

Mirjam James

# Jamie's Concerts



**GUILD**  
SCHOOL  
**HALL**

# Jamie's Concerts evaluation

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Jamie's Concert is the first concert format aimed at primary carers of autistic children by the pianist Noriko Ogawa. The key aims are to help autistic people through helping the parents and carers around them, to offer high quality events specifically tailored for the primary carers of autistic children, to run these concerts during the day, when children are at school or care and to combine the concerts with tea and mingle time after the concerts to combat social isolation. They were first established in Japan before Noriko started to perform in the UK

The present report about Jamie's Concerts is based on a pilot research project carried out using a research grant given by the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London.

The aims for the research project were

- 1) Exploring experiences of primary carers of autistic children visiting a specially organised concert
- 2) Identifying and describing key aspects of that experience (musical, social and emotional)
- 3) Establishing to what extent the engagement with Jamie's Concerts can be considered to be "therapeutic", without claiming to be therapy



Audience members including Jamie's Mum



1<sup>st</sup> UK concert and mingle time in Amagasaki



## Data collection

### Questionnaire

Data was collected using questionnaires with sections to be filled in before and after the concerts. The questionnaires included quantitative and qualitative sections. Quantitative questions gathering information about general concert attendance, caring responsibilities and liking of the event, while qualitative questions gave participants the opportunity to explain their choices of answers and describe experiences in more detail. A small number of in-depths interviews were carried out which included questions around the event itself, but also the lasting effect in the week that followed the event. The data collection was carried out over several months 2015/2016 and captured audiences attending concerts in the UK as well as Japan.

The total of 143 valid questionnaires were collected of which 65 (45%) were collected after concert in Kawasaki (Japan), all others (78) were collected after concerts in the UK, with the largest group of participants from Cardiff.

## Interviews

Three interviews with audience members were carried out following the live concerts. All participants, who gave consent to be contacted for further research, were contacted and invited to take part in a short telephone interview. The invitation was sent twice, as we had a very low response rate after the initial invitation. We conducted a total of three in-depth interviews two female and one male participant. Two interviewees had been to one concert each, while the third interviewee had already attended three of Noriko's Jamie's Concert, the last one in a working capacity.

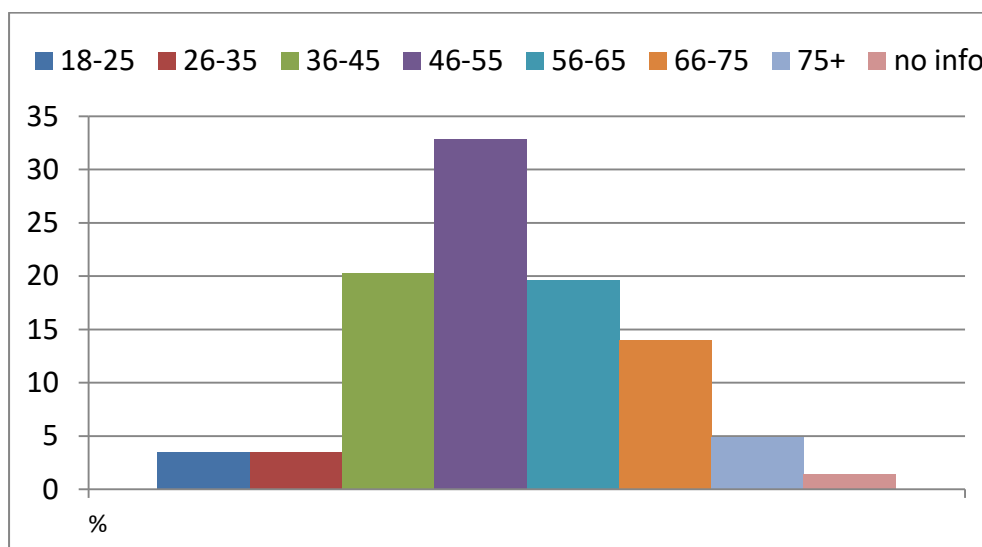
All interviews were semi-structured, with questions covering four sections: 1) before the concert, 2) during the concert, 3) after the concert and 4) general and in the future. Some questions were similar to open ended questions asked in the questionnaire (particularly section 1 and 2) while section 3 asked about the long term effect of events such as Jamie's concerts.

## Analysis

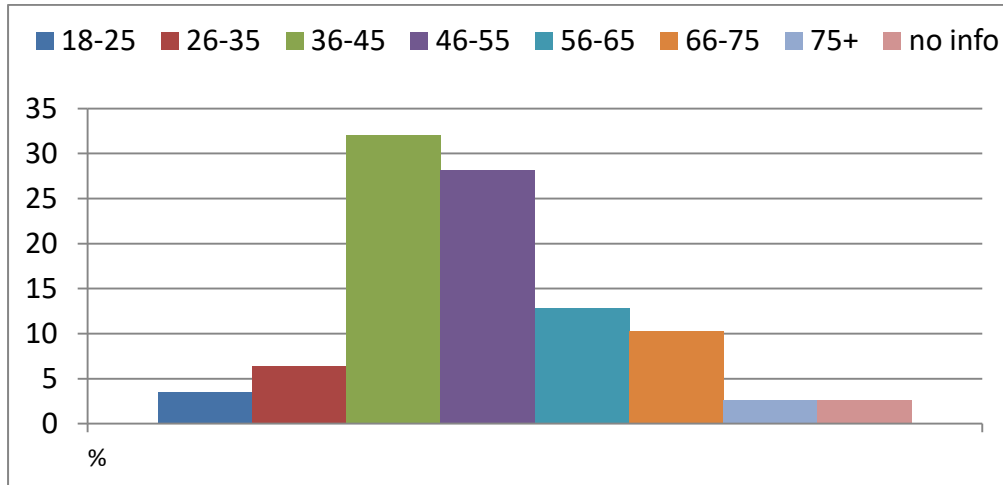
### Questionnaire Demographics

The overwhelming majority of participants were female (116; 81% of all participants, with 3 participants not disclosing their gender). When only looking at participants attending concerts in the UK, the number of female participants is slightly lower (76% compared to 22% male participants and 2% missing data).

The majority of participants were between 46 and 55 years old, and 20% were between 36 and 45 years old and another 20% were between 56 and 65 years old (compare figure 1). The age distribution of UK only participants showed a slightly younger group with 32% of the participants being between the age of 36-45, while 28% were age 46-55 (compare figure 2).



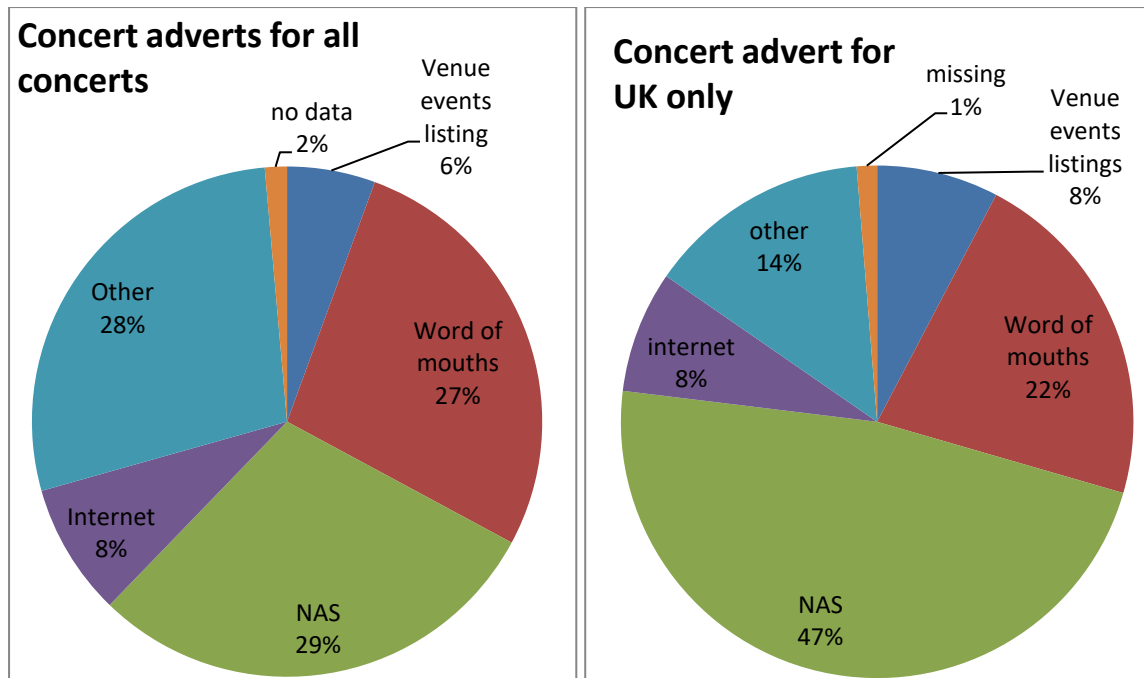
**Figure 1:** Age distribution of all participants in %



**Figure 2:** Age distribution of UK only participants in %

Participants indicated two main sources of how they found out about Jamie’s concerts: Through the National Autistic Society (NAS), and through “word of mouth” (compare figure 3). Participants who had ticked ‘other’ included answers such as “heard it from a friend”, “from a different society (Japan Society North in the UK)”, “from a magazine or newspaper” as well as “found on facebook”. Looking only at the UK data, the impact of the NAS in distributing the concerts was much larger, followed by “word of mouth”.

The venue itself as well as other internet sources did not play a huge role in recruiting an audience. The data indicate that in Japan, where Jamie’s Concerts are always held in the same venue, the concerts are not well advertised at the venue itself. However, in future surveys more detailed questioning (including radio, newspaper, through a friend) should lead to an even better understanding how audience members found information about the concerts and which areas of promotion are underrepresented.



**Figure 3:** Concert information found by participants. Left side all participants included, right side UK participants only

28% of all participants were members of the NAS, and 29% stated that they were not members of the NAS, while a total of 37% of participants did not answer this question. Looking at the UK participants only, NAS membership was much higher, with 53% stating that they are members of the NAS, and 18% not answering the question which meant that the number of participants not being members of the NAS was the same as in the overall data set. The higher NAS-membership numbers amongst UK participants is probably the main reason why almost half of all concert attendees heard about the concert through the NAS (as shown in figure 3).

A similar high percentage of participants (32.87%) did not answer the question whether or not they were a parent or carer of a person with autism. In informal comments after the concerts some participants mentioned that they are related – e.g. being a grandparent or a family friend – to a person with autism, but do not carry the main caring responsibilities. Other audience members mentioned that they care for a child with other disabilities or conditions. However, the majority of participants, 57.34%, stated that they are carers of a person with autism. 9.79% stated explicitly that they don't care for a person with autism. When looking at the UK only participants, the numbers of carers /parents of a person with autism who attended the concert were with 68% higher compared to the whole dataset. 17% stated that they don't have caring responsibilities and 15% did not answer the question. These results suggest that concerts in Japan attract a wider range of people, not only carers of autistic people, but also carers/parents of people with other problems and a wider circle of family and friends of people with autism, as well as general music lovers, which points to a possibility that the concerts can be a vehicle to increase general awareness of autism.

For 54% of all participants the concert was the first of its kind to be visited, while 14% stated that it was not the first time (31% did not answer the question). Since Jamie's Concerts have been running in Japan for several years it is not surprising that 80% of UK participants stated that this was the first time to attend a concert for autism carers and only 10% answered that this is not the first time

(during one of the in-depths interviews it became clear that several audience members visited two Jamie's Concerts in the Midlands).

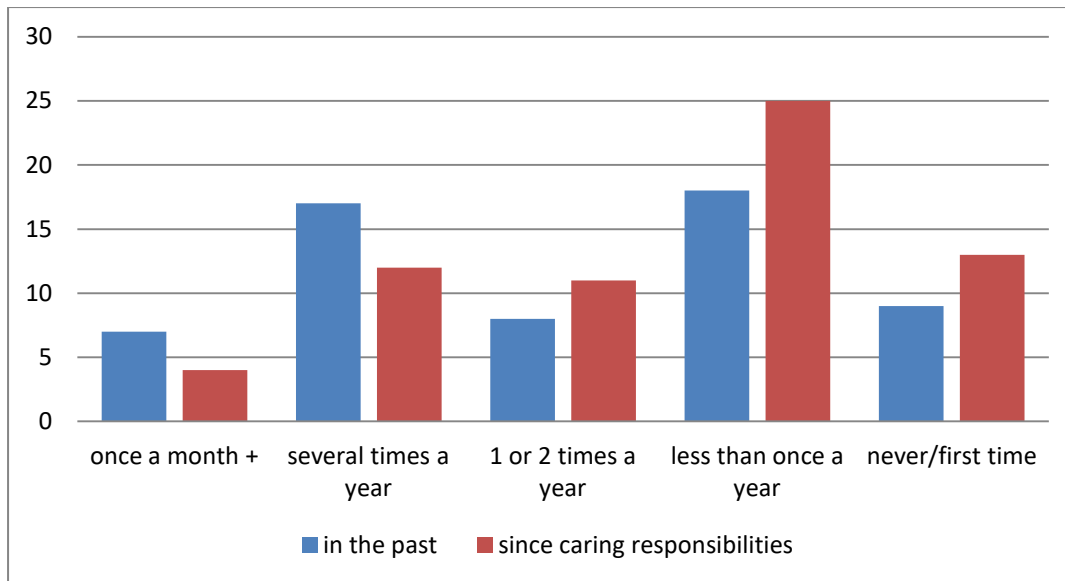
For 70.6% of participants the day chosen for the concert was easy to attend, 22.38% felt it was somewhat easy to attend and 7% found it difficult to attend. The time of the day (during the day) was very easy for 69.5%, while 17.5% found it somewhat difficult and 4.3% found it quite difficult to attend. Here no big differences can be detected to the UK-only data, with 74% stating that it was very easy to attend the concert on this day of the week, 20% that it was somewhat in the middle and only 5% that it was difficult to attend, while 72% found the time on the day very easy to attend, 13% somewhat in the middle and only 4% found it very difficult to attend during the day.

### **The concert experience**

Participants were asked to rate how much they'd enjoyed the concert on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 meaning 'not at all' and 5 meaning 'very much'. The mean-rating was 4.9, with 11 participants not having given an answer.

### **Concert attendance before and after gaining caring responsibilities**

One of the key criteria of Jamie's Concerts is the accessibility of the concerts: they are scheduled during a weekday at daytime, when families are more likely to have some help to care for their autistic people. Data presented above showed that for the majority of participants the day and time of the concert was very convenient. Evening concerts might be harder to achieve and therefore we presumed that parents and carers would be less able to attend 'normal' concerts scheduled in the evening. Two questions in this survey reflected the difficulties of attending concerts when looking after a person with autism: The question on concert attendance before and since participants had to take over caring responsibilities for an autistic person/child. In this analysis, only responses were taken into account, which were given by participants who stated that they have primary caring responsibilities of an autistic person. Comparing participants answers for 'On average, how frequently do you currently attend live classical music events' with 'How frequently did you attend live classical music events before you had caring responsibilities for a person with autism (if you do)' revealed a statistically significant drop in opportunities to attend classical live performances with the onset of caring responsibilities (compare with figure 4).



**Figure 4:** Concert attendance before and since participants gained caring responsibilities in %. Only participants were included, who stated to have primary caring responsibilities (N=59)

### Social aspect – post concert tea & biscuits & chat

One key element of Jamie’s concert is the social aspect, when tea and biscuits are distributed after the concert and audience members can talk to each other and with Noriko. Only 19% of all participants said they didn’t speak to anybody they hadn’t met before, while the majority of 62% used the opportunity to talk to someone they hadn’t met before. Another 19% didn’t answer that question. Looking only at the UK participants, the percentage of participants talking to someone they didn’t previously know was higher at 78% and the percentage of participants who said they didn’t speak to anybody they didn’t know before was lower at 15% compared to the full data set. Taking into account that occasionally participants were asked to finish the second half of the questionnaire before the social mingling time had started, most of the reported occasions of speaking to someone they had not met before happened before the concert. It can be concluded that more than 62% will have spoken to someone they didn’t know before.

While 1/3 of participants didn’t indicate how much they valued the opportunity to meet others, the mean (average) rating for the question was 4.8 (with 1 meaning “not much” and 5 “very much”).

And would the audience come again? While 19% didn’t answer that question, 80% of all participants answered that they would come again. For the UK participants 94% stated they would come again, with only 1 person stating ‘maybe’.

### Qualitative comments

A number of different sections of the survey gave participants the opportunity to include thoughts about the experience of Jamie’s concerts in their own words. Since the background of the concerts in Japan and UK were different – in Japan concerts are well established and include co-performers or narrators, and are paid for by the audience, while UK concerts are new, more intimate and personal due to Noriko’s free and personal introductions between pieces – the following section concentrates on comments given by audience members visiting the UK concert.

Qualitative answers were given after the concert, asking first for general comments about the experience without any further specifications. Participants were also asked which piece of the programme they enjoyed the most (they could give a composer's name) and were asked to explain their choice. The next qualitative question focused on the social element after the concert, when audience members were offered tea and biscuits and were able to mingle among each other and speak to Noriko. The questionnaire gave also space to suggestions how to improve these concerts and a final space for any further comments someone wished to make.

The analysis of these answers, as well as the interview data, was based on Braun and Clarke (2006) approach carrying out a thematic analysis, resulting in a "thematic map" (figure 5) to capture and interpret all important aspects of Jamie's Concerts.

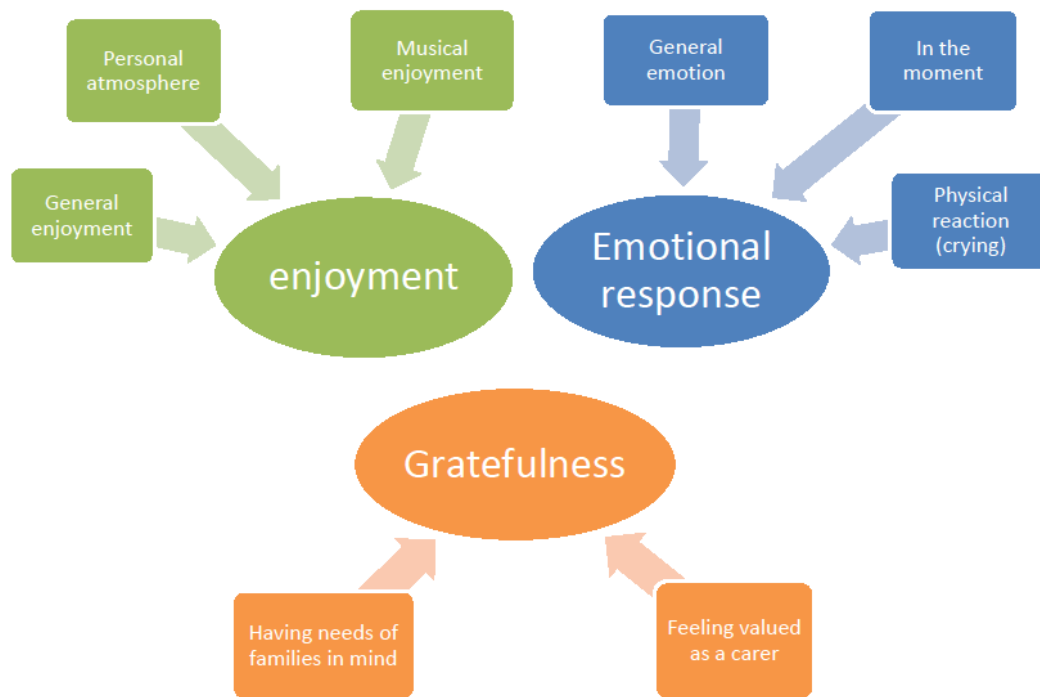
### General experience: enjoyment- emotional responses - gratefulness

While some of the questions specifically addressed the preference for a piece or the social gathering after the concerts, some answers given in these sections were linked to the event experience in general. These responses have been gathered together and can be grouped in three different types of responses: enjoyment, gratefulness and a personal/emotional response to the experience.

Responses coded as '**enjoyment**' referred to comments such as *'One of the most lovely mornings of my life'*, *'I loved the (...) very personal approach'* or *'Very enjoyable and thoughtful performance'*, which basically captured three categories: a 'general' enjoyment, enjoyment of the intimate/personal atmosphere and musical enjoyment. Over the whole data-set, 69 comments referred to 'enjoyment'.

The second general type of responses has been coded as '**personal/emotional response**'. Comments that were grouped here strongly related to the music heard, as they described very individual responses to the music either as an increase of general emotions, a physical reaction such as crying or a feeling of being in the moment and unaware of any caring responsibilities: *'Wonderful relaxing music taking me away from every day responsibilities and worries'*.

While – presumably – most audiences would refer to 'enjoyment' after experiencing a live concert they have volunteered to attend, whatever the nature of the concert or the audience, and also the second group of comments – emotional responses – are not unique to these concerts – the third type of comments (30 in total) – **gratefulness** – seems to be more closely linked to the specific type of concert. Participants expressed their gratefulness that someone has the needs of families who live with autism in their focus, as well as feeling valued as carer, with comments such as *'Thank you so much for considering the needs of families and holding this in the day'* or *'I feel very privileged to have such a unique experience, but also very valued as a carer, which makes a big difference.'*



**Figure 5:** Thematic map of the questionnaire's qualitative comments, describing key characteristics of participants' general experience of Jamie's Concerts

## Interview

In analysing these interviews, coding started by using themes mapped out on answers collected in questionnaires. Where interviews echoed participants' perception as described in key characteristics of participants' general experience of Jamie's Concerts?

All three interviews captured the three main characteristics, enjoyment, personal/physical responses, and, gratefulness. As interview participants had more time to express their thoughts about the experience, key characteristics can be more refined and described in more details in the following analysis.

### Enjoyment of the 'whole package'

Also here, the event was enjoyed as a 'whole package', which included a special atmosphere, as well as the music. The special atmosphere was created through the personal link Noriko conveyed when she spoke to the audience, but also the way she spoke to the audience, which was described as "humble", "nice", and "not elitist": *"And I thought, wow, there wasn't anything elitist about her, there wasn't anything grand. [...] She was such a humble person."* However, throughout the interviews it became clear that the music was the key highlight of the events, *"The music, I think, was the most important thing"*. The small group of interviewees still united participants with different backgrounds when it comes to previous concert attendance. While two participants used to go to more concerts and still try to go, one participant was described by themselves as 'not very musical'. The programmes excited all interviewees, regardless of their previous concert experience. The reason was described as choosing a mix of well known pieces combined with lesser or unknown contemporary compositions. This approach was valued by interviewees as an attraction for these

concerts: “[The] approach and the music she chose was very interesting, cause she chose a mixture of really well known familiar pieces and some unusual pieces [...] quite a lot of people we knew were music lovers, although there were a lot of people who wouldn’t normally go to a concert but thoroughly enjoyed it.” The strong link between the music and Noriko’s personality can be illustrated with the quote: “So I went down, really it was only afterwards that I realised that - I never learned to play the piano, I’m not musical - and she was obviously very, very talented, but I didn’t know HOW talented - until - I was talking about the concert, we were speaking about the concert to people, - and some of my friends knew of her, so it was just, -, I think I was as impressed with her as a person as I was about her music.”

## Emotional responses

Interviewees expressed in more detail their emotional responses to the music and to the whole event. It was already hinted in the questionnaire that the concert touched the audience emotionally which led to strong emotional responses.

Interviewee A: “A lot of people were very moved, very moved by it and very, very attentive, you know you could tell it had quite an effect on people, that’s because you know, to be able to arrange to be there for an hour and just be calm and relaxed and you know, the music choice was so clever too. Very nice.”

While most participants described their emotional responses in their questionnaire in more general terms, some referred to their physical reactions, i.e. crying during the performance, one interviewee spoke about her physical responses during the concert in more detail:

**Interviewee C:** “I remember going to concerts, and, once Noriko started playing, it was really emotional, me and my friend started crying (laughs), this is ridiculous, we are going there for a nice time and we are both crying (still laughing). It wasn’t, you know, it wasn’t a sad experience, it was just an emotional experience, because we felt so, so privileged.”

This interviewee also described that she was particularly touched as Noriko started the concert with a Debussy piece that her son likes to choose as one of the pieces programmed on their keyboard. Her laughing while she spoke about her tears during the concert was almost like a nervous laugh, as if embarrassed for such a “ridiculous” response.

During the concert I attended the majority of audience members could be observed being moved to tears. I can only speculate to what extent they felt almost embarrassed at their own responses. It would be far-fetched to draw a close link between an overwhelming feeling they felt and the lack of response rate we had when recruiting for interviews. However, this participant’s almost embarrassed admission would suggest that it was hard, even in an anonymous telephone interview to talk about those responses. The emotions evoked by the music, but also by Noriko’s personal approach when speaking to the audience, seem to be in contrast to the often emotionally “distant” personalities of people with autism, as described by another interviewee: “She was just, I think it was her humility, she talked with such humility that... she could do this because ... erm ... autistic children aren’t they are not to be ... erm ... cuddly in a way that some other children with different needs are, probably sort of warm and ... sometimes when I meet autistic children ... erm, they are not ... obviously like, because there is, you know, part of the parcel what autism is, they tend to be distant, erm [...] I thought she was one of the most amazing people I’ve met in a long time.”

However, whether participants referred to their crying in the questionnaire or the interview, they all clarified that these tears were not out of sadness, but out of happiness and joy.

## Gratefulness

All three interviewees expressed that one of the most amazing things of this concert was feeling valued as a carer. But an activity aimed at the carer was a novel experience to them, and a highly valued one.

**Interviewee A:** *"...but what was different was the idea that she was doing it, you know, for parents of autistic people and cares of autistic people, and that was a really nice gesture. Because a lot of the time, you know, sometimes people organise special autism friendly film viewings or autism friendly concerts or something where you take, you take your child or a person with autism along with you, so that was different about this was, that this was for us, not for the autistic person. [...] That made it quite special.*

*M: Have you had an experience in the past similar to that? Where it is kind of aimed at you as carer or parent?*

*Interviewee A: Not that I can recall, no. It was - quite often I think as carers or parents, you are not really thought of particularly, you know, sort of, the focus quite rightly is all on the autistic person, you know, in any case on any disability, the focus is on the disabled person, and I think often carers are just taken for granted, and that felt very nice."*

**Interviewee B:** *"I felt absolutely blessed that I have gone, absolutely incredible, her support gave me such a positive, because it's not an easy thing, something when you think of a high functioning autistic child, you don't see the problem."*

**Interviewee C:** *"So there is that, the ability to go, during the day, but also it's the sense of feeling valued as a carer. Somebody has thought about you..."*

The feeling for being valued as a carer was paired with an almost astonished discovery, that there was someone, who was not directly related to an autistic person, yet understood the needs of parents and carers.

**Interviewee A:** *"And that was very touching, when she talked about her friend's son, and you know the fact that she realised that the music was really calming and relaxing for the parents, - and you know so she wanted to do that for other people, you know it was a very, very great thing that she does and we were very impressed!"*

**Interviewee B:** *"I can remember thinking, gosh, she's taken on this responsibility for several years, for someone she is not REALLY being close to us, not a member of the family, in a busy life, she has taken on this sort of mantel and kept that responsibility."*

## Specific answers

Going back to the questionnaires, participants were asked to give specific answers when naming their favourite piece, but also what could be improved in future concerts. Some answers were given in more general terms, but a large number of participants gave specific answers.

### Music performed

With regard to a specific piece, 54 participants gave the name of one or more specific composers, the most popular being Debussy, followed by Chopin. A further 4 were able to describe the piece. When explaining their choice, participants described – as mentioned before – a general enjoyment of the piece (*'I enjoyed it all for different reasons'*) or emotional responses (*'This had a huge impact on my feelings. I became completely absorbed. It was like being cleansed.'*), but also a large number (22) of comments were linked to the music, either in a music analytical way (*'A piece of contrasts & loads of fun, though loved the drama in the 1<sup>st</sup> Rachmaninov piece'*), appreciating novelty (*'The Takemitsu piece for introducing me to someone new'*), Noriko's playing in general (*'Noriko's playing was simply stunning'*) or a personal connection (*'It reminded me of my own childhood as well as my son playing them'*).

### Social mingling

The total of 26 individual comments were given with regard to the social mingling after the concert. The enjoyment here was strongly linked to the opportunity to meet others in the same position (*'Wonderful to network with other carers'*) as well as a very relaxed atmosphere (*'A lovely relaxed & accessible atmosphere.'*).

### Future concert

Some answers in this section – as well in the sections asking for further comments and areas for improvement – expressed a wish for more concerts like that. The request for more concerts in general were made as personal wishes (*'I hope, I have an opportunity to see this lady play in the future'*), love for the general concept (*'Great enthusiasm for more respite events in the Ogawa model'*), but also the hope to share these experiences with other carers (*'Love to invite other autistic mums to enjoy the quiet & privileged moments of Noriko.'*).

### Improvements

The question how these concerts could be improved generated 44 individual answers. Almost half of them (19) said it couldn't be improved (*'It was perfect!'*). Of those who made constructive comments of how to improve, the suggestion to print a simple programme is the easiest to fulfil. The printed programme would be used as a simple memory of the names of composers and of pieces, but also of a memory of a special event (*'I would have loved a souvenir programme (for autographs and memories'*).

The largest group of improvements were around better, wider and clearer promotion which would lead to a larger concert audience (*'It would have been nice if some more people had heard about it.'*) while at the same time giving more families the opportunity to experience the benefits from such a respite. Here suggestions included that smaller autism groups should be informed (*'Smaller autism groups were unaware of this event'*). And some participants were unsure about the nature of the event and would have loved to bring others (*'Would have brought grandparents/family along if we knew at the time that you could. Assumed one ticket per email.'*).

## Social mingling – the “icing on the cake”

Interviewees were also asked if they would have come if it had been a tea party and a chat, without the music. All participants agreed that there are a good number of coffee morning and similar gatherings to meet other families with autistic children. It also became obvious that in particular social media linked to networks such as NAS or Thrive was the most used way to find out Noriko’s concert. However, the music was the main reason to come during the day to attend the concert:

**M.** If it had been just a tea party and a chat, without the music, would you still have come?

**Interviewee A:** *“Probably not. [...] There are a lot of things like that, coffee morning and stuff, and because we both love music anyway, that was a definite extra attraction, and [...] quite a lot people we knew were music lovers, although there were a lot of people who wouldn't normally go to a concert but thoroughly enjoyed it.”*

But the opportunity to mingle afterwards was perceived as very beneficial as well *“it was a really nice touch with the tea and coffee and chat and so on”* and *“I think that was just the icing on the cake”*. It also prolonged and underpinned some of the feeling of gratefulness as well as emotional responses perceived during the concert; experiences perceived by the interviewees: *“Because she came to the table and sat by me [...] so humbled, she literally sat there, I couldn't speak to her, I couldn't speak to her because that level of commitment was so absolutely inspiring, I don't know, I don't know where she [?] but erm, to me that afternoon was just bliss..., I thought she was incredible.”*

Also similar to the emotional response when Noriko performed a piece that one of the interviewees son’s likes to put on on their programmed keyboard was the unexpected discovery of a joint preference for the same biscuits between Jamie – the concert’s ‘patron’ - and the interviewees son: *“And it was very sweet the biscuits were what we call our diamond biscuits, because that’s what our autistic son calls them, they are custard cream and the diamond shape of them, Noriko didn't know that, so she was really erm, pleased to know that they were called diamond biscuits, that other autistic children liked them. That was a really nice thing.”*

## After the concert and thoughts about future events

Interviewees were asked how the concert affected them in the days and weeks afterwards, and if the benefits of coming outweigh the costs and organisational trouble they had to go through in order to attend.

The feeling of being touched and understood and therefore valued as a carer stayed with all interviewees beyond the concert experience. They all spoke about their experience with - if they came with someone else - the person they came with as well as to other people. Unprompted they all said that they would like to promote these concerts to their friends and other members in their network, as they would like to share the special experience they had. All expressed two ways of wanting to help: giving more parents and carers the opportunity to receive such a “gift”, but also help Jamie’s Concerts to develop and succeed.

Thoughts on how to increase the audience were expressed by all interviewees and – besides the use of networks – all participants reflected on the lack of local media interest – paper and radio.

Promoting the concert in local media would not only increase the audience but also help to promote the awareness of autism as well as promoting classical music: *“I also think you could probably get local radio stations involved, you know because it's the most brilliant story, you know, people don't often hear those kind of classical music or music generally, you know, erm, sort of to discover that someone does something as special as that, would be quite nice.”*

When thinking about the benefits Jamie's concerts would bring to a future audience, interviewees named aspects in both categories: benefits for anyone with caring responsibility as well as a general opportunity to introduce classical music to a new audience. For parents and carer the concert meant *“an hour of calm and relaxation”* as well as the opportunity to *“spend time with likeminded people”*. The suggestion that these concerts are a way to foster new audiences could be sensed in earlier quoted remarks that it didn't have any of the clichés of classical music, such as being elitist. The widespread enjoyment and emotional response might also lead some individuals to wanting to explore classical music more: *“and another think is, I guess, if you didn't know that music already, it introduce you to some music that you didn't know, that you might enjoy, that you might want to share with your family and so on. And like this, if you are not used to going to concert, it might give you a taste of, you know, want to listen to classical music more often or want to go to concerts more often”*.

Most interviewees had attended a Jamie's concert in a main concert hall which was easy to get to, even if travel times were up to one hour. Scheduling the concert during the day made it easier for all three to attend, as they did not need to worry about caring responsibilities. One interviewee – who came to her third Jamie's concert as a helper – said she wouldn't have attended the third concert as a normal audience member, as this was held in a venue only accessible by car, which she doesn't have. Accessibility of the venue was also an issue mentioned, as not everywhere had easy access for wheelchair users, which could have caused difficulties with a larger audience.

## Conclusions

Attendance at concerts had significantly decreased since caring responsibilities started. While this can be seen as a common problem to most parents with small children, the added difficulties for parents with autistic children and adults are, that special childcare is often needed to deal with the autistic person, which is costly and not widely available, but which reduces the possibility to go to concerts or other social activities even more. A small but noticeable number of audience members also stated, that they had never been to a concert before their caring responsibilities and this was the first time they've attended a classical concert since caring responsibilities. These data suggest that these concerts have also the potential to draw in new audiences to classical concerts.

Jamie's concerts try to overcome some of these major hurdles: Jamie's concerts take place during the day, when children and adults are cared for, which was greeted by audience members with huge approval. The concerts are one hour long, without an interval, shorter pieces are performed with introduction into the music as well as Noriko's motivation to run these events. After the concerts is time to talk to other audience members as well as Noriko, while having tea and biscuits. Audience members responded very positively to the whole event.

Jamie's concerts are described as a unique experience for audience members. The feeling of being valued as a carer was the key and unique experience of the concert audience. Not only the enjoyment of the event and deep emotional responses to the music performed but also the whole approach to the event was also reported by the participants.

One research aim was to establish, to what extent the engagement with Jamie's Concerts could be considered to be "therapeutic", without claiming to be therapy. The described deep emotional responses to the music seem to serve a therapeutic effect. The descriptions here are similar to accounts described by Alf Gabrielsson, who writes about positive effects "without the participation of a special therapist, it is the music itself that is the 'therapist'" (p.220). Gabrielsson also points out that these 'therapeutic' experiences – as well as deliberate use of music as therapist – remain untold, some people might be afraid of being "regarded as a bit 'weird'" if one would describe strong emotional experiences. Our low response rate to interview requests might tap into such self-conscious feelings of participants, as most of them indicated willingness to participate in further research, but might have shied away from one-to-one interview requests. While – in my own observation – the majority of audience members shed a tear or two during the performance, the majority of questionnaires did not mention tears, but spoke about strong emotional responses in more general terms.

Gabrielsson goes on explaining the positive effects his participants described due to the music's "relaxing and calming effect", which provides "security and the relief of built-up negative feelings such as worry and anxiety. The music can divert attention from negative feelings and states, which might not to be eliminated but to be reduced and become subordinate to the music. The music can express and arouse positive feelings such as calmness, security, happiness, strength, vitality, hope, and liberation (...)". The emotional experiences of audience members described in our own study also describe similar positive and calming effects. Participants were able to name certain pieces and described these pieces in connection with certain emotional responses. The piece-related effect is also described by Gabrielsson, when he describes how the expression and the course of the music must suit the particular person in a particular situation. In the case of Jamie's concerts, a link between a particular situation (being a carer of an autistic child) and the music was made through Noriko's narrative around the music as well as her motivation to carry out these concerts. While Gabrielsson describes how the music in these 'therapeutic' situations can be regarded as a representation of another persons, "a person who understands and talks to you", Noriko's narration might help to create a better link between the specific audience and the music performed, which might magnify an experience of the music for many people, that Gabrielsson describes as a "personal message, that the music is directed straight at them".

Therefore one of the key questions is, to what extent is the success of these concerts due to the 'Noriko-factor', which was described by audience members as being empathetic, as well as her interest and understanding of the life with an autistic person, her personal introduction of pieces as well as sharing her own stories with Jamie, her day to day experiences, positive stories, combined with well chosen repertoire and a world class performance.

On the one hand, it was the music itself that was most valued. On the other hand, the success of the concert was due to the combination of music and a particular narration – not patronising, but with the audience in front in mind. Also Gabrielsson underlines the importance of music suiting a

particular person as well as a particular situation for a therapeutic effect. The narration by the performer can create that suitability.

As stated before, the audience also included audience members new to classical live concerts. The high rating for 'I would definitely come again' suggests that Jamie's Concerts can also be seen as a recruitment for new audiences of classical music and as such as an example for the creation of new concert forms suitable for new or different audiences. A research paper by Dobson (2010) investigated aspects that are important to individuals with little or no experience in order to enjoy a concert experience. The feeling of inclusion and participation in the performance were important, and the use of further information through spoken introductions played a significant role in enhancing the participant's understanding of the events. Noriko's narrative choice to not only talk about the music she had chosen to play, but also about her experience with Jamie, the autistic child that gave the inspiration to these concerts, served all these purposes: the audience felt immediately included. Extending the concert to a social mingling with tea and biscuits turned the listeners into participating performers, when they described how it felt to have Noriko – and other audience members – as their "listeners" and "co-performers".

Jamie's Concerts are a strong and valued tool to support people with primary caring responsibilities, their wider families and friends. Besides bringing respite to audience members for the duration of the concert and the ability to meet others in similar circumstances, the concerts can also be seen as a therapeutic opportunity to reach audience members on an emotional level. It is the music itself that resonates in the audience as well as the unique experiences, that someone had their wellbeing in mind:

*So there is that, the ability to go, during the day, but also it's the sense of feeling valued as a carer.  
Somebody has thought about you...*

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## Literature:

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