

Executive Summary

CPB Classical Music Testing Project

Midday classical listeners in four cities were recruited to determine their preferences in classical music on radio during midday hours. A total of 309 respondents recorded their moment-to-moment reactions to 150 samples of classical music and responded to a questionnaire about their classical music listening and use of media. The latter also tested some of the findings of the PRPD/SRG Core Values of Classical Music research.

A great volume of data has been gathered and analysis will continue through 2008 as stations make changes to their midday music selections during the Application Phase. Key findings to date include:

- The most significant distinguisher of musical taste was whether a person considered themselves a Serious or Casual listener of classical music. Serious listeners found a wider range of music appealing than did Casual listeners. However, the ranking of music sounds and categories did not differ between the two groups.
 - Familiarity was important to both Serious and Casual listeners. There was no evidence of “burn-out” of often-played music nor do Serious listeners show a great desire for obscure or challenging music on radio in middays.
- Music that had High Appeal to all listeners was generally melodic and bright with consistent dynamics (no inaudibly soft passages or harsh contrasts of volume). It had “forward motion,” that is, the sense that the music was following a logical progression. The High Appeal sounds were positive and uplifting, with a soothing or reassuring familiarity, in style and overall texture if not always in terms of the actual melody.
- Music that had Negative Appeal to all listeners was dissonant and lacked structure, and often had extreme ranges of volume and intensity. Often there was an aggressive or frantic quality. Some selections were simply not in the “classical” mold at all, while others seemed to meander structurally. There was also a negative reaction to music that had too sentimental of a sound (“Schmaltzy Pops”) or that was so soft as to be nearly inaudible.
- Music that had Low Appeal to all listeners often mixed characteristics of the high and negative categories. This music was often marred by unconventional arrangements or thematic material. Some veered away from the traditional classical sound. This group of

sounds included pieces that showed some extreme differences between Serious and Casual listeners.

- The results strongly suggest that a new approach to programming classical music will prove most effective in serving listeners. Rather than emphasizing traditional categories of music based on instrumentation, musical era, key signature, etc., the sound of the music is of paramount importance. While a handful of categories (organ, dissonant) had nearly universal negative appeal, and a few categories such as opera appealed more strongly to serious than classical listeners, these were the exceptions, not the rule. Listeners' enjoyment and continued listening is based primarily on how the music sounds and feels.
- Most of the Classical Core Values findings were validated. These include:
 - The pre-eminence of the "Qualities of Heart and Spirit"
 - The selection of music is a much greater determiner of listening than elements in between the music.
 - Classical music's "soothing" qualities are of prime importance, followed by its inspirational effect.
 - Classical listeners do want to learn about the music but learning often takes place just by listening to the music, they do not seek a great deal of talk.
- Unlike the Core Values findings, a majority of respondents indicated that they are not "news avoiders". Respondents listen to a lot of public radio news and the NPR newsmagazines. However "regular updates of news" in midday are not a high priority to these listeners. These findings indicate that stations can be flexible in how often they offer news during midday music without alienating listeners.
- The "relaxing" quality of classical music was most important in the evenings while "stimulating" music was least important in that daypart. This finding seems to challenge the common practice of scheduling pieces that are challenging in evening hours.
- Midday classical listeners tended to be more likely to use new technology than the general population:
 - CD's were the most frequently used of all the non-radio technology probed.
 - They use significantly more Internet Radio.
 - Those 25-44 were 65% more likely than the total population to own iPods or similar devices.
 - They do not differ in the rate of Satellite radio subscription.
- Only 7% reported listening less to radio than a year ago while 28% said they listen more. A majority (65%) of respondents said they were listening "about the same".