

Concert-going has a strongly social aspect that complements the music

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Summary

The paper reports the experiences of audience members at a chamber music festival in Sheffield. The research highlights the various aspects of concert-going that affected the pleasure derived by audience members at the festival: these were not limited to the music but included the sense of community felt at the concerts, the closeness that the audience got to the performer, and the sense of occasion that the festival concerts represented to the regular attendees.

A loyal, passionate and tight-knit community had built up around the festival

The festival in question had been going for 20 years. And the experience of the regular audience contrasted with that of infrequent or first-time attendees. The informality, intimacy and unconventional nature of the performance space (a small theatre-in-the-round setting) was a source of delight for some regulars but could be seen as off-putting to novices who may be expecting a more conventional setup.

For some audience members listening was an active experience

The research was based on 347 questionnaire responses and 20 follow-up interviews. Many of the audience members captured in the research had become proficient listeners, seeking to be discerning and attentive. Their

developing knowledge of music also reinforced a commitment to fully appreciate what they were hearing. The festival played a significant role in their cultural and social life and its loss was mourned at the end of the festival.

Keywords

music **UK** **audience** **experience** **live** **listening**

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