

## **The Recipe for the Highest Level Performance Arts Experience: Communicating the Five Aesthetic Senses**

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### **Abstract**

*The purpose of this study is to discover the combination of techniques and elements that create the highest-level aesthetic performance arts experience for the audience. This study challenges theories about popular culture and high culture techniques, the environment, and the experience between the audience and the artist to discover which mixture of elements communicate the highest-level experience. Twelve performances were included in this study using the participant observation method. Field notes were taken and analyzed to find the patterns of the most effective techniques used at each performance. Five aesthetic senses had the most influence on the outcome of the performance: venue, staging, connection, participation, and sound.*

**Keywords:** performing arts, audience experience, popular culture, high culture

### **1. Introduction**

Music performance experiences can allow the mind to be inspired to generate some of the most creative ideas, see missing connections and solutions, begin to visualize meaning and transcend the mind to another place, elevate the mood and state of mind, and leave the audience with an exhilarated and energized feeling. Some performances are able to achieve a high-level experience for the audience, and some performances can fail to create an aesthetically stimulating experience.

The performing arts include various kinds of performances, which are of high and low caliber. This study looks at what makes those performances of high and low caliber within the context of the performance experience. This study also examines how the techniques from both high and popular culture, including mass and low culture, affect the experience of music performances to determine which techniques destroy or enhance the experience and allow the art to be communicated and received at the highest level. What communicates and stimulates the senses to create the highest-level performance arts experience for the audience? The artistic expression and aesthetics of music performances are looked at through a communication arts perspective.

For the purpose of this study, the term high-level experience is defined as an experience that causes deep contemplation (Putman, 1990), allows the audience to gain insight and enjoyment (Laszlo, 1967), strongly stimulates the senses, induces inspiration, causes one to visualize the meaning of the arts, causes a peak experience, and transcends a person into the art or music to a place where they are experiencing the performance there with the artist and audience and within themselves.

It is important for the performers and arts managers to know what mix of aesthetic elements and techniques are needed to effectively communicate the art and the artistic message. This would allow the artist to have a deeper relationship with the audience, gain audience size, give the audience a more inspiring experience, and an opportunity to appreciate the arts on another level. The recipe for the highest-level arts performance can allow all performers, whether in a palace or a local theatre, a chance to create a high-level performance arts experience for the audience.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Popular and High Culture**

There is a very clear division between theorists who believe that there should be a segregation of arts cultures and those who believe that all art cultures are valid and segregation is not needed. There are arguments claiming the mixing of techniques from popular and high culture destroys the art and rids the world of true arts culture creating a mass culture of diminished quality and creating a homogenization of cultures (Macdonald, 1957). Some theorists believe that qualities are lost when popular art is created (Adorno, 1991; Benjamin, 2002; MacDonald, 1957; Weaver, 2009). With the borrowing of culture and techniques, one uniform culture could be created instead of more (Wilensky, 1964). However, is it possible that each culture could enhance and lift the other higher and create a hybrid instead of one homogenized culture?

Cowen and Tabarrok (2000) write about how artists have to choose between high and low art and what audience their artwork will appeal to. When industrialization occurred in the United States in the 1900's, it created different social and class boundaries, which created class chaos, and resulted in art without quality in mind (Storey, 2003). Theorists describe the belief that because low and popular culture artists try to appeal to such a large audience, the arts content is affected and has a message of a lower caliber than other art (Adorno, 1991; Baldwin, 1992; Greenberg, 1946; Howe, 1948). Although some art that is created for the masses or made using popular culture techniques can be of low quality, it does not have to mean all popular culture art is of low quality. When the Greater Grand Forks Symphony performed the "Eight British Folk Songs" in addition to their classical repertoire, it added to the performance experience. Art created for the masses can successfully stimulate the audiences' senses (Shusterman, 2000; Toffler, 1964).

This study argues that both cultures have needed aesthetic qualities to create the art. Combining techniques from both cultures is an art form and artists must be careful not to create the effect of lessened quality of the cultures when combined. The borrowing of cultures can create new and tasteful art (Gans, 1974). Popular culture and the new mass media have brought good techniques and unique art to the world of the arts (Gaboury, 1970; Gans, 1974; Mayo, 2008; Price, 2008; White, 1971). The borrowing of cultures could actually result in more creativity (Gans, 1974). The literature does not discuss the option of living in an arts culture allowing artists to mix and match the best techniques from all cultures to enhance the experience of the art.

New media art has given artists new ways to become creative and express new meaning (Emmerson, 2001; Mariategui, Cubitt, & Nadarajan, 2009; Storey, 2003). Seldes (1957) believes technology has taken the meaning out of the arts because of the creation of new media and changes in technology. Although, new media and changes in technology create more access to art and mass distribution, it also allows more multi-media opportunities to layer techniques. This mixing creates a deeper message just like an oil painting by Degas that uses many layers of oil paint, musical groups such as Bond or The Piano Guys mix their classical musical composition with popular culture techniques of expression. This means that popular culture encourages more creativity.

### **2.2 Experience**

There are many aspects of a performance that create meaning with the audience, including the mediums used and the environment. The mediums and materials used in the arts and in their environments can affect the type of experiences the audiences will have (Serota, 1996; Sweeney, 1992). People could have more meaning attached to music because of the type of environment and the way that the audience is able to participate (Duffy, 2000). Dewey (1934) discussed similar feelings as Benjamin (2002), and wrote how arts lose their importance and special quality to the aesthetic experience when taken out of their original environment. Dewey (1934) explained that for a person to have an aesthetic experience, one must understand the art, the art must include everyday life, and have an environment that encompasses the art's origin. Prior (2002) explained that the colors of the walls in museums affect the art and the audience's experience. This means that there is more to the environment than just the ease of accessibility or convenience; the entire environment can change the art and the experience with the art. The audience measures the value of their experience based on four different areas: knowledge, risk, authenticity and collective engagement (Radbourne, Johanson, Glow, & White, 2009). If this is how the audience gauges the value of its experience, what is it about the performance that creates a valuable experience, and how can the performers take the audience past the focus of the value and bring the focus to the art and the experience?

Putman (1990) believed that there is a much more active role for the audience within the communication that occurs between the artist and their audience than other theorists. The listener sees the emotions from the artist that also encourages feelings in the listener that is incorporated into the “aesthetic enjoyment” (Laszlo, 1967). He does not discuss what level the “aesthetic enjoyment” is and what else is incorporated to feel it. Deighton (1992) argues that when people see the analogy related to them with a story, information becomes more meaningful and a performance becomes an experience. Meaning is created when experiences from the past and the present collide and we find the similarities between them creating a feeling of harmony during the performance (Turner, 1986). Creating meaning is important, but knowing how to incorporate this into the art or the creation of a performance is just as important. Theorists have addressed what creates meaning in experiences, what constitutes a valid creation of art, how mass culture has changed art, how popular culture is good or bad and how popular culture brings new ideas and creativity and is part of creating the recipe for the highest-level performance arts experience. This research discovered what popular and high culture techniques are needed to create the highest-level experience.

### **3. Method**

The experiences of 12 performance arts experiences were examined in Grand Forks, N.D., Crookston, Minn., and Fargo, N.D. These three cities share many resources including artists and musicians. This study limited the performances to events that focused mainly on music with some theatre and art. Of the 12 performances attended, eight performances were in Grand Forks, two were in Crookston, and two were in Fargo. High, popular, and mixed culture performances were included in this study. The researcher included genres that she was both more and less familiar with. The performances were found through multiple different media outlets including websites, radio stations, posters, and word of mouth. The researcher stayed inside the arts network to attend performances for a five-month period. Table 1 describes each performance.

**Table 1: Description of the 12 Arts Performances**

Name of Group	Venue	Style and Genre	Professional, Pre-Professional, or Amateur
Ingrid Michaelson opened with Brooks West	The Fargo Theatre	Vocalists and musicians. Mixture of pop and folk music. Brooks: mixed with a little rock and pop.	Professionals
Messiah Sing-A-Long with the Master Chorale	St Michaels Cathedral in Grand Forks	Classical choir. High culture music.	Professionals, pre-professionals, and amateurs
UND Jazz Combo and 1:00 Jazz	Hopper-Danley Chapel on the UND campus in Grand Forks	University jazz band. Popular Culture Jazz music.	Pre-professionals, and amateurs
How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying	Burtness Theatre on the UND campus in Grand Forks	University theatre. Popular culture musical theatre.	Pre-professionals
Trio Montecino	University of North Dakota Museum of Art in Grand Forks	Trio with piano, clarinet, and cello. Mixture of popular culture and high culture music.	Professionals
UND Band and Wind Ensemble	Chester Fritz Auditorium in Grand Forks	University band. Classic band playing new and old music. Popular culture and high culture sounds.	Pre-professionals and amateurs
Eighth Street String Quartet	University of Minnesota Crookston Kiehle Auditorium	Two violins, viola, and cello. High culture classical music with one more folk type lullaby.	Professionals
Miranda Lambert with Josh Kelly and Eric Church	The Ralph Engelstad in Grand Forks	Vocalists. Popular culture music. A mix of country and pop with a little rock.	Professionals
Odd Couple with community Fire Hall Theatre	Fire Hall Theatre in Grand Forks	Community theatre. Popular Culture Theatre.	Amateurs and pre-professionals
Blue Grass Mass with the Master Chorale, The Diers, and the Woodpicks	United Lutheran Church Cathedral in Grand Forks	The Grand Forks Master Chorale: full choir. Diers: trio with a vocalist, guitarist, and violinist. Woodpicks: men who sing, play the guitar, banjo, fiddle, bass, and mandolin. High culture classical music sung by choir with popular culture blues.	Professionals and pre-professionals
Annie Fitzgerald	Antique and Gift Shop Willow and Ivy in Crookston	Vocalist with acoustic guitar. Popular culture folk music.	Professional
3OH3 with Hellogoodbye and Down With Webster	The Venue in Fargo	Popular culture boy band with some rap.	Professional

The performances were studied using the participant observation method. The study focused on the researcher's interaction and participation with the art and the role of being an audience member as part of the music performance experience. Field notes were taken during the performances to record how the experiences made the researcher feel noting the level of experience that was occurring. Detailed notes were taken for every performance keeping track of everything from the programs, the food, the lighting, the staging, the costumes, the materials the artists used, the music played during intermissions, what the artist says during the performance, how the researcher felt during the performance at different times, what the artists were wearing, the types of seating, and the historical background of the venues. These field notes included everything about the performance from before it started, the intermission, and how the performance made the researcher feel during and afterwards.

In order to discover what makes a performance achieve the highest level, the researcher looked for what appealed to the senses and brought her to the point of transcendence; or as Hall (1980) might describe it, when the product was given meaning. When the higher-level experiences occurred during performances, the researcher noted what was occurring within her, what parts of the performance were connecting to the meaning being created, and the aesthetics around her. Relationships and patterns were analyzed from a series of events to find meaning (Berger, 2000). The series of performances experienced and the field notes taken were analyzed to see the relationships between all the aesthetic concepts and meaningful experiences to find themes that related to the meaning found during performances. To understand the field notes, the researcher asked questions derived from Goodall's (2000) theory: what is the context and what do all of the parts involved do to the overall meaning of the experience? Goodall (2000) suggests finding "rich points" to find the defining moments with meaning analyzing the actions within those moments and studying the interaction. The high-level experiences were compared and considered "rich points". By comparing the rich points with the context and meaning found, the categories of the five aesthetic senses were discovered.

The researcher has an extensive arts and communication background. Her arts background allowed her to see all of the elements that contribute to the production of a performance of music and art while participating in the audience. The researcher is vocally trained in classical and jazz music, is a violinist in the Greater Grand Forks Symphony, and commissions work as an oil painter and portrait artist. She also has a background in classical ballet, international ballroom, and managing arts performances on a small and large scale. The researcher's background gives her the perspective and expertise to make connections in discovering the parts to make the high-level experience while observing and participating within the audience. This can create a bias because the researcher could unconsciously prefer one performance to another. Her background could also make her observations different than the average audience and change the meaningful connection. However, a performance and the music can create meaning with many people, so the researcher is looking for the setting for these connections to be created and what allows the creation of the connections.

#### **4. Results**

This study discovered that there are five aesthetic senses that a performance must appeal to and satisfy to create the highest-level performance arts experience. The five aesthetic senses are: venue, staging, connection, participation, and sound. These are the five senses that the performance arts should fulfill to allow the audience to understand the art, feel inspired, and obtain the highest performance arts experience. This study also discovered that this experience requires a mixture of techniques from both high and popular cultures.

Each aesthetic sense includes a list of techniques, from high and popular culture, that must be fulfilled to allow the performance to attain the highest-level peak experience for the audience. The techniques used within the aesthetic senses are an art themselves; the techniques must be used effectively to support the art being performed. When concepts for all of the aesthetic senses are put into practice, they can either support or hinder one another if they are not used in an effective way to support the art being performed and its meaning. Each element must be carried out in a way that supports the mood, style, genre, design, size of venue, size of audience, and message of the art/music being performed and experienced. A high-level experience can last a few minutes if some of the aesthetic senses are used, but if each aesthetic sense is fulfilled, it can last the entire performance. Table 2 describes the elements for each aesthetic experience sense.

**Table 2: Description of the Five Aesthetic Senses**

Venue	Staging	Participation	Connection	Sound
The historical background of the venue supports the performance/art and music.	The use of technology for pyrotechnics or visual displays are used to continue and enhance the message.	The audience has a role within the performance/art and music.	There is communication between the audience, the musician, and the art using technology to experience the connection with their creation.	The technology enhances the sound to a level and quality that allows the audience to hear the clarity of music and the message.
The acoustic qualities within the hall or room supports the sound of the music.	The lighting (including colored lighting) on stage enhances the mood and creates the focus on the performance/art and music.	The audience is included within the song or creation of the music before and during the actual performance.	The musician communicates effectively non-verbally including emotion filled facial expressions and body language.	The technology included is effectively used in the creation of the music to enhance the message.
The interior design of the venue supports the staging design, mood, and message of the performance/art and music.	The use of house lighting is focused on the performance experience and not used to highlight during the performance.	The audience is allowed to sing or dance with the music during the performance.	The background or history of the music being performed is communicated.	The style of repertoire chosen matches the overall sound of the entire performance.
The sound created fills the rooms of the venue.	The use of colors on stage match and enhance the message.	The use of technology before, during, and after enhances the communication of message.	The technical elements of the work/music being performed is communicated.	The musician creates a full rounded sound with voice or instruments to hear the music and message.
The architectural character of the venue supports the performance/art and music.	The decorations and props are used to surround the audience and used during the performance to enhance the message.	The musician/artist teaches the audience the choreography or lyrics of the song to enhance the message.	The message of the music performed is effectively verbally communicated.	The audible expressions/nuances from the creation of the music; breathing, etc. are clearly heard to support the message.
	The artwork in a backdrop carries the message of the performance/art and music.	The performance includes food such as a meal or appetizers to match the setting of the gathering.	The description of the artist's inspiration for the songs is communicated.	
	The type of costume attire reflects the type of performance and enhances the message.		The description of what the song means to the artist is communicated.	

#### **4.1 Venue**

The venue is part of the environment of the performance. This environment connects to the message of the performance being exuded from the artist, the music, to the experience that is surrounding the audience. The venue includes the historical background of the venue, acoustic qualities, interior design, how the sound fills the room, and architectural character.

The Grand Forks Master Chorale performance exemplified the venue aesthetic sense because their environment and venue matched their sound and message. They performed the "Messiah" in St. Michael's cathedral, which has a very grand environment with flying buttresses, intricate sacred pieces of art, and a full sound to the acoustics to match the message and style of the "Messiah." The choir blended right into their environment using the qualities of the music and the venue to create the experience in the type of environment that the "Messiah" was meant for. This type of performance and venue created harmony more than just in the notes of the music, but with the entire production.

The architectural character affects the performance because the character of the building can have just as much character as the performance allowing connections to be made the more the surroundings have meaning. The performer has to work with the environment and create the sound and performance depending on the venue environment. Many of the buildings used as a venue for performances are not built for the acoustics of a live performance, but when the acoustics carry the sound, it makes the art encompass the audience. For example, sometimes the performers were not loud enough to fill the room or the performer's voice can become muddled in with the rest of the music and the words of the song become incomprehensible. This is what happened at the Miranda Lambert concert at the Ralph Engelstad Arena in Grand Forks, N.D., which is a large hockey arena that does not have natural acoustics and architecture to support the music. The acoustics were that of a hockey arena; loud with a lot of echo and the arena was not made for music.

The history of the building becomes part of the experience when entering a building with its own story. This makes the art experience start when walking up to the building and being surrounded by meaning and architectural character. The interior design should match the story and architecture of the building, but ideally, be stylized in a way that will not compete with the stories told through music on the stage. The colors of the interior design cannot be the focus of the color and style of the room. The design should leave room for the louder colors and focus of the purpose of the venue, which is the performance.

Trio Montecino chose to perform for a smaller sized audience in the North Dakota Museum of Art. The art museum used to be a basketball court and has high ceilings with wood floors and artwork that covers the walls. The classy environment and performance were able to cater to both popular and high culture's art even when most of the music they played was high culture. The artwork in the performance room did not distract or take away because it was a very neutral base to draw from. It was almost like a primed canvas ready for the music to play on.

High cultures' acoustics and architecture can be the best fit for popular culture arts and popular culture venues can be the best fit for high culture music that takes on a modern sound depending on the message and unique qualities of the art being performed. Blue Grass Mass performed by the Master Chorale, The Diers, and the Woodpicks were a mix of talented musicians and included a variety of instruments and sounds. The Grand Forks Master Chorale is a full choir, the Diers is a family trio with a singer, guitarist, and violinist, and the Woodpicks are a group of men who sing and play the guitar, a banjo, a fiddle, a bass, the mandolin. However, the Blue Grass Mass's sound did not fit the acoustics and environment of a cathedral. It was awkward hearing and feeling some of the music's rough laid-back tones inside a cathedral. The cathedral environment did not fit the blue grass music, and therefore changed the sound and meaning of the performance. The performance became awkward at times because the venue's backdrop was a very large modern mural of Christ. When hearing the lyrics to a folk or blue grass song while staring at a picture of Christ, it changes the picture in the mind, thus, changing the meaning and experience felt. It was distracting and did not enhance the meaning of the music. This results with the inability of the audience's experience to match the performer's level of talent because the venue aesthetic sense was not fulfilled.

Annie Fitzgerald's performance took place in an old historical building with beautiful architectural character including remnants of Victorian age design elements originally housing a courthouse, firehouse, and police station that now houses an antique shop.

This building was not built for performances, but Fitzgerald used the acoustical benefits of this room to her advantage and was able to fill the room with her voice and guitar by choosing songs that could be sung acoustically with a smaller close knit audience setting to match the venue's natural characteristics. The character of the building enhanced all of the different genres of music she included in her repertoire that evening. The way that artists use the character and qualities of a venue can change the performance and experience. Whether it is the acoustics, the historical character, or the way the interior character and setup influences the performance, the artist must use the venue's attributes in a way that will enhance the meaning of the performance and not distract or take away.

#### **4.2 Staging**

The way the venue is styled is just as important as how the performer and the stage are dressed. Staging includes how the stage is artistically dressed, how the lighting and props are used during a performance, use of color, backdrops, decorations, and costumes. A type of backdrop or artwork should be used to highlight the performance. Many seasoned performers bring staging design with them. The backdrop can change during the performance, can include written messages, and use lots of colors and designs. Having a backdrop that enhances the message of the performer or music creates an environment for their message to be heard. This includes the use of color and choosing colors that are not just neutral because it was the cheapest fabric or easiest to get to, but the color that matches the style of the artist and feeling of the music. The decorations and props help create this experience.

Fitzgerald's performance in the antique shop included all of the Christmas merchandise. It was decorated for Christmas with garland, Christmas trees, and an artificial fireplace with all the antique armchairs and tables surrounding Fitzgerald. This made the atmosphere inspiring and matched the feeling of her music as she sang and played the guitar with a pop and folk sound reminiscing with the audience as if we were at a holiday family gathering. The researcher was able to look around at all of the decorations and people and focus on the message of the notes and words of the music. Fitzgerald was dressed in casual holiday attire, which fit the setting of the folk holiday world she created. Just like a holiday being celebrated, a performance that is centered around a theme needs decorations to create the experience associated with the music and the artist's message. The attire or costumes worn by the artist are a continuation of the feeling of the music and the message. Styles, colors, and artwork chosen to accompany the performance extend the feelings associated with the experience. Fitzgerald's staging allowed the music to have the meaning of the performance surround the audience.

The use of technology such as pyrotechnics or visual displays is part of staging. Some performances could use multiple television screens that display visual images that extend the staging to enhance the feeling of the music, depending on the size and genre. The Miranda Lambert concert took place in the Ralph Engelstad Arena and the stage was placed right in the middle of the arena. Their backdrop and stage setup did not do much for their performance, as it was very plain with three televisions on three poles displaying images such as flames to match part of the story being told with the lyrics of the song. The visual images of the flames were not very dramatic or grand, and thus did not enhance the message that was being communicated.

The lighting and backdrop can be used to create or enhance the color or movement of the lights. The lighting on the stage and the use of the house lighting can enhance the meaning of the environment and sets the mood. The lights and colors of lights on the stage should match the rest of the staging design and colors. A change in mood can warrant the emphasis with lights and color. House lights should be dimmed as much as possible to create the focus on the stage and the music being created. The performance "How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying" by the UND Theatre had a stage setup that was very well planned. Every time there was a change in mood and a break in the music that needed emphasis, the lights changed focus and color. When lighting is used properly, the set transitions from the edge of the stage to the seating of the auditorium and it is as if the world on the stage stretches out into the audience.

Other performances could include pyrotechnics that create fire as an attention getter at the beginning of a song. The size of the venue, size of the audience and the style of music determine the use of these elements. There are many options for the use of technology in staging, but the main concept of this element is the use of color and art to extend the stage to help the audience create the feelings associated with the music. Sometimes the natural staging within the venue compliments the music, and other times it can detract from the meaning.



All staging elements should be used to enhance the message and music and seamlessly transition from the artist, the stage, to the audience.

### **4.3 Participation**

Participation includes the role of the audience, how the audience is included with the creation of music, if the audience sings or dances during the performance, the use of technology, teaching the audience choreography or lyrics, and how food is included. A successful high-level performance includes the audience many times throughout the whole performance, but not the entire performance. Participation is influenced by how the performer includes the audience in the experience of performing the music by having them sing along or dance. Some performers create dance movements or hand actions to go along with the words of the music for the audience to learn, allowing the audience to become a part of the performance. Ingrid Michaelson included the audience many times throughout the whole performance. She helped the audience sing along with her music and created dance movements and hand actions to go along with the words of her music for the audience to learn.

Performers who have mastered the participation aesthetic sense, talk with their audience in-between the songs and have conversations with specific people in the audience. This creates interaction with the music on many levels. There is, however, a way to overdo audience participation, which can happen when the audience participates to the point where it interrupts the artistry being performed. This happened when Ingrid Michaelson let the audience participate in singing her songs for a large portion of the concert. Fitzgerald did not overuse participation and invited the audience to sing a Christmas song that they would probably all know as her last song. Most of the audience members did not know many of the songs because she wrote them herself and had just released her CD. However, allowing the audience to sing one rendition of a song they would all know allowed the audience and the researcher to become part of the experience she was sharing with the audience without overtaking the whole performance.

The conductor of the “Messiah” by the Grand Forks Master Chorale invited the audience to sing parts of the music with them. It was advertised ahead of time to bring the “Messiah” music score. The conductor would turn towards the audience, and the choir to conduct and cue the audience throughout the performance. The audience singers didn’t sing everything with the choir, only specific selections. The audience singing and creating music didn’t interrupt the flow because they only sang parts of the “Messiah,” which made the singers in the audience feel more a part of the creation.

Other sensorial stimulants include technology and chosen cuisine. Performers can use technology to aid in participation before, during, and after. Technology can be used to create and extend the backdrops, allow larger audiences, or allow the audience to be part of the creation of music online to be performed during the performance. 3OH3 used TV screens to allow more of the audience to see when it was hard to see over the large crowd of people who were standing. It also allowed those of us who wanted to sit for a while, to take a table and watch the performance, but this also allowed us to become disengaged from the performance experience. This took away from the art. Technology can be used to help include the audience more and be a participant in the experience, but it can easily take away from the experience.

The audience’s participation is also affected by how food is used at the event because this can keep the audience’s attention while being nourished or distract the flow. Performances by 3OH3, Ingrid Michaelson, and classical performances by symphonies were performed in venues which allowed people to buy candy, popcorn, and drinks and even meals. This does not enhance the experience and can take away from the experience. Small hors d’oeuvres served in-between the songs at Fitzgerald’s performance helped the audience be fully engaged during the performance by including it in the intermission and that allowed the audience to pay better attention during the performance. Participation can be overdone and can very quickly destroy the art. However, participation can also enhance the art and the experience by allowing the message to truly be heard and felt.

### **4.4 Connection**

Whenever the musician sings a song, the success of the experience for this aesthetic sense is highly determined by the information communicated and how the artist expressed the message to the audience. Connection includes the communication of the music’s message verbally and non-verbally, technical elements, the artist’s background, inspiration for the song, the meaning of the song to the artist, ways the song can relate to the audience, and their music and their message using technology. Their music and the meaning of their message can extend the production with the use of CD’s or Internet to connect with the audience beyond face-to-face.

This can create a connection before the audience even attends the performances allowing for a deeper connection and can continue after. This was the case for the researcher for concerts such as Miranda Lambert and Ingrid Michaelson. When an artist gives the background of the music it includes information such as the time period, what the composer was like, and the description of the different movements of a composition. Trio Montecino performed a piece of music called "Meditation and Hooleri" written by a composer who was originally from the Red River Valley. The composer, Michael Wittgraf, took the opportunity to talk to the audience about what his life was like at the time he composed the piece. It is similar to the way Storey (2003) talks about how the boundaries of art shifted and art began to be in a person's everyday life, as Wittgraf described what sounds in his everyday life of work inspired particular unique sounds that are created within the music. Successful performances included performers who spent time relating the songs to the audience with real life analogies and told about the inspiration for writing an original song.

When Fitzgerald sang, she explained how she wrote most of the songs, what inspired her, the stories in her life that evoked the emotions she was feeling when she wrote the song, what she would like the audience to do with the message of the song, and how the audience might connect the message to their lives. Fitzgerald grew up in Crookston. She spoke of when she was a child, her upbringing, and the love she has felt in her life. The researcher felt much more meaning in the creation of this performance experience because Fitzgerald related her stories of the creation of her music to us, the audience.

Musicians need their whole body to express the message of the artwork and music being created. The audience needs to see each emotion in their face and body movements: smiles vs. a scrunched up angry face and fluid movements vs. stiff hard movements. Their facial expressions and body movements need to emphasize the feelings within the music to help the audience feel the music and the message. Ingrid Michaelson showed a large amount of expression with her face and body movements, and she even had some hand gestures and dance moves to go with the music; some were impromptu and some were choreographed to go with the feeling of the music being performed.

Performers that use their whole body to express and move around the stage can create a connection to the message and the audience. Miranda Lambert was a great example for implementing body movements into a performance including walking up and down the catwalk, throwing hair around, stomping feet, and using a lot of facial expressions. For example, a conductor and the symphony members must all use their whole body to express the music, and go with the beat or style of the music. If the conductor is the only one in the symphony using their whole body, the message is lost in translation, which is what happened with the UND Band Ensemble. This created a less meaningful experience and the researcher became disconnected from the music experience. Expressions and body movements include techniques such as dancing, hand gestures or actions, and very theatrical facial expressions that enhance the connection, music, and message. Connecting to the audience is about sharing with the audience meaning from the message and the artist. Connecting the audience to the music brings the audience to a level where they can make their own meaning creating the full use of the connection aesthetic sense.

#### **4.5 Sound**

Sound includes the technology used for the level and quality of sound, the technology used in the creation of the music, the style and repertoire, the full rounded sound, and audible expressions/nuances. The type of repertoire and stylizing included in the song choice affects the overall sound. This also includes the multiple different musical acts that can be in one performance. The sound and style of each group must have a common thread, otherwise the meaning of the performance and sound is lost, and the environment or staging will not match the whole performance. When 3OH3 had Hellogoodbye and Down With Webster opened for the concert, the style and sound did not match or uplift either band. One of the bands played really slow music, and this did not match the upbeat environment of the venue or 3OH3's style.

Sound is partly influenced by the artists' skill. Because musicians cannot always control what venue they play in and how it was built, the key lies in how well they can use their space. The performances that allowed this particular aesthetic sense to swell and overtake the senses to get to the high level of performance were the ones that used the space and sound to their best ability.

This means filling the room with a full sound whether by their voices and/or the sound coming from the other materials being used in their performance, such as their instruments and the sound of their body movements when feeling the music (the movements of their arms, the shifting of body weight, breathing, etc.). The researcher could hear the musicians in Trio Montecino breathe and heard the f-stops click on the clarinet with every note. Because there was such clarity with the sound, the researcher could also hear the silence between the notes and their breath. This was important because it really put importance on the meaning of each note. This allowed the researcher to feel how the musicians were feeling the music and took her to the same place: inside the music.

When a musician is trying to have a full sound, their environment can affect the sound. This is when technology can play a big role and allow the sound to have its fullest effect in any venue that it would not have otherwise. Sound checks must also be conducted with someone in the audience's position listening and describing their sound to make adjustments as needed, and not from the musician's standpoint on stage. However, the quality of the technology then affects the quality of the sound. The technology can aid in hearing the nuances and audible expressions with clarity. Some performances such as the University Band Ensemble at the Chester Fritz auditorium in Grand Forks had only moments of high-level experiences because their sound rarely filled the room. This is when there is focus needed on technology to allow the talent to fill the room.

Fitzgerald used the space accordingly and was able to have the thickest, fullest sound with her voice to fill the room along with her guitar. This can be difficult to do without technology, but was almost more beautiful in this setting as the audience could hear every breath and crackle of her raw folk styled textured voice without listening to it through a speaker. The holiday dressed room and the natural sound allowed the researcher to visualize the music the entire time along with having chills during almost every song.

The performances that excelled in one of the aesthetic senses, such as having a very full rich sound that filled the room, created a high-level performance experience during at least part of the performance. This experience, depending on the performance, lasted for a few minutes to the whole performance. The most successful performances allow the high-level experience to be felt throughout the whole performance and fulfilled as many of the elements as possible throughout the entire performance.

## **5. Discussion**

MacDonald (1957) claimed that he was concerned that popular culture and high culture would create one mediocre culture, however, this study argues that MacDonald was not looking at the bigger picture. Could high culture become even better than anyone ever thought? When Weaver (2009) wrote that it was possible to successfully combine the new and the old media for a creative artistic experience, he was right. There are ways to make the performance more than a creative experience, a high-level aesthetic, transcendent, sensory fulfilling, inspiring experience creating a high-level performance arts experience during the entire performance.

Cowen and Tabarrok (2000) wrote about how artists have to choose between high and low art, but this study shows that artists should be choosing the techniques that best support communicating their art and message and not between the segregation of artistic cultures. Sometimes multimedia can enhance the art, and sometimes it can take away. There are multiple examples of the mixing techniques with success. It is a balance of techniques from both cultures and types of techniques. Fitzgerald's performance included techniques of a classical background in vocal training yet her style of music came with folk stylizing, a venue to be considered pop culture in an antique shop dressed in Christmas decorations. She explained the history of the music as high culture performances do, and described her inspiration as popular cultures do. She sang creating a formal high culture setting where the audience was not involved, but switched to popular culture participation techniques by asking the audience to sing a song they knew at the end. This changed the outcome of the researcher's experience.

Theorists such as Adorno (1991) and Greenberg (1946) were afraid the mass audiences would destroy the arts, but this study argues that the more diverse the audience, the more encouragement to communicate about the music being performed. The Messiah performance included an audience mixed in all levels of professionalism. The music became high level because of the environment of the cathedral and the support of the trained musicians creating more emotion and feeling when the audience was asked to participate creating a sound that swelled and filled both the venue and the audience. Adorno (1991) argued that the masses and new media would create cultures and art of a low level, and performances that used pre-recordings lowered their level of creation experience. If pre-recordings are used during a performance instead of using the natural talent and abilities of the singers or in a way that creates a unique sound, the audience is not able to experience the initial creation of music.

Technology helps connect the art, the audience, and the artist before, during, and after the performances with websites, and recreations of the music performed. This only creates more meaning and not less meaning as Seldes (1957) argued. Ingrid Michaelson recorded many versions of her music to be taken home and created all kinds of versions of pop music songs including songs by Britney Spears, yet these were all works of her art and were full of expression. In some cases technology can be of high enough quality and will enhance the art just as Mayo (2008) explained; new media helps enhance the message of the art. Michaelson's music included many layers of different instruments while using technology to create the sound. If the technology hadn't been used, the researcher would not have been able to hear every breath of expression, the quiet but full notes being sung, and the orchestra in the pit at the UND Theatre.

High culture audiences are very separate from the experience the artists are having on stage together. Previous theorists, such as Macdonald (1957), described fears of the masses involvement and making mediocre art, but Putman (1990) believed that there is an active role for the audience. This study found the involvement of the audience created even more intricate music and performances with a high level of technical difficulty as long as allowing everyone to participate did not take over the whole performance created.

Benjamin (2002) explained how the aura of art is lost when art is removed from its original venue, and the blue grass music's sound did not fit the acoustics and environment of a cathedral. However, this research looks at the concept of the "aura" differently in that there are aesthetic pieces of the environment and staging that can connect with this artwork, and it can be done in more than one way. This is what staging the environment is for. Witgraff discussed how he composed the art and what its original form was, but the simplicity of the everyday museum environment connected to the meaning that Witgraff described.

Prior (2002) explained how the colors in museums affect the art and the audience's experience, but the researcher found the staging of the performance and colors used can also affect the audience's experience. If a hockey arena that is used as a concert venue was left in its normal state with all the hockey paraphernalia and no transformation into an environment to match the stage setup, it becomes distracting and does not enhance the meaning of the music.

Dewey (2005) addressed the importance of the historical background of the artwork to the experience. This study recognizes that high culture performances are usually best at introducing a work and discussing the history or technical elements, and popular culture tends to have a focus on describing the artist's inspiration for the song, the composer's life, and how it relates to the audience and what kind of message they can take with them. The emotion shown by the musician encourages the aesthetic enjoyment in the listener (Laszlo, 1967), and this study found it does more than encourage it; it enhances it and is part of the main ingredients in a recipe to experience the music and the performance at the highest level.

All of the elements within the five aesthetic senses are pertinent to creating the highest-level performance arts experience. Each performance and musician can fulfill each element differently and still fulfill the aesthetic senses to the fullest in a way that supports the performance. Using the aesthetic senses in a performance is an art form. When multiple techniques are used that originate from both popular and high culture, the senses are stimulated to a higher level or as Mayo (2008) explained, mass media allowed the message to be more clearly communicated and appeal more to the senses. This means that high culture arts are not the answer for everything; it takes a mix of techniques from both cultures for each arts sense to create a successful performance arts experience including elements from each of the five aesthetic senses. The next step in the arts and communication research is to explore what makes the highest experience for the musicians and artists performing on stage or how the aesthetic senses play a role in enhancing other experiences, such as learning experiences. As a result, this research could begin to bring all arts cultures to a high-level where the audiences hunger to taste and experience the arts, and artists could perfect their recipe to inspire every audience.

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