especially the presto! And a terrible thing is music in general. What is it? I don't understand. It acts, it acts frightfully (I speak for myself), but not in an ennobling way. It acts neither in an ennobling nor a debasing way, but in an irritating way. How shall I say it? Music makes me forget my real situation. It transports me into a state which is not my own. Under the influence of music I really seem to feel what I do not feel, to understand what I do not understand, to have powers that I cannot have. <...> The consciousness of this indefinite state filled me with joy. The same faces, and among them HE and my wife, I saw in a different light. This music transported me into an unknown world."

If it "fills with joy", why is it "a terrible thing"? This is why:

"Music transports me immediately into the condition the of soul in which he who wrote the music found himself at that time. <...> But he who wrote Beethoven's 'Kreutzer Sonata' knew well why he found himself in a certain condition. That condition led him to certain actions, and for that reason to him had a meaning, but to me none, none whatever. And that is why music provokes an excitement, which it does not bring to a conclusion. For instance, a military march is played; the soldier passes to the sound of this march, and the music is finished. A dance is played; I have finished dancing, and the music is finished. A mass is sung; I receive the sacrament, and again the music is finished. But any other music provokes an excitement, and this excitement is not accompanied by the thing that needs properly to be done, and that is why music is so dangerous, and sometimes acts so frightfully. " (Tolstoy: Ch.23)

The transformation of senses, the essence of the aesthetic reaction escapes from this character. He is not afraid of the applied music (military march, etc.) because it brings concrete, recognizable feelings that associate with concrete activities. And music such as the Beethoven sonata "encourages us to something, functions in a challenging, but the most vague way, that is not directly linked to any specific reaction, movement, act. We see this as a proof that it works cathartic, clarifying and purifying the mind, revealing and bringing to life the new forces." "This is music with a delayed effect, which acts as an earthquake, revealing new layers to life. Art is rather a direction forward, requirement to seek beyond our lives. The aesthetic emotion by itself seems to be isolated from our daily behaviour, it does not lead us to something, only creates a great need for certain actions. Art relates to life as a wine to grapes – said someone and he was absolutely right, he pointed out the fact that art takes its material from life, but gives something beyond this material, something what it does not yet contain". (Vygotsky: 320-322)

Functionality of music depends on its "sociability". Music constantly absorbs the experiences of a person, revises them in its own way and creates a special synthesis. Shostakovich said: "Life and art are inseparable. Their correlation is somehow similar to nature: one comes out from the other. But the main object of art is still a human, his inner world, ideas, dreams, aspirations. Artist's search in this direction has no limits. An artist can show what is happening in the soul of one person to millions of people, and to one person - what fills the soul of mankind. For art it is an equal magnitude." (Koshmina 2003:199).

## **Chapter 2. The experiment. Interviews.**

### **Method:**

The interviews took place between April and October 2013 and were done during face to face meetings or using Skype. All the respondents are informed about the aim of interviews and gave their permission to use them in my Master thesis. I will not use their answers for any different purposes. The interviews were recorded on my own private device and all respondents will remain anonymous.

Firstly I made all of the respondents visit a classical concert and listen to a classical recording. Since I am interested in the effect of classical music in general and not of a particular piece or composer, I left the choice of musical material to the ones interviewed. The recordings were chosen either by current mood or by particular interest in something; choice of concerts was more influenced by practical reasons.

I chose to not prepare a strict questionnaire, but to make it a kind of free conversation. All the respondents are people I know personally, what makes the communication somehow easier. Yet I looked for people with different backgrounds and experience. Due to the fact that my respondents are of different nationalities I had to use other languages (Russian, Lithuanian, Dutch) apart from English. The translation is as close as it was possible.

There is a danger that real negative comments are missing because respondents didn't want to disappoint me or were afraid to look "stupid", I really hope it's not like this.

Most of the respondents found it difficult to put their musical experience into words, yet everyone admitted to have listened with extra care and attention because they knew that they would have to talk about this experience.

Of course, my "experiment" is very limited. I talked to a very small amount of people, they all knew that they are a part of a research, they listened to music because I asked them to, they prepared to talk about their experience already during listening. There is, unfortunately, a certain lack of spontaneity. Also the musical material does not cover anything before the 18<sup>th</sup> century or from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup>. Though, not to

forget that music from these periods is the most standard repertoire in the concerts. Unless you specifically look for something older or more contemporary, you are most likely to hear music that was written in these times.

This is what I asked:

*What did you feel?*

*How did you feel?*

*What did you think?*

*What did/ didn't you like?*

*Did you prefer the live concert or recording? Why?*

*How did you choose what to listen to?*

*What effect does classical music have on you usually/ in general?*

*Do you ever listen to classical music or visit concerts?*

And some following questions depending on the answers. I tried to just let them speak freely and as much as possible.

I will use quotes of 11 people, 5 of them are frequent listeners with no musical training:

**1/** 25 year old female, listened to Debussy *Pelleas et Melisande* in concert performance and Satie *Trois Gymnopedies*

**2/** 30 year old female, listened to an organ recital and Tchaikovsky *Souvenir d'un lieu cher*

**3/** 17 year old female, listened to a piano recital and Brahms piano trio no 1

**4/** 43 year old male, listened to Shostakovich viola sonata and Mozart *Eine kleine nachtmusik*

**5/** 30 year old female, listened to Stravinsky *Firebird* and Marcello oboe concerto

3 of them didn't have any experience with classical music:

**6/** 23 year old male, listened to a piano recital and random pieces on youtube

**7/** 38 year old male, listened to Beethoven *Eroica* and Tchaikovsky *Waltz of the flowers*

**8/** 24 year old female, listened to Nielsen 4<sup>th</sup> symphony and Mozart violin concerto no 4

3 of them are professional musicians:

**9/** 31 year old male violinist, listened to Tchaikovsky 5<sup>th</sup> symphony and Ysaye *Ballade*



10/ 37 year old female violinist, listened to Stravinsky *L'histoire du soldat* and Beethoven *Die grosse fuge*

11/ 24 year old female cellist, listened to Mussorgsky *Pictures at an exhibition* and Prokofiev cello sonata

## Results:

Every respondent expressed the aesthetic pleasure of listening in some way, a word "very beautiful" was used by 10 of them, resp.6 was an exception. Resp.8 told me that she was positively surprised to be able to like and enjoy this music. She always thought classical music to be something either too difficult or boring. Perhaps, she says, because she never took a chance to sit down and listen.

Another frequently mentioned thing was being able to forget about cares/ problems and rest from daily rush/stress. For instance, this is what resp.1 is saying: "It makes me feel calm, relaxed and cozy. It reminds me of those rainy days when I had a chance to curl up on a sofa with my dog and a good book. I feel a little melancholic, but in a good way. This music reminds me of the pleasure of savoring the everydayness, the ordinary things in life that often get unnoticed in the daily rush. <...> It's great to dream with such music. Dive into the world of fantasy, move away from the problems."

Resp.4 has the need to visit classical concerts once in a while. He tells that sometimes his daily stress becomes too much to handle and he needs to get away from it. After a good concert he feels ready to go on with new force.

Resp.9 says that although he is a professional violinist and spends most of his time with music, listening is still a way to calm down for him: "Music penetrates the soul and makes forget all the problems. It becomes pleasant to just listen."

Also resp.2 feels in a similar way: "I feel freed from daily cares, I don't think, only feel. Feel something unusual and beautiful. It soothes, makes you wonder about the hidden things".

On the other hand, resp.6 did not like what he heard, he thought it was too long and not exciting enough. Yet, he thinks that this kind of music can be listened to at home to take a break from stress.

Resp.7 believes that classical music invites a listener to think more, he even considers it to be the purpose of it. Resp.2 agrees on that: “This music makes me think about something serious. I'm starting to think about all the complexities of life”. Resp.3 tells that after the concert she did not want to move from her chair, she preferred to stay a bit longer and put her thoughts together.

Often the emotions were described as intense, extraordinary and causing goose bumps. “In some places it felt like my heart stopped beating.” – said resp.7 and showed me particular places in the recording.

Resp.4 almost experienced physical pain in Shostakovich: “It's like someone is slowly pulling a thread out of my heart”.

Resp. 11 feels a few different things at the same time: “I become very focused, I get excited but also dreamy. Some melodies really hit me. On a concert it is even more extreme, I get goose bumps faster. I think of nothing but the sounds and the music itself”.

According to resp.10 music, especially if it's good, easily puts a listener into a certain mood and the range of moods is huge: “Different musical compositions can provoke different emotions and thoughts. You can love it or hate it, get calm or excited, happy or angry, relaxed or frightened and many more.”

“But all of that is while listening” – he says – “When the music is finished I almost always feel the same way, I realize that I've been on another planet and now I am back to earth.” This “coming back to earth” was called “waking up” and “returning to reality” by nine others.

One more important part of musical perception are associations. Some said that they saw pictures in front of their eyes (resp.3, 6, 8). Resp.11 often compares music with a story, a fairy tale, sometimes the reality or nature. Resp.4 believes that associating music with something is the way to understand it and is more important than knowing musical theory and biography of the composer: “I associate music with something, I remember about a particular event and I experience it again.”

On the contrary, resp.5 told that she never imagined anything to music, she wants to purely listen. As a child she even had a problem with it at school: “When a teacher asked what I see to a certain musical composition, I never knew what to answer”.

Quality and way of performance seems to be an issue for musicians. All of them admitted that they are often judging the performer and this is distracting from the pure musical experience. First question is not whether they like a piece but whether they liked how it was played. “When a great piece of music is performed in a great way, it is a higher power. When the same piece is played badly, it upsets me extremely.” – resp.10 says.

8 of the respondents preferred the concert experience to a recording, mainly because of the communication with the performer. Resp.7 loved the whole atmosphere in a concert hall. “It’s very solemn, beautiful, sophisticated, puts in the correct mood.” – he said. Resp.3 finds it spectacular to watch the musicians, to see what they can do with their instruments. Resp.8 thought it was interesting to see reactions of other people from the audience.

Resp.5 chose the recording: “I prefer recording, because then I concentrate on music only. On the concert I got distracted by external things. Also on a recording it’s possible to return to the bits a liked more or skip something.”

Resp.6, as already mentioned above, thought that this type of music is better to be listened at home.

Resp.1 admits to enjoy going to a concert as a social event, but does not think that her musical experience is influenced or changed by this anyhow.

### **Chapter 3. Discussion.**

Generally the outcomes of the interviews are very similar, comparable things were said really often. I did not find a big difference between musicians and non-musicians, the way of expression was slightly different, but the content – not that much.

Therefore I would not agree with the point of view of the “purists” that musically educated people are less emotionally involved than uneducated. I totally agree with Teplov and his statement that music cannot be perceived in an emotionless manner by whoever is listening to it. It is also absolutely confirmed by my interviews. But perhaps it is more difficult for a performer to reach a musician than a non-musician. Educated

listeners are very sensitive to the level of all aspects in the performance, they have a greater knowledge of the subject and have certain preferences for style, expression etc. On the other hand, for a composer it would be easier to reach someone who is more experienced. Specific preparation of mind makes more things accessible and it can increase the speed of perception. As well, a musician usually differs the pure musical material from the execution of it: if you don't like the performance it does not at all mean, that you don't like the piece and the other way around. It drew my attention, that my professional respondents interpreted a question "did you like it?" primarily in connection to the performers, not to the musical pieces. I have already noticed this before while discussing concerts with musicians.

I would also not agree with a rather spread opinion that an unprepared listener cannot be able to value "serious" music. Yes, "I don't like classical music" is unfortunately a common thing to hear nowadays. One of the reasons for it is that people often base their opinions purely on expectations, without really knowing what they are talking about. We are not always open to something that is new and unusual for us or for our social environment.

Only five of my respondents (I quoted just three of them) had no previous experience with classical music, this is just a very tiny drop of the gigantic mass of people. Still, these five made an effort, sat down, opened their ears, minds, hearts and listened. Is there a chance that appreciation of art could change if more people did that at least once in their lives? Resp.8 is a good example of that.

I couldn't really divide my respondents into listeners and hearers (V.Lee), although I do agree with this classification. I can for sure say that resp.5 is a listener, but about the rest it is not completely clear. Perhaps my interviews did not go deep enough and of course the borders are not absolutely strict as well as the fact that the same person can be a listener or a hearer at different points.

Our choices of music are often unconscious and are often based on a need to release and live through our own feelings. We choose music that matches our mental state and emotions that are currently dominant. This was confirmed by all of my respondents. It is not hard to imagine such a situation: A person is attending a funeral and mourns sincerely, but suppresses that and holds back the tears. With the sounds of a funeral march the sorrow rises to an affect, comes free and becomes a larger-scale experience

- as the fate of the human, not just a particular case. Then some things that were covering the horizon, the daily troubles in particular, do to speak step aside and let in a new, wider world. In this world the sorrow becomes somehow smaller. These are the "purifying tears" that is written about so much. Washed by tears the soul eventually accepts its suffering. And might be relieved. At the same time this is a liberation of previously suppressed emotions.

"Heavy" emotion can be suppressed by the usual mechanisms, but can also grow to the state of affect and a cathartic relief if appropriate music sounds.

This is an example how negative emotions can transform into positive (referring to Müller-Freienfels for example) and can also serve as an a bit exaggerated illustration of "stress relief" that was mentioned by many of my respondents and which also takes us back to the *catharsis* phenomenon in turn.

Music has been united with words and dance for centuries. For many listeners this has caused a psychological tendency to interpret music in a figurative way, to search for the "real" meaning of it. There are some reasons that force a listener to look for a non-musical support in the perception of music, One of them, for instance, comes out of the specific nature of musical language, which is somehow similar to the language of literature, but different from the visual arts. Reading a text and listening to music is harder for perception than watching. While watching the attention is pleasantly distracted by things, movements, objects that can entertain us. The "easy watching" effect is connected to the fact that the surrounding reality is visual, we tend to perceive it as a natural background to our life. On the other hand artistic effort in music is maximal: intuitively finding a logical sense and connection between separate elements of sound is rather difficult. Constant distractions while listening, to a big regret of those who really appreciate music, come from natural tiredness, which is caused by unconscious activity of musical thinking. There is a division between those who enjoy the visual accompaniment and those who are easily disturbed by it (for ex. resp.5).

Another thing to consider is that the actual informing part of artistic expression (informing in the usual meaning of this word) is extremely weakened. Often there is no plot at all, no characters or events, everything is immersed in a subjective-emotional state of mind. The lack of an informative function, the lack of plot in music i.e. the inseparability of "facts, faces and events" on one side and the experiences of those characters on the other, leads to a fusion of the listener and the artistic character. This

identification is typical to any artistic experience, but in music it becomes particularly sharp. Music does not relate to the listener as an external object, like a book or a painting, for example. In contrast to a reader or viewer a listener cannot have an own independent opinion about characters and events. Music only awakens its meanings in the listener. The real perception of music is a kind of "confirmation" of this spiritual fusion, a "confirmation" that the senses that music gives and those senses that already live a listener's soul match. Therefore music helps to open yourself inside yourself, it is an intimate self-discovery. The material of musical perception is not just sounds, its what they awaken in a person, its images and feelings, which already existed in the listener before, but only now they became recognised consciously.

In my interviews I sometimes felt that some of my respondents mention seeing images because they think that it is what is expected from them. Some of them might have been searching for associations on purpose. On the other hand, to associate or compare is a natural way to make up an opinion. We perceive everything what is surrounding us in a complex manner, without clear divisions. Our evaluation of new things is based on what we already know and have experienced. Using the words of pianist H.Neuhaus: "The art of sound is able to express and embody everything without exceptions, anything that a person can experience, think or feel." This means that the amplitude of musical consciousness is practically unlimited.

Musical image contains a "feeling-thought" in it (terminology of N.Roerich, A.Schnittke and some other artists); it helps to recognize and penetrate the "core of the concept and content" (Y.Milyptein, Y.Flier). When we enter the world created by a composer "we occasionally experience vague and associative visions, chaotic fragments of memories. This is a natural process: association leads to a sounding image and further to composing, playing music or just to a deeper perception of it. It is important that this process is rather active and diverse and is not limited to one thing." (V.Spivakov). (Quotes in Gessen 1995: 64,86)

## Afterword.

This thesis gave me more awareness of what I am doing, I don't know if I play "different" after doing this work, I hold my bow exactly the same way as I did two years ago. But there is definitely a change in my mind, in my way of thinking. Of course, I always knew that the main purpose of playing is "making music" and delivering it to others, but now it is more clear and formulated in my mind. I am more conscious about it. No doubt that this is going to affect my playing somehow.

It was nice how the theoretical and practical parts supported each other. There are undeniable similarities and connections between them. Naturally, in literature everything is expressed more properly, it has cleared out a lot of things for me and with this help I was able to put my already existing thoughts together. Interviews confirmed the information and made it alive.

So far, I have only had a chance to research the listener's emotional reaction, not the performer's. I have been questioning myself about it though. When I play for an audience myself, I am not thinking that I have to make them feel sad or happy because a certain piece or bar is sad or happy according to me. The purpose is to speak through my playing and show my view and understanding of the concept as much as I can. Usually the kind of emotions that I experience during **listening** to a particular piece and during **playing** it are the same, with the difference that in the first case I am being told something and in the second I tell it myself. Most of the times I don't know whether I got exactly what the artist was trying to tell me, in the same way I don't know whether listeners are getting exactly what I am trying tell them. To be honest, I don't think that it is always necessary. Yes, we (musicians) do have to make ourselves as clear as possible, to reach the audience maximally, but a listener has a right for a personal vision on a musical piece. The very nature of art implies a certain multiplicity of its interpretations. Only in this way it becomes an essential part of a human being.

To conclude my research I can say that the hypothesis that classical music awakens positive emotions and takes a listener beyond the everydayness seems to be confirmed, although it still stays a hypothesis.

This work was definitely useful and very interesting for me and I believe it can be the same for the reader.

## Literature:

Aristotle (1788). *Poetic*. London, Printed for John Stockdale

Vochkarev, Leonid (1997). *Психология музыкальной деятельности*. Moscow, Институт психологии РАН

Gessen, S. (1995). *Основы педагогики*. Moscow, Музыка

Goehr, Lydia (1992). *The imaginary museum of musical works*. Oxford, Clarendon Press

Iamblichus (1905). *Life of Pythagoras*. Los Angeles, Theosophical Publishing House

Kalmykova, S (2001). *Музыкальная эстетика в античной философии и раннем христианстве*. <http://centant.spbu.ru/centrum/publik/confplat/2001/kalmyk.htm> (accessed in april 2014)

Koshmina, Irina (2003). *Путешествие в мир*. OLMA media group

Kudryashov, Andrei (2006). *Теория музыкального содержания*. St.Petersburg, Lan

Lee, Vernon (1932). *Music and its Lovers*

Medushevsky, Vyacheslav (1976). *О закономерностях и средствах художественного воздействия музыки*. Moscow, Музыка

Plato (1949). *Timaeus*. New York, Liberal Arts Press

Rappoport, Sergej (1972). *Искусство и эмоции*. Moscow, Музыка



Rader, Melvin (1957). *A modern Book of Esthetics. An Anthology*. Moscow, Inostrannaya literatura

Schopenhauer, Arthur (1818). *World as will and representation*.  
[http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The\\_World\\_as\\_Will\\_and\\_Representation/Third\\_Book](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_World_as_Will_and_Representation/Third_Book)  
(accessed in april 2014)

Теплов, Борис (1985). *Избранные труды*. Moscow, Pedagogika

Tolstoy, Leo (1889). *Kreutzer sonata*. [www.gutenberg.org/files/689/689-h/689-h.htm](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/689/689-h/689-h.htm)  
(accessed in april 2014)