



# CONCERTGEBOUWORKEST YOUNG

COMPARING OUTCOMES 2019 AND 2021  
REPORT - SUMMARY



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# SUMMARY

## INTRODUCTION

There are many elements to the Concertgebouworkest Young programme that make it unique and distinguish it from other (European) youth orchestras:

- ▶ Its target group of talented musicians between fourteen and seventeen years old
- ▶ Its focus on including “hidden talent” and its multidimensional interpretation of hiddenness
- ▶ The inclusion of seventy plus new talented musicians in each edition
- ▶ Its pan-European reach (and beyond)
- ▶ Its two-and-a-half week long, intensive Summer School
- ▶ The combination of a musical and social programme during the Summer School
- ▶ The role of Young alumni as ambassadors for classical music (and the programme)

These central elements combine in the three outcomes of the Young programme:

- ▶ Outcome 1: Providing access to a high-quality music programme to youth with hidden talents
- ▶ Outcome 2: Supporting the social and personal skill development of participating youth
- ▶ Outcome 3: Establishing a community of active students who act as ambassadors in their own neighbourhoods and countries

Below we reflect on the Young programme’s success in achieving these outcomes on the basis of two years of research into the initiative. We address the way in which the central elements (e.g., “hidden talent”) can be defined and studied, and the challenges that they pose. This summary ends by drawing preliminary conclusions about the impact of Young on the Concertgebouworkest as an organisation

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### OUTCOME 1

#### **Hidden talents and representing diversity**

*We conclude that ...*

- ▶ In the first two editions of Young, the Young team of the Concertgebouworkest made progress towards Outcome 1 by providing hidden talents access to its youth orchestras. This related to both those talents in need of extra support due to disadvantages identified in the dimensions indicated below, and those underrepresented and from diverse backgrounds within the European scope of the project.
- ▶ The Young team was able to mobilise a highly diverse group of participants in both years, regarding both nationalities and hidden talents. From a sociological point of view, a mixed group might be preferable to a homogeneously hidden group. In a mixed group of participants, the young talented individuals can learn how to deal with diversity while those with fewer opportunities are likely to experience (future) upward mobility due to their newly acquired and diverse network.
- ▶ Roughly one-third of the 2019 participants and little over half of the 2021 participants score high on multiple, if not almost all dimensions of hiddenness in our Hiddenness Index. We learned from the Index that the 2021 group is more hidden than the 2019 group. The Young team thus succeeded in their goal in 2021 by selecting a greater number of hidden talents. These talents, for instance, may have been born in a rural area into a non-musical family with limited socio-economic opportunities, lack access to a network in the field of classical music, and the support of a helpful teacher and/ or sufficient self-confidence.
- ▶ The intersectionality (and variation) in factors explaining an individual’s hiddenness, and the sensitivity of the required data, pose a constant challenge to the Young team. Conveying the meaning of “hidden talent” in a short, catchy and clear way, without scaring off future participants, poses a challenge. The Young team must consider myriad factors including the impor-



tance of 'representation' and whether ethnicity may be just one element in a person's hiddenness, how to communicate these diverse hiddenness factors and how to deal with the limited information on the hiddenness of applicants.

### *Defining hidden talent*

The Young team often received questions from audience members or sponsors after Young concerts such as, "If the young musicians already made it to this level of playing classical music, are they really hidden?", or "I don't see many young people of colour among the participants, are they really hidden?" Superficial judgements are easily, and frequently, made. The complex story behind 'hidden talent' is much more difficult to convey.

First of all, talent is a basic requirement. Not because the Royal Concertgebouworkest ranks among the top-quality orchestras worldwide, but because talent is absolutely essential when working on diversity and inclusion. This is due to the general assumption in the cultural sector that greater inclusion means lowering the standard of artistic quality. Failing to prove that quality and equality can go hand in hand, would do the hidden talents more harm than good and would negatively impact the process of making the art sector more inclusive. Fortunately, both editions of Young resulted in high-quality final concerts. Both events received positive reactions from parties in and outside the Concertgebouworkest, even from those who were previously critical and sceptical of the programme.

Secondly, identifying who is deemed 'hidden' is complex because it is not just skin colour or ethnic background that determines disadvantage. For example, the child of a member of the British House of Lords of Indian descent will have different chances in life than the child of a British-Bengali factory worker. Nationality is a similarly faulty indicator of privilege. Our research shows that young musicians from southern and eastern European countries ranked among both the most and least hidden talents. Furthermore, in 2021, possibly contrary to expectations, Sweden (no.3), and the Netherlands (no.4) featured among the "top five most hidden talents".

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Therefore, to study the Young programme's efficacy in reaching hidden talents, we established, in dialogue with the Young team, which dimensions impact a person's career in the field of classical music:

1. The geographical dimension—does the young musician live close to quality musical education?
2. The socio-economic conditions of the young musician's family—can they afford quality education, instruments, transportation to music lesson/competitions, etc.?
3. The family's cultural background and networks in the arts—do they know the field of classical music well enough to make strategic decisions and do they have helpful connections in this field?
4. The cultural (ethnic) background—does the family have a history of migration? This is of importance as not all ethnic communities encourage their young people to follow careers in western classical music.
5. A miscellaneous dimension—does the young musicians have previous orchestra experience, a helpful music teacher and self-confidence enough to succeed in the field of classical music?

The table below summarises the outcomes on these dimensions and their composite factors. It shows that the 2019 group of participants required support because it held a larger group of participants from rural or intermediate areas (less proximate to high-quality music education) and a larger group of participants with only a few years of experience of playing in an orchestra (less exposure). The 2021 group of participants is more urban, but comes less often from musical (extended) families. This group could therefore use extra support to build the necessary networks in the field of classical music. The 2021 group of participants take music lessons more often at public institutions and less with private teachers, which signals less access to high quality music education in some countries. Additionally, eighteen percent of the 2021 participants only had experience in a local band or ensemble, which could render them less visible to the talent scouts of higher quality music schools or orchestras. In both the 2019 and 2021 groups, between fourteen and eighteen percent of the participants' families had a history of migration and a little over twenty-five percent identified with non-dominant groups in their countries of residence. Those participants willing to describe the non-dominant group they identified with, predominantly mentioned their religious affiliations.



Factors of hiddenness	2019 (N=73)	2020/21 (N=72)
Living in rural / intermediate areas	49%	37%
At least one parent in (un)skilled labour / in non "high cultural capital" positions	34%	31%
Parents/guardians are not professional musicians	54%	70%
No musicians in the extended family	58%	72%
Number of different countries of residence	25	25
Number of different nationalities	27	25
Participants with history of migration	14%	18%
Percentage identifying with non-dominant groups	27%	26%
Music lessons at a public institution only	63%	73%
Quality of their instruments	16% rented instruments	3% low, 58% medium quality
Orchestra experience	8% no previous experience	All have previous experience, 18% only in local band or ensemble
Less than 3 years of experience in orchestra	41%	26%
Not yet won a music prize	19%	23%

### The Hiddenness Index

We then built a Hiddenness Index in an attempt to acknowledge intersectionality, incorporating the various factors that combine in a person and that together explain the extent to which a person may be disadvantaged or underprivileged (hidden). In the surveys we asked the young musicians to fill out before and after the Summer School, we added questions that provided data on each of these factors and dimensions. We assigned a greater weight to the factors of the dimensions that we believe have greater impact on a career in classical music, and then ran our analyses:

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Descriptive Statistics Total Hiddenness	2019 (N=73)	2020/21 (N=72)
Mean	0.29	0.36
Max (1=hidden)	0.77	0.63
Min (0=not hidden)	0.00	0.14
Number of participants above mean (= more hidden)	32%	52%
Number of participants below mean	68%	48%

The above table shows that, the 2021 group is overall more hidden than the 2019 group. In 2019, the difference between the most and the least hidden talents was larger (0.77 most hidden to 0.00 least hidden). However, the average hiddenness of the group was lower (mean=0.29, when 0.00=not hidden) and a larger group of participants scored below the mean (sixty-eight percent less hidden than the average hiddenness for the group). In 2021, there was a smaller difference in the situation of the most and the least hidden talent (2019: 77%; 2021: 49%), and between the most hidden talent and the average of the group (2019: 48%; 2021: 27%). Nonetheless, a little over half of the participants scored above the mean and the mean is higher (= more hidden).

### Limitations

The Hiddenness Index helped us to overcome one-dimensional readings of people, and avoid the strong emphasis on race and ethnicity that we see nowadays in the Dutch cultural sector. However, it has its limitations. Many factors could not be taken into consideration in the Index for privacy and imperitence reasons, for example, the sexual orientation, political views, religious affiliation, and further personality elements of participants. It is, however, important to note that these factors may not only co-shape their personalities, but also influence their musical careers.

Another limitation of our arts-sociological research is that we did not address the psychological dimension. The fact that the young musicians are so successful at a young age, may be explained more by their character than by the relatively practical dimensions we worked with to study hiddenness (their family's economical means, networks, etc.). What the young talented musicians undoubtedly share is their total dedication to classical music, their discipline to practice, their perseverance to reach their goal, etc. In this respect, it would be interesting to consider findings of psychological research on excellence



and top performers in arts and sports and apply their conclusions to the study of Young programme participants.

## A high-quality music programme

*We conclude that ...*

- ▶ The Young team of the Concertgebouworkest made progress in the Young programme towards Outcome 1 by providing access to a high-quality music programme, the result of the 'high-quality' (professionalism) of the Young team.
- ▶ The team offered a high-quality programme resulting in high-quality concerts at the end of the Summer Schools, supported by top teachers and conductors.
- ▶ Participants reported that the very capable and sociable Young team took excellent care of the participants and helped in all ways they could.
- ▶ The Summer Schools were very well organised and the participants rated the various aspects of the Summer School very highly (programme, team, mentors, rehearsal location, etc., except for the food).
- ▶ The Young team is a learning team. Learning from its experiences with Young 2019 (the set-up, mentoring, the design of the musical and social programme, etc.), the team implemented responsive changes in 2021.
- ▶ The team showed great flexibility during Corona, drafting a quality online programme that kept the participants engaged and added positively to their experiences.
- ▶ The overall programme was effective and positively impacted the musical development of the participants in both years.

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### *Impact on musical development of the participants*

The participants were asked to evaluate the extent of their learning for several musical skills (along with their social, personal and ambassadorial skills – see Outcome 3). As the table below shows, the strongest effect of the Summer Schools on the participants related to the musical inspiration it offered. Above all, participants felt inspired and motivated to challenge themselves after playing in some of the best concert halls in the world and working together with professional musicians. Participants were slightly more modest, but still enthusiastic, about the Summer School's success in inspiring them how music can play a role in their professional lives in case they do not become professional orchestra musicians.

Self-evaluation of improvement as a consequence of attending Young (Summer School Survey)	Average mean per skill set 2019 (N=73)	Average mean per skill set 2021 (N=72)
Inspiration	4.61	4.55
Ensemble skills	4.48	4.50
Expressive and music skills	4.40	4.21
Social skills	4.15	4.07
Ambassadorial skills	4.12	4.17
Self-awareness	4.14	4.04
Diversity skills	3.78	3.84
Mental strength to deal with pressure or stress	3.77	3.66

Second to the strong impact on inspiration, is the impact on ensemble and expressive music skills, with a large percentage of participants agreeing strongly on the improvement of these skill sets, over eighty percent in both years. Regarding ensemble skills, the strongest impact of the Summer Schools was on the participants' ability to blend their own sound with the rest of the orchestra and to play together in the orchestra or a chamber music ensemble. Regarding their expressive music skills, the participants registered the great impact of the Summer Schools on their dynamic skills (playing softly, loudly, etc.).



## OUTCOME 2

The Young programme also supports participants' social and personal development in order to help them in their musical careers, as talent alone is not enough to make it to the top. This support comes in the form of a social programme, in collaboration with United World Colleges, that is part of Young Summer School and, in the past year, also of the online programme.

*We conclude that ...*

- ▶ In both years, progress was made towards Outcome 2 by supporting the future social and personal skill development of participating youth.
- ▶ Compared to the scores on the improvement in music skills, the personal and social skills outcomes of the Summer School are more mixed, with more participants answering 'neutral' or 'disagree' (meaning that their skills did not improve compared to before they entered the Summer School).
- ▶ Nonetheless, even the lowest average score on improvement of their social and personal skills can be considered a very high score (3.77 out of five, see the table above). Participants registered progress even on aspects of their social and personal skills where they already felt relatively secure (as indicated in the Baseline Survey).

*Impact on social and personal development of the participants*

Regarding social and communications skills, the Summer School helped the participants to improve their foreign language and collaborative skills. The two most improved aspects of self-awareness were the participants' understanding of their capacity for further learning and improvement, and their ability to reflect on and better understand themselves. From a sociological point of view, it is interesting that participants strongly agree with the self-awareness statements such as, "During the Summer School I learned to understand how my qualities relate to what a well-functioning orchestra needs", and "I learned to recognise and praise the qualities of others".

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Most participants felt they had already mastered diversity skills (very) well before attending the Summer School. Yet, here too, progress could be registered. In both years, between sixty-three and eighty percent of the participants agreed or agreed strongly with the statements. The only exception to this is the statement that the Island game made them more aware of their own prejudice, to which 'only' fifty-seven percent of the 2019 participants agreed or agreed strongly. Although the differences between the two years are not very large, it is interesting to note that the 2021 participants responded more positively to six out of the eight statements on the Summer Schools' impact on their diversity skills than their 2019 counterparts. Mental strength was the ability that scored lowest for both years, but remained, as mentioned, still fairly high. Regarding the mental strength to deal with pressure and stress, the largest impact was on accepting that making mistakes is part of performing live.

## OUTCOME 3

*We conclude that ...*

- ▶ The Young team of the Concertgebouworkest made progress towards Outcome 3 by establishing a community of active students that take up ambassador roles in their own neighbourhoods and countries.
- ▶ Building ambassadorship with former participants nominating participants for the following edition proved successful and may be (part of) the reason why the 2021 group was more hidden. It signals the start of a snowball-effect.
- ▶ The programme was effective. It positively impacted the development of participants' ambassador skills. This was greatly the case in 2021, the year in which the Young programme placed greater emphasis on ambassadorship, as a result of the lessons learned in the first edition.



### *Nominations*

The 2021 Baseline Survey showed that the role of the music teachers is somewhat smaller than in 2019, whereas the role of the peer network increased tremendously. Almost a quarter of 2021 participants indicated that they heard about the programme from friends that participated in the first edition. The importance of Instagram as a medium of communication grew together with the importance of the peer-ambassador network. The role of the participants as ambassador-nominators is likely to further increase. Not only will the group of alumni (ambassadors) grow in number with each edition, but the 2021 group was also better prepared for their ambassador roles as part of the online programme and Summer School training through hands-on activities and inspirational examples. Some of these examples came from 2019 participants who acted as successful ambassadors.

### *Impact on the ambassador skills of the participants*

It is interesting to note the high percentage of participants who felt responsible for promoting Young and classical music in the Summer School Surveys, ninety-two percent in 2019 and ninety-five percent in 2020 agreed or agreed strongly with the related statement. Regarding ambassadorship, seventy-nine percent in 2019 and ninety-two percent in 2021 of the participants stated that they learned how to use their personal and musical qualities as an ambassador during the Summer School, and sixty-nine percent in 2019 and seventy-six percent in 2021 indicated that the workshops taught them new tools with which to share their stories.

## IMPACT OF YOUNG ON THE CONCERTGEBOUWORKEST ORGANISATION

With the Young programme, the Concertgebouworkest is making a difference to the field of classical music and its participants. As this research indicates, the unique concept has a present impact on participants, while also contributing towards making orchestras more diverse in the future. Concertgebouworkest Young may make a difference in the arts sector as a whole, by providing an example of how to successfully make the classical music sector more inclusive and by openly sharing the fundamental questions and struggles the Young team's encountered in the process. These challenges also need to be addressed in the arts sector in order to become inclusive.

The impact of the Young programme on the Concertgebouworkest as an organisation will be one of the elements of our study in the coming year. It is already clear that the organisation will have to work through the following challenges:

- ▶ How should the organisation deal effectively with "hidden talent" and the lack of information on the hiddenness of the applicants in the selection process?
- ▶ How should the organisation embed the Young programme structurally in the Concertgebouworkest organisation and extend the organisation's narrative on diversity and inclusion?
- ▶ How can the prerequisites for continuation and stability (structural financial support, etc.) be met to enable the successful structural implementation of the Young programme in the Concertgebouworkest organisation?





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