

How to Increase the Attendance of Young Czechs in Classical Music Events: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract: This study explores the barriers to participation in classical music events among young Czechs. It aims to identify factors influencing attendance and provide recommendations for increasing engagement among this demographic. The research employs in-depth interviews with ten young Czechs. Findings reveal that young Czechs discover music through digital channels, preferring a wide range of genres that fit different occasions in their everyday life. The motivation for attending music events is the pursuit of unique experiences. Classical music is appreciated for its relaxing qualities and ability to increase concentration. Social media play a pivotal role in shaping attendance decisions. The study suggests that blending classical music with contemporary genres may enhance its relevance and attract younger audiences.

Keywords: Young Czechs, Classical Music, Attendance, Barriers, Engagement Strategies

JEL Classification codes: M3

INTRODUCTION

In today's competitive cultural landscape, engaging young people in classical music events represents both a challenge and an opportunity. This study investigates the relevance of classical music for young Czechs - a critical issue not only for understanding current cultural tastes but also for ensuring the sustainability of classical music consumption in the future.

The primary aim of this research is to explore the barriers that deter young Czechs from participating in classical music events. Additionally, it seeks to identify factors influencing attendance and offer recommendations for increasing engagement among this demographic.

The study is organized as follows: First, a review of the existing literature is presented. Next, the research methodology and key findings are outlined. Finally, the paper offers recommendations, discusses limitations, and identifies areas for future research.

1 LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on barriers to classical music consumption among young people is relatively sparse. Existing studies predominantly focus on strategies to make classical music more

accessible to vulnerable groups (e.g., de Aguileta et al., 2023; Kolb, 2001). Social and cultural hierarchies influence perceptions of classical music (Shiu, 2024). Attending concerts may be linked to middle-class cultural values (Crawford et al., 2014).

Young people have diverse musical preferences, selecting genres based on different situations in daily life. A shift towards mainstream popular culture is evident, while interest in "highbrow" culture has declined (Willekens & Lievens, 2014). Musical taste, once shaped by exclusionary rules, is now marked by openness to diverse influences (Widdop & Leguina, 2015).

Classical music is appreciated for its relaxing effects and ability to enhance concentration. Buigut (2016) quotes Goethe, who speaks of the omnipotent effect of music. Kawase (2015) verified that strong emotional experiences and liking of music correlate with the intention to attend concerts. Listening to recordings is more common than attending concerts. While many young people engage with classical music, few attend live performances (Kolb, 2001). However, Shiu (2024) states that in 2023, millennials (48%) and Generation Z (19%) formed a significant share of the classical music audience in the United States.

Limited awareness and interest can make classical music seem irrelevant (Shiu, 2024). Some question whether orchestras should even seek new audiences and how to reach them (Colotti, 2024). Interest often develops early, influenced by parents or musical training (Crawford et al., 2014).

Digital channels are key to music discovery, with social media influencing concert attendance. Those engaging with online classical music content are twice as likely to attend live performances (Frantz, 2015). YouTube has proven effective in promoting classical music, and digital platforms remove financial barriers, enabling broader access (Shiu, 2024). Shiu (2024) also argues that early exposure fosters cultural literacy and lifelong appreciation of classical music.

Ho (2012) and Bălan-Budoiu (2021) highlight the pivotal role of education in fostering acceptance of classical music, which is often perceived as an "elite art form". Young people perceive classical music as elitist and exclusive (Shiu, 2024; Frantz, 2015; Gilmore, 2013). The formal concert atmosphere can be unappealing (Gilmore, 2013). Lack of knowledge about music and concert etiquette further discourages attendance (Frantz, 2015; Crawford et al., 2014).

Financial constraints, including ticket costs, are a major barrier (Frantz, 2015). Declining arts education in schools reduces exposure. Some feel classical music does not reflect their interests or identity (Shiu, 2024). Peer pressure and insufficient information about concerts also hinder attendance (Graham, 2015).

Family and friends play a key role in fostering interest, along with curiosity about new music and experiences (Graham, 2015). Early music education predicts later engagement (Crawford et al., 2014; Frantz, 2015).

Technology and social media help promote concerts and interact with audiences (Shiu, 2024; Frantz, 2015). Reducing barriers—through informal concerts, "Jeans and Beer" events, and public performances—attracts younger listeners (Frantz, 2015). Intermission activities enhance audience engagement (Frantz, 2015). Tailoring programs to younger preferences also boosts attendance. Christiansen (2003) similarly advocates for creative strategic planning to share the "story" of classical music effectively. Digital platforms further support education and accessibility (Shiu, 2024; Colotti, 2024). Social media shapes musical tastes, while family

background and education contribute to cultural capital (Vanherwegen & Lievens, 2014; Willekens & Lievens, 2014).

Women show greater cultural engagement than men (Willekens & Lievens, 2016), highlighting the need to consider gender dynamics. Lastly, the pursuit of unique experiences remains a strong motivator for concert attendance.

Other research examines innovative strategies for classical music performers, particularly regarding the application of digital technologies (e.g., Colotti, 2021; Frantz, 2015).

Despite these calls, there seems to be a notable lack of studies specifically analyzing the barriers to classical music consumption and identifying actionable measures addressing them. Addressing this gap is particularly pertinent when considering younger audiences, who represent the future of classical music.

2 METHODOLOGY

We set the following central research question: *What are the barriers that deter young Czechs from participating in classical music events, and what measures can be taken to reduce the obstacles?*

To address this question, we decided to use qualitative research methodology which enables us to delve deeper into a certain topic (Hendl, 2005).

The data was collected using semi-structured, in-depth interviews. We conducted them with ten young individuals (aged 19 to 24) from various regions of the Czech Republic. The participants included five attendees of classical music events and five non-attendees. Six participants were listeners of classical music, while four were not (see Table 1).

Tab. 1: Characteristics of the Research Participants

Name	City	Age	Region	Listening to classical music	Attending classical music events
Linda	Praha	23	Praha	No	No
Dominika	Olomouc	22	Olomoucký kraj	Yes	Yes (once per year)
Sebastian	Hradec Králové	19	Královéhradecký kraj	Yes	Yes (twice per year)
Oliver	Zlín	21	Zlín	Yes	No
Marek	Praha	23	Praha	No	Yes (once per year)
Oliver	České Budějovice	24	Jihočeský kraj	Yes	Yes (once per year)
Matěj	Ostrava	20	Moravskoslezský kraj	Yes	No
Dagmar	Plzeň	21	Plzeňský kraj	No	No
Viktoria	Praha	24	Praha	No	No
Natalia	Brno	22	Jihomoravský kraj	Yes	Yes (once per month)

Source: Authors

The interview guide included topics such as music preferences, the role of music in daily life, perceptions of classical music, motivations and barriers to attending music events, and recommendations for increasing engagement. The interviews were recorded and transcribed.

The interviews were then analyzed using MAXQDA software. We identified several topics using the coding method. Similar codes were then grouped into categories, which can be found in Table 2.

Tab. 2: Categories Derived from the Coding Analysis

Digital Platforms as the Primary Source for Music Discovery
Music as a Companion for Different Daily Routines
Variety of Preferred Music Genres
Classical Music as Calming and Focus-Increasing
Classical Music Is Associated with the Artists
Desire for Unique Experiences as the Main Driver for Attending Music Events
Social Media Impact Significantly Attendance of Music Events
Calling for Blending Classical Music with Modern Genres

The description of the categories derived from the Coding Analysis follows in the section findings.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Digital Platforms as the Primary Source for Music Discovery

Digital platforms have transformed the way young Czechs discover music, with Spotify emerging as a key tool in this exploration. This digital transformation is evident in the narratives shared by interviewees, who articulate the significant role digital platforms and their algorithms play in their daily lives. The interviewees also appreciated the element of surprise in their music discovery experience, enhanced by digital platforms.

"I discover music mostly through Spotify. If it offers me those 'For You' playlists, then through that." (Natalia)

"(I discover music) via Spotify, but maybe also in those what aren't playlists but such where it shuffles for you..." (Sebastian)

3.2 Music as a Companion for Different Daily Routines

Music seems to be deeply rooted in the daily activities of young Czechs, which goes beyond simple entertainment. The interviewees choose specific genres to accompany different activities and states of mind. From improving focus and productivity at work to bringing comfort during commuting and energizing exercises, the stories demonstrate the music's changing role as a motivator and companion.

"I don't have a specific genre that I prefer. But I like to listen to techno when I'm working. When I'm driving, I enjoy listening to old-school hits like Maroon 5 and the like, so pop. But I also like classical music. It helps me when I need to concentrate on something, or it calms me down before a match. When I exercise, I like Eminem. When I run, sometimes I listen to dramas or something that pumps me up." (Natalia)

Music seems to be a tool which interviewees use purposefully throughout their everyday routines, for improving focus, emotional support, or brightening repetitive tasks. Different genres seem to perform distinct functions throughout the day.

"It's terribly dependent on the setting for me, for example... when I'm in a good mood... or even according to seasonality... I like rap... and so on, but that's in the car, for example, right? But then I have a phase... when I just want some calm music... So then, I like music which I know, I also like just instrumental music when I need to focus." (Sebastian)

"I don't know. I play it when I go somewhere to unwind, to make the journey to school or work go by faster." (Linda)

"Music brings me in my everyday life relaxation or a background for some repetitive activity." (Matěj)

Marek even describes music as "an escape from silence," implying that he needs to fill all spaces of his everyday life with sound and meaning.

3.3 Variety of Preferred Music Genres

The interviewees seem to incorporate into their daily lives a variety of music genres, depending on their mood and tasks performed.

"Pop, rock, classic rock, metal. And why those genres? Since childhood. From my first encounter with music, it just grabbed me." (Matěj)

"Well, I don't have a specific genre that I prefer. But I like to listen to techno when I'm working... Otherwise, pretty much everything. Sometimes I'm in the mood for classic rock." (Natalia)

"I prefer hip-hop, rap, house, electronic music, R&B, funk. And because they are mostly energetic." (Marek)

"There is a difference which musical genre I prefer when I cook in the kitchen, and there is a difference when it is Friday evening and I feel like having fun with my friends." (Oliver)

3.4 Classical Music as Calming and Focus-Increasing

Throughout the interviews, individuals highlighted the fundamental value of classical music in establishing a peaceful or focused setting. Classical music is valued for its functional utility in relaxing the mind and improving focus.

Last but not least, classical music is perceived as more sophisticated than other music genres, which seems to be in contrast to modern music, characterized as easy-going, energetic, conducive to dancing, more accessible and dynamic.

"Now I want to go to Avril Lavigne, and I'll definitely get energized, but when we go with Adam's parents to Bocelli, or a Film Music concert, it's more about relaxing and chilling." (Natalia)

"So, when I listen to classical music, I feel calmed." (Marek)

"Classical music gives me concentration." (Viktoria)

"For me, classical music is more sophisticated than other music styles, like pop or hip-hop." (Matěj)

Dominika, on the other hand, correlates relaxation and mood improvement with jazz and bar music, implying that a broader range of music might induce a peaceful condition.

"What does music mean to me in everyday life? Relaxation, an improvement of mood, calming down. I would include such music as jazz and similar, or various bar music, can be calming." (Dominika)

3.5 Classical Music Is Associated with the Artists

The interviewees emphasized the link between classical music and those who create and interpret it. Some also associated classical music with their own experience performing this kind of music in childhood, as well as with craftsmanship and the values it represents.

"So, what comes to mind when you hear classical music? Vivaldi, Mozart, simply symphonies and so on." (Natalia)

"When I hear the word classical music, the first thing that comes to my mind is an orchestra for sure." (Dagmar)

"The first thing that comes to mind... I imagine classical performers. I think of my piano lessons back in the day, and I imagine culture and beautiful manners." (Dominika)

"When I hear the word classical music, the first word that comes to mind is craftsmanship." (Matěj)

3.6 Desire for Unique Experiences as the Main Driver for Attending Music Events

When going to live music performances, the interviewees mentioned primarily a uniqueness of experience, as well as an emotional connection with other people as a main driver. Live music experience may provide strong, personal, memorable moments of connection with people and happiness, which often outweigh even the high costs.

"If I want to see someone, I don't really look at how much it costs if it brings me some experience." (Dagmar)

"If it's an artist who I know doesn't come around here often, or I've been listening to since I was little, or someone special knowing that I'll enjoy it and it will be an experience I don't want to miss even if it means crying with a million of people there." (Natalia)

".... or if it's a direct performance by some artist at a concert that maybe it's not that common, is appearing in the Czech Republic or Slovakia. So, he is here once in a lifetime" (Viktoria)

"It's mostly about being with a group..." (Oliver)

Concerning attending classical music events specifically, some interviewees mentioned limitations of this music genre, which may result in young people's lack of interest. They mentioned that classical concerts are not places for dancing and vibrant entertainment, which young people typically search for.

"It is usually not a place where you go to dance, to have fun. It's a fact that you usually listen to it and feel some energy from it, but it's not really the goal of today's entertainment..." (Natalia)

3.7 Social Media Impact Significantly on Attendance of Music Events

The social media and friend recommendations seem to be the key source of information for young Czechs when it comes to finding out about music events.

"Where do you usually find out about an event? From social media... From Instagram." (Marek)

"Mostly from social networks... Probably on Facebook, they have those events well organized." (Viktoria)

"Well, many times the artists I listen to, I follow them on Instagram, so either they share that they have a tour or that they will be somewhere." (Natalia)

The interviewees agree that social media represents an important avenue for people to hear about music events and thus impact the participation. The ease of information flow on social media platforms appears to generate a cultural ecosystem in which event knowledge and attendance decisions are frequently linked to one's digital social experience.

3.8 Calling for Blending Classical Music with Modern Genres

The interviewees articulated the necessity for creative adaptation of classical music events to modern tastes and lifestyles. They perceived a certain mismatch between the traditional classical music concerts and the current tastes of the younger generation.

While there was a recognition of the need to maintain the fundamental aspects of classical music, the interviewees called for blending classical music with modern genres, e. g. by adapting well-known modern songs into orchestral versions as an appealing entry point for young people, leveraging their familiarity with classical music.

"Definitely if they combine it with music genres popular among the young generation, like if there was some collaboration between classical music and rap, or I don't know, just with another genre." (Linda)

"Playing music that young people listen to and playing or transforming some well-known songs into orchestral versions." (Dominika)

"Maybe if those orchestras collaborated with more current artists, some revivals, and such things. Some mashups of music genres would definitely be attractive." (Matěj)

The interviewees believed that organizers of the classical music events should be actively searching for innovative ways to adjust classical music to the current needs and attention spans of the young (e.g., by decreasing concert lengths and making them more dynamic or performing at special locations).

"Well, make it somewhat untraditional, combine it with something modern. Well, because they don't enjoy sitting for three hours." (Marek)

"Maybe (organizing a concert) at some interesting place for young people, where they would come." (Linda)

They also emphasized the potential of film music in popularizing classical scores, demonstrating how classical music can be pushed to the forefront through the current cultural forms.

"Perhaps film music really brings it to the forefront, that some scores are played or such." (Matěj)

"People like classical music, but they don't know it's classical music. For example, often in movies, classical music is usually in the background and so on, and they just don't realize it. So, it's more like those people are not aware that they are listening to classical music. So, you can promote it through those movies, series, and so on." (Natalia)

Oliver, on the other hand, provided a note of caution concerning these innovative suggestions. He emphasizes the significance of keeping the core of classical music while making it more accessible to younger audiences. He argues that, while adaptation is vital, it should not result in a full alteration that deprives classical music of its fundamental qualities.

"Let's not make it a mashup and stray too far from classical music. It's a question of how much it should change. We don't want it to become something completely different and lose its essence." (Oliver)

4 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has several research limitations. First, the qualitative research methodology does not allow for generalizing the findings to the broader population. Additionally, the interpretation of qualitative data may be influenced by researchers' biases and perspectives. Furthermore, social desirability bias could have affected the results, as participants might have provided responses they believed were expected or acceptable to the researcher rather than their genuine feelings or behaviors.

For future studies, researchers could compare these findings with those of other age groups to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the topic. A case study approach could also be utilized to evaluate the practical implementation of the recommendations. Finally, future research could focus on developing and testing strategies aimed at increasing engagement and attendance across various demographic groups.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

One of the key contributions of this study is the detailed insight it provides into how young Czechs actually discover and consume music in the digital environment. While the literature generally refers to the role of digital channels (Shiu, 2024; Frantz, 2015), the interviews

specifically identified Spotify as the dominant platform and highlighted the importance of algorithmic recommendations and personalized playlists in the process of music discovery. This nuanced view of preferred platforms and discovery mechanisms offers more actionable insights for targeted strategies aimed at engaging this demographic group.

Although existing literature states that music is generally appreciated for its emotional effects and its capacity to enhance concentration (Kawase, 2015; Buigut, 2016), the interviews provided concrete examples and specific contexts of such usage, which broadens our understanding of the motivations behind listening to classical music. The interviews also revealed how particular musical genres serve as “companions” to various everyday activities and mental states, with classical music being deliberately selected for its calming effects and its ability to aid concentration.

While Crawford et al. (2014) emphasize the influence of parents and music education in developing an interest in classical music, respondents additionally stressed the role of associations with specific composers or orchestras. This suggests a deeper cultural awareness that is not necessarily linked to frequent concert attendance. A completely new finding, not mentioned in the existing literature, is the specific association of classical music with artistry and craftsmanship—respondents expressed admiration for the artisanal skill of performers.

Finally, a strong call for connecting classical music with modern genres and formats emerged as a clear signal from the young Czech population. Although the literature mentions attempts to lower barriers through informal concert settings (Frantz, 2015; Christiansen, 2003), the specific proposals drawn from the interviews—such as genre fusions, orchestral adaptations of popular tracks, and collaborations with contemporary artists—represent concrete and potentially effective strategies for reaching a younger Czech audience. These suggestions, along with the aforementioned admiration for artistic skill and the presentation of well-known composers, may prove especially valuable.

Overall, while the literature provides a general framework of barriers and motivations related to classical music consumption among young people, the in-depth interviews with young Czechs offer valuable specific details and nuances that enrich our understanding of this issue within the given cultural context. The identification of preferred digital platforms, the detailed account of music’s functional uses, the specific associations tied to classical music, and the concrete proposals for genre fusion represent unique insights that may be key in developing effective strategies to increase engagement with classical music among young Czechs.

To conclude, the study explores the engagement of young Czechs in classical music events and identifies factors that influence their participation. Through qualitative research involving in-depth interviews with ten participants, the paper examines barriers, motivations, and perceptions of classical music compared to other genres. Recommendations aim to make classical music more appealing to this specific demographic by leveraging digital tools and innovative strategies.

Digital platforms like Spotify seem to dominate how young Czechs discover music, with algorithmic recommendations and curated playlists playing a pivotal role. Music serves as a companion for various daily routines, with genres selected to match specific activities or moods. For example, classical music is favored for focus and relaxation, while energetic genres like hip-hop and techno are preferred for workouts or social gatherings. Despite the diverse musical preferences of young Czechs, classical music is appreciated for its sophistication and calming qualities, but is often overshadowed by the dynamism of contemporary genres.

Social media’s influence on event discovery highlights the importance of digital presence.

Unique and memorable experiences drive participation in music events. Live performances that evoke strong emotions and foster social connections are particularly appealing. The

participants suggest blending classical music with contemporary genres or offering formats to create novel experiences.

The study suggests leveraging digital engagement strategies and creating engaging content that resonates with younger audiences. To make classical music events more appealing, it is recommended to blend classical music with modern genres and formats. For example, orchestral adaptations of popular songs or collaborations with contemporary artists can attract younger audiences. Hosting performances in unconventional venues and incorporating visual and interactive elements can enrich the concert experience. Shortening concert durations and including dynamic programming can align with the attention spans and preferences of younger attendees.

Also, programs linking classical music to broader cultural narratives and modern genres, such as highlighting the use of classical compositions in film scores and popular media, can foster appreciation.

All of these strategies not only may enhance accessibility of classical music to the young but also ensure the genre's cultural and artistic relevance for future generations.

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