

## A GANZFELD EXPERIMENT USING MUSICAL TARGETS WITH PREVIOUS HIGH SCORERS FROM THE GENERAL POPULATION

by MELVYN J. WILLIN

### ABSTRACT

An ESP experiment was conducted as a continuation of the previously reported experiment using music as the target (Willin, 1996). Sixteen trials were carried out during a period of six weeks in Essex and Sheffield using four pairs of people with each pair participating in four trials. Pairings were chosen deliberately according to previous above-chance scores. A chance hit rate of 25% was expected and a hit rate of exactly 25% was achieved. One pair scored 50%, one pair scored 0% and two pairs each scored 25%. These results thus provide no evidence for the communication of music by ESP.

### INTRODUCTION

It is not felt necessary to repeat information contained in the previous paper (Willin, 1996). The reason for undertaking this further set of trials was to ascertain whether previous high scorers could repeat or increase their positive results in identical tests. The four pairs of people chosen will be referred to throughout as:— J & P, M & H, C & A, and E & N.

In the previous ganzfeld experiment these pairings scored as follows:—

- J & P 1 hit, 0 misses. (J achieved 2 hits and 2 misses with other Senders.)  
(60% hit rate with 25% expected by chance)
- M & H 2 hits, 0 misses. (M achieved 0 hits and 1 miss with another Sender.)  
(66% hit rate with 25% expected by chance)
- C & A 5 hits, 1 miss. (No other people were used.)  
(83% hit rate with 25% expected by chance)
- E & N 2 hits, 0 misses (No other people were used.)

It is freely admitted that the relatively small number of trials may have produced unreliable statistics.

### METHOD

#### *Preparation for the Experiment*

12 trials took place at my house in Essex.

4 trials took place at the University of Sheffield Music Department.

The same safeguards were in force as before except for the Sheffield sessions, where all the trials took place in different buildings separated by approximately 100 yards. The buildings were out of sight of one another.

The same music pool was used with packages previously chosen having been replaced with identical envelopes and contents.

The same procedures were followed but with less explanation necessary, since all the participants were well versed in the trials' content. A Helper was on hand to deal with any Receiver problems, and the Experimenter remained with the Sender as before. No problems were encountered.

There were differences in the timings of the trials. To fit in with their

personal schedules pair C & A undertook two sessions on the same day, and pair E & N undertook all four sessions in two days. This may have had an adverse effect on their results because of physical tiredness or boredom. With the latter pair there was certainly a feeling that important business was being interrupted to accommodate the trials.

The Receiver of pair M & H arrived for each session after having rushed back on a commuter train from London, and on one occasion the Sender had just been rejected after a job interview. Their minds may well have been on other matters than relaxing into a *ganzfeld* condition.

The Receiver of pair J & P seemed fairly relaxed for all the sessions (as she was in the last group of trials). However, the Sender was under more strain for these sessions, having recently been informed of breast cancer with on-going chemotherapy and all its pressures.

It is human nature to make excuses for poor (or good) results, but when there are extreme circumstances it may be appropriate to mention them, even if only to promote further discussion of the material concerned.

With the pair J & P the same Receiver (J) was used for each trial.

With the pair M & H the same receiver (M) was used for each trial.

With the other pairs each person took turns to receive and send.

## RESULTS

An overall hit rate of 25% was achieved—four hits out of sixteen trials—which was exactly what chance would have indicated.

As with the previous experiment, transcriptions were made of the Receivers' comments and these were divided into categories indicating the visual, auditory, olfactory and tactile senses and the Receivers' emotional states. The visual references outnumbered the others, but generally considerably less was said by the Receivers for these trials than during the previous sessions.

### *Discussion of Receiver Transcripts*

Visualizations remained with themes that occurred in the previous experiment. Thus, pastoral scenes were well represented and outdoor activities such as dancing and walking featured again. Auditory sensations were infrequent, but one of the hits (J & P) produced good auditory imagery (Trial 2, full transcript):—

Rhythmic tapping; someone speaking; whistling; rhythm again; hand clapping; children playing; hopscotch; clapping games; happy and light-hearted; assortment of rhythmic instruments; clapping again; children and jumping; skipping; clapping; ice shattering; happy celebration; skipping; dancing; playing.

The Receiver successfully chose *Galan Kangin* gamelan music from Bali. The Receiver wrote: "The term 'gamelan' came into my head during the session but I said 'an assortment of rhythmic instruments'."

An unsuccessful trial by C & A produced strong guitar and Spanish music from the Receiver whilst the Sender was listening to *Now the Drenched Land Awakes* by David Bedford—an unaccompanied choral item!

Olfactory and tactile sensations were almost totally absent, but various emotions were felt; sadness, happiness, beauty, etc. These did not reflect strongly the emotions of either the music or the Senders' interpretations.

Transcripts from E & N made several references to music recently heard on the car's cassette player and to a television programme. The tone of the recorded Receivers' voices would lead one to believe that E & N were not particularly relaxed for their four trials despite the relaxation tape used. (The same could be said of Receiver M.)

### *Receiver Personal Details*

For this series of trials a limited number of Receivers and Senders were used and they had all undertaken the previous ganzfeld and music experiment. They had all expressed a willingness to undertake this further group of sessions with the pairings chosen by them.

J & P were both female and, although not firm friends, they had built up more of a friendship during the course of this and the previous ganzfeld experiment. Both were schoolteachers and both had an interest in music and reading. J was in her mid-sixties and P in her early forties. J was a believer in paranormal matters and had some experience of them, but P was more sceptical, apart from one experience when she believed that she and a group of friends saw an apparition of the living in their teenage years. Both could be classed as having extrovert characteristics.

M & H were both female and acquaintances rather than friends. M was a clerical worker and H was a laboratory technician. M was in her late twenties and H was in her mid-forties. M had an interest in music and socializing, but H, although sharing M's interest in music, placed family matters the highest on her list. Both could be classed as fairly extrovert and both had some belief in the paranormal.

C & A were married and both in their early forties. Both were interested in paranormal matters and C had some experience of Buddhism and meditation. Both could be described as fairly extrovert. C worked in an administrative supervisory position and A was taking an Open University degree in Social Sciences.

E & N were male and female respectively. E was a university professor (in music) and N a Ph.D. student (in music). They had a professional, but friendly, relationship. Apart from sharing a love of music their hobbies did not coincide. E mentioned cycling and N mentioned cinema and reading. E was forty years old and N in her mid-twenties. It was difficult to assess their degree of extroversion or introversion since neither appeared to be particularly strongly one way or the other. There was a difference in their attitudes to the paranormal, since E expressed a disbelief but N had experienced what she believed to be a paranormal occurrence.

If one is to maintain from the previous experiment that mixed-gender, extrovert friends in middle age with a belief in the paranormal and careers involving responsibility and supervision (e.g. teachers) are more likely to achieve above-average scores in ganzfeld trials, then the above participants should have provided good results. Since this was not the case (except with J & P), this must cast doubt on the hypothesis, except for the possibility that other factors were strong enough to overcome these favourable dispositions.

### *Dates, Times and Places of Trials*

These trials all took place during the months of July and August 1995.

Twelve trials took place at my house in Essex and the trials with E & N took place at the University of Sheffield Music Department, Sheffield.

Two of J & P's trials took place during the morning and two during the evening.

M & H's trials all took place during the early evening.

One of C & A's trials took place in the late afternoon and three in the early evening. Two trials were on the same day.

Two of E & N's trials took place in the morning and two in the afternoon. All four trials took place within a period of two days.

There would not seem to be any significant data to be ascertained from these results.

### *The Hit Music*

From the sixteen trials held the following results were achieved:—

Track a was chosen five times with one hit achieved.

Track b was chosen four times with one hit achieved.

Track c was chosen four times with one hit achieved.

Track d was chosen three times with one hit achieved.

These scores indicate a fairly evenly-spread chance score. However, as in the previous experiment, the a tracks were a more popular choice by the Receivers and the modern music provided by the d tracks was chosen less often. Because of insufficient data no claims of significance can be made for these choices.

The actual music sent during these trials was as follows:—

a was sent four times.

c was sent four times.

b was sent three times.

d was sent five times.

It would seem from this that the randomization procedure was working adequately.

### *The Miss Music*

With the relatively few trials it is difficult to provide concrete evidence for trends towards or away from the music chosen. However, it was perhaps of interest to note that the Ligeti piece *Lux Aeterna* appeared as one of the four tracks and was not chosen, as was the case in the previous ganzfeld experiment.

Twelve tracks were not successfully identified and these can be classified as follows:—

7 tracks were 20th-Century pieces, including one Radiophonic Workshop item and one popular number.

3 tracks were Baroque items.

1 was a 'romantic' item.

1 was a sitar solo.

### **CONCLUSION**

It was felt that sixteen trials constituted a small but reasonable number to allow previous high scorers to replicate their results from the previous music and ganzfeld experiment.

From the results achieved, no specific conclusion could be drawn as to the relative merits of the date, time or place of the trials. As with the other experiment, expectations were very high to start with. The Receiver J scored hits with her first two trials in both experiments. As the sessions continued there was a deterioration of hit scores, which almost certainly had an adverse effect on all the participants. An unintentional goat effect may have been displayed by the Experimenter, and there was a noticeable attitude by some of the Receivers and Senders that their busy lives were being interrupted by these sessions.

Modern music scored less well than other categories and confusion as to the Receivers' and Senders' different interpretations of the music may have caused problems in ESP. Blind trials where a Sender was not used were not undertaken, because it was felt that if the Experimenter had known which track was being played then he might have inadvertently acted as an unconscious Sender. It was felt that an extra-sensory bond could be created between the Sender and the Receiver via the emotion brought about by listening to the music.

Ganzfeld experiments are extremely time-consuming in preparation, carrying out and writing up afterwards. Should other researchers wish to explore the use of music as a target pool in ESP experiments, they should take note of the following comments:—

The music needs to be very contrasted and it should also produce strong reactions from the Receivers and Senders. For example, a possible grouping might include:—

- a) *Mars* from the *Planets Suite* by Holst.
- b) A jolly Christmas carol.
- c) *The Moonlight Sonata* by Beethoven.
- d) A heavy metal rock item.

Intellectually-stimulating music should be avoided since an analytical Sender or Receiver may not respond at a 'psychic' level.

The role of the Helper might be explored further as to his or her possible influence on the proceedings.

It might be wise for the Sender as well as the Receiver to hear a relaxation tape prior to listening to the music to be sent, and for him or her to maintain a relaxed state whilst the Receiver is scoring the musical items. This would ensure that the Sender did not distract the Receiver telepathically during the scoring period.

An alternative to white noise *needs* to be found. Too many people started from a water-based situation before moving into other domains in their mentations. Perhaps a continuous 'OM' as used in some Buddhist meditations might be more suitable.

Blind trials where nobody knows what music is being played might be set up in contrast to those using a Sender. (This would involve using headphones with the volume set to zero and a separate tape for every musical item.) It would also have to be ensured that the Experimenter did not know which tape number corresponded to which piece of music, lest unintentional clues be given as to the identity of the music. The results of these trials could then be compared with trials using a Sender.

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*Triceratops, Dumney Lane  
Great Leighs, Chelmsford CM3 1PE*

**REFERENCE**

Willin, M. J. (1996) A ganzfeld experiment using musical targets. *JSPR* 61, 1-17.