Psychological Perspectives on Musical Experiences and Skills

Research in the Western Balkans and Western Europe

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3. Aesthetic Experiences of Contemporary Music from the Perspectives of a Composer, a Performer, and a Musicologist

Sanela Nikolić and Ivana Miladinović Prica

Introduction

Aesthetic experience presents 'one of the most poorly defined concepts in psychology and neuroscience' (Brattico et al., 2013, p. 1). Various terms are used to describe aesthetic experiences, including aesthetic processing, aesthetic emotion, aesthetic pleasure, aesthetic contemplation, or aesthetic judgments (Istók et al., 2009). The diversity of terms reveals the phenomenon's complexity, which contains both affective and cognitive components. Contemporary art in general, and contemporary classical music specifically, pose a challenge to psychological research into aesthetic experiences due to features that make them difficult to investigate and grasp. The high concentration of individualised styles and innovation in the creative process often results in significant departures from traditional canons. Indeed, aspects such as 'seeking out the new' and 'aesthetic curiosity' as immanent to contemporary art aesthetics raise questions about the communication capacities of contemporary music, and the possibility of it being understood by an audience (Pitts & Price, 2021; see Chapter 7 in this volume).

In previous studies, the aesthetic experience of music has primarily been equated with the emotions that music evokes (see Juslin & Västfjäll, 2008, p. 559). Yet the field of music and emotion studies is complex, reflecting the mutual inconsistency between many different research standpoints, terms used, conceptual solutions, and the defining

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relationships between everyday emotions, music-evoked emotions, aesthetic emotions, and judgments. The difference between perceived and felt emotions makes these considerations even more complicated. For example, Juslin and Västfjäll (2008) claimed that multiple mechanisms of the induction of musical emotions are not unique only to music, and that 'the study of musical emotions could benefit the emotion field as a whole' (p. 559). Konečni (2008) proposed the state of 'being moved' as a replacement for a category of musical emotions within his Aesthetic Trinity Theory (p. 582).

There are other theoretical alternatives, such as the insight that music-evoked emotions are somewhat different from real-life emotions, and more often aesthetic than utilitarian (Scherer & Zentner, 2008, p. 595); or the claims that 'music produces aesthetic pleasure, a sense of peace and relaxation and/or stimulation and arousal' and 'that music is about aesthetic pleasure linked principally to musical structure' (Rozin & Rozin, 2008, p. 594). The last claim connects the appearance of aesthetic emotion with a cognitive understanding of the musical structure. Here, questioning the role of expertise in the cognitive aspect of contemporary music perception is particularly important. Thus, some contemporary views presuppose that aesthetic judgments and aesthetic modes of engagement are vital elements of aesthetic emotions evoked primarily by cognitive mechanisms. In this case, the difference is made between causal inattentive listening, which may result in basic everyday emotions, and focused listening with an aesthetic attitude that can induce aesthetic emotions (Brattico & Pearce, 2013; see Chapter 4 in this volume).

Since we were focused on the question of how diverse classical music knowledge and expertise is integrated into aesthetic experiences, we transferred the perspective of aesthetic processing from the contemporary visual arts, where aesthetic processing is defined as 'the sensation-based evaluation of an entity with respect to the [...] conceptual system' (Jacobsen, 2006, p. 158). In this perspective, a perceiver's level of knowledge about the art is an important factor on which the outcome of a complex emotional and cognitive multistage process of aesthetic experience is based (Leder et al., 2004, p. 505). 'Consequently, the viewer's expertise is probably of ever-growing importance, because only through knowledge about stylistic devices and underlying ideas can the

viewer dissolve the ambiguities an artwork poses' (Augustin & Leder, 2006, pp. 138–139). In line with this, some studies have examined the role of art knowledge and education as facilitators of aesthetic emotions in both the experience of music and painting (Miu et al., 2016), or investigated the differences between the aesthetic experience of trained musicians and non-trained listeners (Müller et al., 2010).

Gaver and Mandler (1987) observed that:

> to listen to a piece of music is to be engaged in a constant process of interpreting it by activating relevant schemas. [...] The number of schemas that may be active and the resulting richness of the interpretation reached depends on both the internal and external structure of the music and on the listeners' knowledge of the music, [and] the richness of their schematic representation. (pp. 264–265)

Deliège (1989) and Deliège and El Ahmadi (1990) gained interesting results in an experimental study where participants (musicians and non-musicians) identified the cues for segmentation of a musical piece during auditory perceptive analysis that coincided with the structure of the music, providing an important theoretical contribution to the cognitive psychology of contemporary art music forms.

Furthermore, as Krumhansl and Agres (2008) noted, contemporary 'empirical research extensively documents that listeners' knowledge about melody, harmony, and rhythm influences what they expect in a given musical context' (p. 584). Thus, in several theoretical models of the compositional process, music knowledge is considered a part of the composing system (Beauvois, 2018; Brown, 2003; Brown & Dillon, 2012; Dean, 2017; Sloboda, 1986). It is emphasised that from the perspective of the composer, music cannot be experienced without direct knowledge of music and engagement with the interactive elements of music material and structure, where the aesthetic experience relates to the meaningful engagement and analysis of the outcomes of compositional processes (Brown & Dillon, 2012, p. 79).

Certainly, the metacognitive strategies in generative and exploratory phases of the creative process (Finke et al., 1992), related to elaboration and hierarchical organisation and structuring of ideas, solving problems, and finding solutions (Bogunović & Popović Mlađenović, 2014), as well as the 'quality of the creative outcomes will be influenced by the extent

of the person's knowledge and how the elements of that knowledge are accessed and combined' (Bogunović, 2019, p. 100).

When it comes to music performance studies, the opinion that the cognitive principle of structural interpretation is the determinant of performance expression, 'aesthetic necessity', and the basic source of expressiveness in performance is widely accepted (Clarke, 1991, p. 87; Doğantan-Dack, 2014, pp. 10–11; Juslin, 2003, p. 290). Some authors speak about 'structural expression' as part of the communication process during the performance (see Bogunović & Popović Mlađenović, 2014). This corresponds with the results of the newest research study, where musical properties are seen as the base on which the aesthetic experience of contemporary classical music processing starts and reflects its further cognitive and emotional processing (Mencke et al., 2023, p. 290). Understanding the musical structure is considered a prerequisite for the successful aesthetic experience of classical music. Music-specific knowledge is stressed as a crucial factor for the successful cognitive mastering of music material. Thus, in recent research, where the role of expert knowledge in professional music critics' experiences was analysed (Nikolić, 2020), it was proven that music-related expertise is an important variable that feeds the aesthetic experience of trained music professionals.

The role of expertise in art appreciation was inferred by Augustin and Leder (2006), who 'found evidence that the experts would categorise and interpret a piece of art based on style, while the non-experts would refer more to personal experiences regarding feelings' (pp. 150, 151). Interestingly, it has been pointed out that 'the possibility to use the linguistic labels of musical events enable musically trained listeners to encode musical structures in a more relevant way' (Bigand & Poulin-Charronnat, 2006, p. 102). Furthermore, Istók et al. (2009) concluded that musicians describe their listening experience using adjectives related to novelty and originality rather than to emotional characteristics (p. 199). So, we intend to stress the role of specialised music knowledge, presupposing that

> every time a subject generates a response (e.g., 'beauty' judgment or preference rating) to an artwork, the response reflects not only the proximal cognitive and emotional processes that underlie it, but also their distal developmental (including educational) histories. [...] [P]recisely because expertise [...] has been shown to be a strong determinant of art

> perception [...] it has been incorporated as a critical variable in major contemporary theories of aesthetic judgment and creativity. (Vartanian & Kaufman, 2013, p. 161)

When it comes to the role of knowledge in emotional responses to musical stimuli, the generative role of music-related knowledge was stressed a long time ago in Meyer's (1956) grounding theoretical framework that binds perception, cognition, and emotional response to music. Namely,

> music produces emotions because listeners actively generate expectations and different degrees of tensions and relaxation from different sources of expectation, one of them being extra-opus knowledge or style knowledge, which does not depend strongly on explicit musical training; non-musicians internalise it through passive exposure. (Krumhansl & Agres, 2008, p. 584)

In other words, music-specific knowledge appears as a critical variable in forming expectations from music, as a constitutive element of the cognitive mastering of music, and, consequently, as a factor for positive or negative arousal and aesthetic judgment.

In the present study, our attention was concerned with the music-related knowledge and experience of contemporary music from the perspective of three music experts involved in creating a particular musical piece—from its composition to public performance and, finally, its critical reception. The research assumes that music-related knowledge is reflected in the communication of emotional and cognitive processes by musicians and embedded in musical structure expression and aesthetic responses.

Aims

This research aimed to: (1) analyse the verbalised aesthetic experiences of the three experts engaged in music creation, conceptualisation, and appreciation—that is, the composer, the performer (piano player), and the musicologist; (2) confirm how specialised music-related knowledge and proficiency are integrated into the participants' aesthetic experience of a contemporary music work; and (3) establish the differences in the participants' aesthetic experiences depending on their role in making music and, hence, in interpreting, understanding, and explicating the same musical piece.

We were interested in their experience of the piece of music, addressing it from the participants' different roles while not being focused on examining the specific life cycle of the piece's origination and the compositional process itself. The literature review shows that no prior studies have dealt with the phenomena of music professionals' aesthetic experience of contemporary classical music using the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). We believe this represents the novelty of this study. We anticipate that the insightful, in-depth statements about the aesthetic experience of contemporary music by these experts may contribute to the understanding of the aesthetics of contemporary music, and may facilitate communication between those who create and receive the music (see also Chapter 7 in this volume).

Method

Participants

Three musicians with expertise and long experience in contemporary music, especially its creation and performance, took part in the study from the point of view of the composer, performer, and musicologist.

Miroslav Miša Savić (b. 1954), one of the most significant Serbian contemporary composers (C) of the neo-avant-garde (Masnikosa, 2021), graduated from Vasilije Mokranjac's composition class at the Faculty of Music in Belgrade (see Serbian Academy of Sciences and Art, 2023). During the 1970s and 1980s, his work was radically innovative in Serbian and Yugoslav artistic circles (Šuvaković et al., 2016, p. 979). In addition to composing music, he is the author of various kinds of works in the domains of multimedia, video, performance, and computer installation. As a member and co-founder of the composer group Opus 4, and the director of the music programme of the Students' Cultural Centre in Belgrade (Miladinović Prica, 2021, p. 15), he advocated a new, 'open' approach to music. He had a significant role in originating Serbian minimalism, experimentalism, and electronic music (Emmery, 2021).

Nada Kolundžija (b. 1952) (Kolundžija, n.d.) is a distinguished Serbian pianist (P). For more than four decades, she has been introducing Belgrade and Serbian audiences to the works of the 20th century classics

with great success (Miladinović Prica, 2021). She expanded her repertoire to include works by Serbian composers, many of whom have dedicated their work to her. As a professor at the Faculty of Music in Belgrade, she has inspired many young musicians to perform contemporary music. Since the mid-1970s, she has collaborated closely with Miroslav Miša Savić, among others, within the Ensemble for Different New Music [Ansambl za drugu novu muziku] (Ensemble for Different New Music, n.d.), founded in 1977 (Ensemble for Different New Music, 2023; Miladinović Prica, 2017). She is the winner of important awards including a Gold Medal at the Global Music Awards in 2020, the Aleksandar Pavlović Award from the Association of Composers of Serbia for lifetime achievements in the promotion of Serbian music in 2019, and a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Association of the Music Artists of Serbia in 2016. Kolundžija's recordings are available through five LP records, nine CDs, and numerous radio and television recordings.

Milan Milojković, PhD (b. 1986) is a musicologist (M) and Associate Professor at the Department of Musicology and Ethnomusicology, Academy of Arts in Novi Sad. He publishes articles and chapters in relevant Serbian publications concerning electronic music and new technologies in contemporary Serbian music (Milojković, 2018), and is author of the book *Digitalna tehnologija u srpskoj umetničkoj muzici* [Digital technology in Serbian art music] (Milojković, 2020). Milojković is also the music editor at the Third Program of Radio Belgrade, Serbia. He designs analogue and digital musical instruments and performs music with various, mostly chamber, ensembles.

Music material

The music piece *Oh Light, oh Tenderness, Oh Darkness, Fandango for Dušan* [O svetlosti, o nežnosti, o mraku, fandango za Dušana], for piano and virtual tape, was composed by Miroslav Miša Savić (Kolundžija, 2020). The work was performed for the first time in the Ceremonial Hall of Belgrade City Hall on 13 December 2019. The unique aspect of this composition lies in the fact that the pianist, Nada Kolundžija, played an essential part in the creative process, acting as co-composer. Her voice reading the poem 'Oh Light, Oh Tenderness, Oh Darkness', by the well-known Serbian poet Dušan Vukajlović (1948–1994; Vukajlović, 1995),

was passed through the open source software Pure Data. The program monitored the amplitude and frequency of her voice and, based on this, generated an electronic MIDI recording, transposing the live voice into the electronic piano and voice sound. The tape with electronic (piano and voice) sound became the basis of the composition. In creating the piano part, the pianist combined aspects of Miroslav Miša Savić's composed piano material with selected excerpts (Figure 3.1) from *Fandango*, by the Spanish composer Antonio Soler (1729–1783), to create a final satisfactory version of the piano part (Savić, 2020). However, during the preparation of the performance, the composer and the pianist were not satisfied with certain solutions, so they changed the material and several iterations were exchanged between the co-authors before the final version of the piece came about. It is essential to recognise that Savić used computer algorithms, which are effective in terms of de-subjectivising music and suspending aesthetic judgment. Consequently, he invites the pianist to be active in composing, that is, to be responsible for choosing musical material. The pianist's interaction with the electronics as a virtual but coequal protagonist was vital for creating a specific amalgam that blurs the division between the composer and his performer, analogue, and digital mediums. The mutual challenges that piano and electronics set before each other, their joint play in illuminating and transforming each other, create a dynamic and imaginative sonic universe. Therefore, the sounds' origin, identity, and the difference between the piano/acoustic and electronic components are sometimes difficult to distinguish.

Data collection procedure

As to the methodological approach, we decided to use a qualitative method which has great value when 'a process of searching for meaning and understanding, seeking to illuminate participants' realities' (Williamon et al., 2021, p. 231) is the aim of the research study. We gathered qualitative data using short, semi-structured interviews conducted two years after the composition had its premiere performance. All three participants were asked to verbalise their impressions concerning their aesthetic experiences, emotional responses, and reflections while composing, performing, and listening to the musical composition. The participants were prompted in the following way: 'Please verbalise

your aesthetic experience of the composition *Oh Light, oh Tenderness, Oh Darkness, Fandango for Dušan* in two ways: How do you reflect on/understand the musical piece and how do you emotionally react to it?'

Questions and answers were given in written form and sent via email. Participants preferred writing down their narratives instead of having live conversations. The intention was to get personally salient in-depth contributions that would capture the core of their experience in a way that enabled us to work analytically with a detailed written narrative. After responding to the first round of questions, the piano player returned her narrative but needed additional, more concrete, and directed questions. Based on her initial narrative, we provided additional questions and opened a written dialogue to stimulate a more precise verbalisation of her thoughts and experiences. The other two participants did not need further encouragement to express their reflections. The average narrative we received from each participant was about 600 words long.

Data analysis

For qualitative data analysis, we chose IPA, which focuses on understanding the lived experiences of individual participants and, often, how these relate to or differ from those of others (Williamon et al., 2021, p. 236), trying to obtain in-depth comprehension. The idiographic focus of this method means that IPA aims to offer insights into how a person makes sense of a given phenomenon, making this method meaningful for our exploration (Eatough & Smith, 2008; Smith, 2004). Thus, the participants' narratives were treated as a window into their music experience. The first author performed the IPA.

The data analysis sequence of steps was as follows. Firstly, the pianist's, composer's, and musicologist's written narratives were read multiple times to extract meanings. The clusters of meanings were noted down, those relevant to each participant as well as to the data set as a whole (see Williamon et al., 2021, pp. 245–246). The identified significant elements were related to the content of words that participants used (what is being reflected upon), language use (features such as key phrases, metaphors, symbols, and explanations), descriptions of emotional responses, and the presence of specific terminology and concepts. Secondly, after

completing the initial noting, a more interpretative stage of meta-critical analysis and grouping of identified meaningful elements was implemented to generate themes for each participant. The next step was to search for emerging, superordinate themes across all participants' narratives, actively interpreting clusters of participants' words. Each of the themes was supported by extracts from the verbal data made by the participants (see Williamon et al., 2021, p. 246). Finally, the third step of data analysis was related to the IPA's focus on convergence and divergence within a participant's experiences in such a way as to connect and compare themes. Thus, a comparative analysis was made to identify the mutual connections and differences within the generated themes concerning the specific musical roles and expertise participants have regarding composing, performing, and critical listening.

Findings

The results presented here are organised in two parallel ways: systematically, following the three identified themes presented within the perspective of each participant; and comparatively, highlighting the commonalities and differences that the themes reflect among the participants.

First theme: Aesthetic experience as a feeling of 'music completeness'

The first theme arose from participants' descriptions of the aesthetic experiences as 'feeling' music, but not in the way of some specific 'simple' feeling, but rather in generalised terms of music as an aesthetic event that is related to cognitive and perceptual processes, as the feeling of 'music completeness'. For example, the piano player formulated her initial narrative on aesthetic experience by talking about the process of collaborating on the creation of the piece and identifying the moments when she felt that she should stop working on it any further and that 'everything is in its place'. Her answers suggest that the pianist perceives music as a primarily experiential phenomenon, that is, auditory, sensational, and nonverbal, which is not possible to transfer into other systems of expression, such as language. Conclusions about music are guided by the feeling of aesthetic completeness, that something is

'good and in the right place', when inner auditory representations are in congruence with the external sound of the music. There are numerous narrative segments where the performer articulates her aesthetic experience as determined by the feelings retrieved from the current and past involvement with performing and listening to music. In the participants' quotes, certain phrases have been bolded for emphasis by the first author.

> It is hard for me to answer all these questions. I never ask them myself. Talking about music that is so abstract seems impossible to me. The answers I get **through playing** are not the ones that can be translated into words. During work preparation, conscious thinking has a role to play. It does help to reach the goal faster, which is 'to put everything where it belongs'. The place is **felt**. It is comfortable, and there is no need to look for anything else. This is preceded by [musical] work, listening, searching… (P)

> The decision to shape the musical piece was a process driven by **intuition and experience**. Like cooking. Spices are added, we try the taste, and we go on until we reach—mmmmmmmmmmmm, it is delicious. (P)

> Fandango is a dance, so, in this case, I tried to get that dancing **feeling** while playing some segments of the composition. (P)

> I started listening to various fandangos to bring that **feeling** into the score. However, the music sheet was great and interesting, but I couldn't **feel** it like a fandango. And so, while still listening, I came across Soler's fandango and started playing it. […] I took scissors and began to cut parts from both scores from which the material with the tape could be further built and aligned. I arranged those parts until it **seemed** to me that nothing needed to be changed anymore. (P) [Figure 3.1]

> […] I did all this in parallel while listening to the tape. And really, **everything was placed where it belonged**. Although a new score was made, there was still room for me to **feel** when I 'entered' the tape sound, so it kept the energy of freshness and the power of spontaneity… (P)

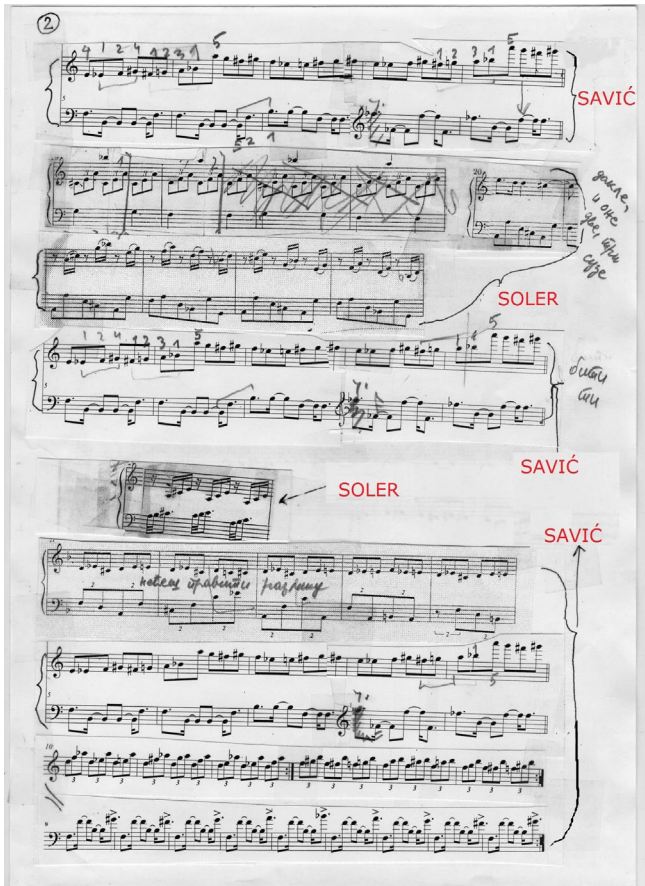

Fig. 3.1 The performer's presentation of 'finding the right feeling' for the musical piece through combining parts of Savić's original and parts of Soler's score (the names of the two composers are indicated in red colour)

When it comes to the composer's narrative, a description of the aesthetic experience as generated from feelings is not expressed, probably due to the compositional strategy of 'using computer algorithms, which are effective in de-subjectivising music and suspending aesthetic judgment'.

In the musicologist's narrative, the 'emotional effect' of music is tackled and defined as 'pleasure in sound'. Two equivalent ways to describe satisfaction felt by music are pointed out: (1) enjoying a piece of music as a 'beautiful object', in terms of admiring the composer's skilful

handling and structuring of sound material, and (2), equivalent to that, a feeling of 'euphoria and optimism' caused by the effect of 'musical surprise' that occurs when discovering an unexpected music system. The latter is known in the cognitive psychology of music as a trigger of emotional response, as the unexpected musical event that is not in agreement with the 'expectations' built up by experience and knowledge (Huron, 2006; Juslin, 2019; Juslin & Västfjäll, 2008; Meyer, 1956).

> The **emotional effect** was the pleasure 'in sound', above all, since the work of music can be enjoyed as a 'beautiful object' of music art, only based on modelling its sound content, which, in addition to establishing complex (and therefore satisfactory) relationships with the past and contemporary music scene, is skilfully composed, and directed towards the settled goal. The second **feeling** I could describe is in connection with the nature of electro-acoustic sound, i.e., manners of using, in this case, digital musical tools. The equivalent of that **feeling** may be found in writing and listening to (tonal or atonal) counterpoint compounds according to pre-set rules, which on the one hand, manifest as music limitations, but on the other, the limitations arise from a person's insufficient knowledge of physical laws. Every moment of overcoming one system's rules by discovering another, new one, evokes a **feeling** of euphoria and optimism. (M)

Second theme: Imagery and metaphors as expressions of experience

The second superordinate theme was drawn from the examples of the participants' deliberate description of the music experience through specific metaphors and almost literary-oriented language style and terminology. For example, the cognitive elaboration of the relationship between performer and computer is experienced as if the computer program is a living machine resisting cooperation:

> The computer program that Miša used was a partner in creating the work. Unpredictable, uncontrollable, surprising... [...] The result of the poetry reading passed through the computer program was amazing. Although the program reacted to my voice, its reactions were utterly unexpected and unpredictable. There, it was not possible to achieve the interaction I expected. I changed the reading tempo, stretched the words, took breaks, and changed the pitch of the voice. I tried to somehow be in the community with the program, but it was still **completely independent**

> and non-cooperative. I was appalled by this **unpredictable 'cooperation'** with the machine. (P)

From the composer's perspective, this theme expressed his continuous challenge in 'constructing' the piece's architecture and solving problems he faced on the way. Again, here we meet the need for 'aesthetic completeness', as in the pianist's reports of the process of searching for the right form and sound of the interpretation:

> I built my aesthetics like a tower of cards, which was increasingly threatened with the danger of collapsing by adding new cards (the aesthetics of a new musical piece). That is why creating new works challenges me with increased risk and difficulty. I thought of each new piece as the last one composed. However, the remaining deck of unallocated cards and the **feeling of incompleteness** forced me to take risks repeatedly. (C)

The narrative of the musicologist lacks the literary writing style, namely, the personal imagery provoked by the musical piece. The musicologist avoids poetic metaphors, maintaining their evaluative approach by using professional, stylistic terms and music expectations based on expert knowledge, which belongs to the third theme.

Third theme: Aesthetic experience and prevalence of musical knowledge

The aesthetic experience of the musical piece and its relationship to specific expertise is present within the narratives of all three participants, especially those of the composer and musicologist. However, the type of knowledge that is required and relied on is not only theoretical knowledge *per se*, but also the knowledge acquired by music-specific training and education as a deliberate mix of personal music preferences, expert attention, critical reflection on style, structure, and the application of aesthetic concepts, including what is shared and what is new for a particular composer:

> This composition is very special and layered. Various layers are involved in it. Sound-transformed poetry is its basis. The actuality is present through the score of the composer and the past through the score of Antonio Soler. Aleatoric elements were very present in its creation, in all layers, from reading the song, 'the piano that speaks', and both scores.

The composition is 'tailored' on elements of aleatoric. That's how it got structured. (P)

My aesthetic ideal consisted of a minimum of change that allows repetitiveness of dramatic tension, increase and/or decrease of tension, but also consistency. It was based on an increased aversion to those music patterns that were far from the proportions of pitch and rhythm and that made an unpleasant noise or clamour. In this way, I established a special non-aesthetic, the beauty of dislike. This non-aesthetic for me was a clear boundary that separated the acceptable from the unacceptable and by the nature of things, what was acceptable was more or less undefined, indefinite. Formal aesthetics such as Eduard Hanslick, Carl Dahlhaus, Ivan Foht, Dragan Jeremić, and others did not help establish my aesthetic theory. (C)

The difficulty of this challenge was partly influenced by the prejudice I always had towards the combination of poetry and music. For me, reciting poetry accompanied by music has always been at the lowest aesthetic level, on the unbearably pathetic scale of emotional understanding of sound. And that is exactly what I took as a topic or an **aesthetic challenge** to be solved. The reciting piano performer, her voice 'playing' the piano thanks to a computer program, and a whole series of shifted roles served to turn a non-aesthetic situation into a new and possibly, acceptable aesthetic. The element of improvisation included in all dimensions of the work further complicates this task. (C)

Collecting **non-aesthetic** criteria was especially valuable to me in algorithmic composition, when a computer program would generate, in part or whole, a music structure, and when the proposed material should be rejected or changed. As that experience increased, so did the role of the computer program. The compass of **positive aesthetic criteria** was a reliable tool for navigating an unknown space. (C)

I understand composition as a significant contribution to the development of sonification practice in our [Serbian] electro-acoustic music and as a welcome effort to further automate and implement music information retrieval (MIR) as part of a composition practice. Although there were similar aspirations in our musical past (such as Vladimir Jovanović's *Ornithophony* or Miroslav Miša Savić's *White Angel*; Milojkovic, 2020) this work differs from the previous ones primarily in instrumentation since it is a concert piece for piano and recorded electronic part, while earlier this type of work was related to the studio conditions or gallery installations. (M)

> The first impression of listening is that this is 'real' Miroslav Miša Savić, the sound quality of the work is like that of my favourite compositions from his earlier works, especially for piano. The second impression was a surprise at how much vivacity the sonification process resulted in [...]. I similarly experienced extended techniques at the end of the composition, which was a welcome contrasting segment, 'refreshing' the overall sound result. (M)

Discussion

The final aim of the analysis was to compare superordinate themes between the narratives of the three participants. The condensed presentation of the IPA results contains the aesthetic and cognitive layer of the findings seen through the perspective of specialised knowledge and experience of music (Figure 3.2).

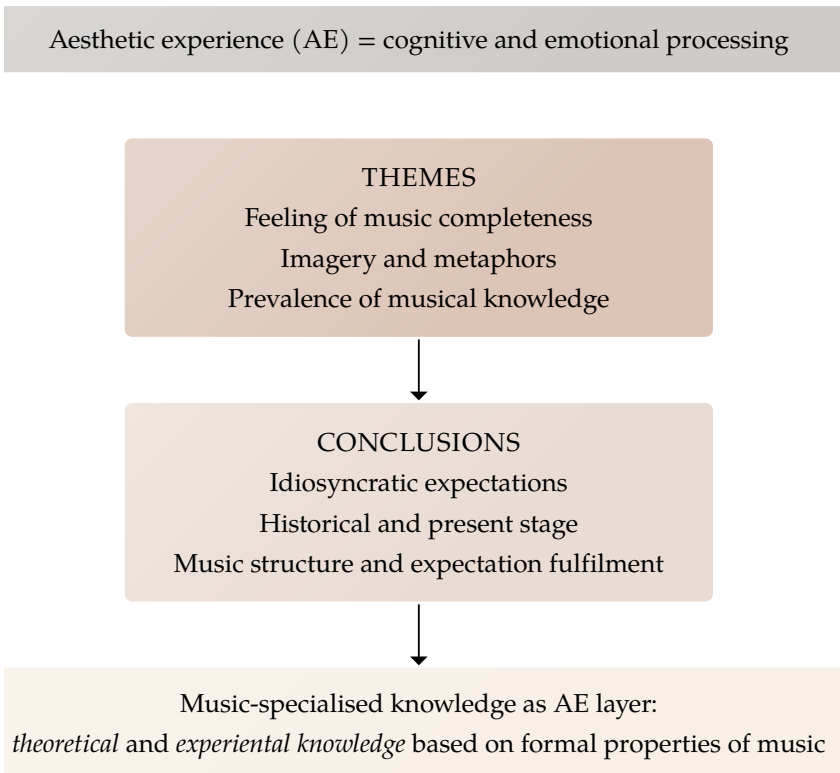

Fig. 3.2 Overview of research outcomes

The discussion focuses on three points:

Firstly, the perception of the aesthetic quality and character of the musical piece is driven by expectations that are idiosyncratic and based on the aesthetic experiences and expert knowledge of each participant. The performer's aesthetic experience is driven by her intuitive feeling for music and long-term experience of performing and listening to music. For example, to reach the fandango character of the composition, the performer compared and tried to match this new aesthetic experience with the previous aesthetic experiences of a particular type of music for dancing—the listening and performing experience of fandango.

On the other hand, the composer showed a tendency to achieve the consistency of his conceptual set-up, and elaborated compositional rules within the newly created composition as *differentia specifica* of his poietics. The composer's narrative of the aesthetic experience is presented as a theoretical elaboration of his attitudes towards the combination of poetry and music, the 'aesthetic challenge', and the technique of 'shifted roles' that could turn a 'non-aesthetic situation' into a new one that is aesthetically acceptable. The composer's narrative is marked by cognitive elaboration and decision-making concerning generating music material and structure. It presents a consistent personal aesthetic theory of transforming the non-aesthetic into the aesthetic through applying the appropriate poietic—conceptual and technical—compositional procedures.

Interestingly, both the criteria of the composer and performer appear in the narrative of the musicologist. Thus, the word 'fandango' in the composition's title directed both the performer and the musicologist to base a positive aesthetic evaluation on expecting and reaching the feeling—in creation and reception—of the fandango character. On the other hand, the composer and the musicologist expected sound expression of theoretically explicated compositional procedures, noted in the recorded composition's accompanying note (Savić, 2020). In both examples, the aesthetic experience was directed by expectations and references outside the music itself—by the verbally formulated dancing character of the composition and the theoretically explained compositional procedures that should be perceived in music through the experience of listening.

Secondly, the aesthetic experience of music is a process that operates in a circular progression involving two stages. These are the *historical stage*, based on past individual emotional and cognitive experiences, and the *present stage*, based on the musical structure of the current aesthetic object. These two stages are present in a circular relationship with different degrees of intensity. In the case of the composer, the deliberate cognitive processing of music based on conceptually founded and elaborated individual artistic poietics, and the expectation to 'hear' this in the sound, are dominant. In the case of the pianist, the previous personal auditory experiences of music as musical completeness are dominant.

In the case of the musicologist, the auditory experience passes through cognitive processing of specific classical music knowledge and training, with a transition towards emotional experiences. Emotional experiences are the result of deliberate cognitive mastering of music, in terms of surprise and satisfaction derived from the logic and expectations of musical material structuring. Thus, it seems that both the pianist and musicologist feel the logic of music both intuitively and deliberately simultaneously. However, emotion of the musicologist is aesthetic, where the emotional reaction to music is founded on the idea of experiencing beauty through the recognition and evaluation of the music's structure, characteristics, and properties of music material. This corresponds with the previous empirical research conclusions that 'the adjective "beautiful" was the most frequently used term to describe the aesthetic values of music', both by music experts and laymen (see Istók et al., 2009, pp. 191, 195). What is prominent is that in the cases of all three participants, the musical expertise is strongly grounded within the historical stage, not only in the form of knowledge about music, but also as expertise that has been acquired by long-term experiential training in creating and performing, that is, in listening to music.

Thirdly, and consequently, the findings showed that the mechanism of *music expectancy* (Huron, 2006; Meyer, 1956) has a crucial role in forming the aesthetic response to a music piece. This concerns expectancy that is fulfilled by the music material and structure, and by the induced emotions that belong to the category of aesthetic emotions. As already noted, music expectancy is important when considering how

music elicits emotions, and was initially explained in Meyer's theoretical framework on musical expectancy and emotion:

> [An] important aspect of Meyer's theory is that it de-emphasises the general mood (such as happy, sad, or peaceful) engendered by passages, movements, or entire musical pieces and emphasises instead the moment-to-moment response to the ongoing music flow. The theory's essential claim is that music produces emotions because listeners actively generate expectations (mostly unconsciously) for what is to follow [...], and the response depends on how expectations are fulfilled, perhaps in a particularly artful way or at an unexpected delay. (Krumhansl & Agres, 2008, pp. 584)

Regarding Meyer's sources of music expectation, expertise was a primary source of anticipation among our participants, firmly integrated and developed within the aesthetic experiences, and accompanied by the development of style-related processing. Expertise as a source of expectation (from both composer and musicologist) is why the dominant criterion for making positive aesthetic judgments is established by evaluating music structure from the standpoint of stylistic and poietic conceptualisations. Next, an emphasis on the value of originality and novelty in structuring music expectation fulfilment had a significant role. The narratives of the composer and musicologist reflect the potential for cognitive music mastering through acquiring expertise: knowledge of musical structure, formal properties, and style. Successful cognitive mastering induces positive aesthetic emotions. Even in the case of the pianist and her description of intuitive music completeness as 'feeling', the experience is based on the artistic music expertise that determines what should be expected and heard in a piece of music, including musical structure and the properties of music components and form.

To summarise, the three conceptualisations of music or three types of music expectation that interweavingly induce the aesthetic experience of music experts are: (1) that music is an aesthetic object that is meant for listening to, feeling, and judging based on the expectations driven by the long-term experience of performing and listening to classical music structures; (2) that music as an aesthetic object is expected to reflect a composer's individual and theoretically elaborated concepts of

how the piece of classical music should be made and (3) that music is an aesthetic object with autonomous structural characteristics that is expected to reflect its specific place within the history of classical music and its relations with other music pieces.

Conclusion

In conclusion, specialised art knowledge can play a salient role in experiencing art by acting as an underlayer of aesthetic experience and aesthetic emotions, and it has the power to put into operation, through an individual pattern, both emotional and cognitive aspects of aesthetic experience. Let us suppose that everyone is defined by specific self-developmental history (Vartanian & Kaufman, 2013). In that case, specialised art knowledge is not something other than the phenomena of aesthetic experience but is immanent to it, an essential factor that makes each person's developmental history unique. The comparison of the three narratives reflects the fact that the nature of specialised classical music knowledge is *doubled* and that dual core comes from the different developmental histories of the participants in terms of their music education and various types of involvement with music.

Namely, we may conclude that one type of expertise as a layer of aesthetic music experience is a type of *theoretical knowledge*—learning and knowledge acquisition through which models of music structure and style are integrated and developed within the aesthetic experiences. The other type of expertise could be named *experiential knowledge*—the knowledge that comes from experience and training in creating, performing, and listening to music, and is related to the person's mastery of skills in the appreciation of music acquired by their long-term lived experiences with music. Thus, the piano performer draws on her experience intuitively, based on internalised, automated knowledge about music, just as the other two respondents do. However, we should not neglect the fact that the performer talked about 'notes falling into place', the composer about 'dislike', and the musicologist about 'euphoria and optimism'. This means that even when the double nature of expertise is developed to its full potential, the cognitive processing of aesthetic music experience and music expectations always leads to the expression of a unique emotional response. This emotional response, as

aesthetic emotion, is attached to and inseparable from the effects of both theoretical and experiential knowledge. This conclusion corresponds with current findings that the aesthetic experience brought about by contemporary music is mainly related to the successful cognitive mastering of music's formal properties (Brattico et al., 2013). We can see this as inherent in the aesthetic responses of all three participants.

Our findings further confirm existing insights that the perception of contemporary music results from conscious immersion in music, where the individual dedicates attention to perceptual, cognitive, and affective interpretation based on the *formal properties* of music (Brattico et al., 2013; Brattico & Pierce, 2013). The aesthetic experience of contemporary classical music is brought about by the mutual interplay of music expectation, experiential and theoretical knowledge, and, primarily, from immersive engagement with musical properties and structure.

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