

Expert judges hinder womens' chances of winning music competitions

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Expert judges are biased against women entrants in top international music competitions, but audiences made up of the public do not display this bias, new research from Vienna University of Economics and Business (WU) shows.

Assistant Professor of Economics at WU, Dr Roberto Asmat, drew on new data to find that being female reduced the chances that an expert jury would rank a contender first.

The results of this research are important as the benefits of winning a prize are significant for early-career musicians.

Dr Asmat found that audience and expert judgements match only 38% of the time.

The study also found that while winning a jury-awarded first prize does not predict future success in music competitions, winning an audience prize does. Audiences are therefore at least as good, and possibly better, at identifying quality than expert juries.

The research suggests that juries may be more biased due to their small size, whereas the larger size of an audience averages out peculiar opinions, a finding that is consistent with the empirical literature on the wisdom of crowds.

"While the question "what is high quality art?" remains unanswered, we add a further observation, namely that specialists are not always reliable adjudicators of artistic quality, and, at least on some dimensions, may be outperformed by the lay public", says Dr Asmat.

The data studied covered 40 years and drew from 370 international music competitions in which both expert juries and public audiences chose a winner from a set of finalists, and the findings were published in the Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization.

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