

Performing in Lockdown: Intangible Musical Heritage in Belgium During the First Wave of the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract. In March 2020, Belgium went into lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As in most other countries around the world, public musical life stopped. Music societies, bands, and orchestras could not rehearse anymore. Gigs and festivals were canceled or postponed. Music schools temporarily had to close their doors. While this has been financially devastating for professional musicians and a blow to the social lives of Belgium's numerous music societies, it has also been a period of creativity and new possibilities. In May, CEMPER, Centre for Music and Performing Arts Heritage in Flanders (Belgium) launched a survey to investigate these new possibilities and to assess the impact of the lockdown on musical practices during the first wave of the pandemic (March-June 2020). This paper presents the results of the survey and the additional follow-up interviews. It focuses in particular on the responses from performers of two heritage communities with whom CEMPER has worked closely over the past years: carillonneurs and *hafabra* musicians. *Hafabra* ensembles rely on group rehearsals and, as wind ensembles, were among the last societies to be allowed to resume their activities after the first lockdown. Carillon players, by contrast, mostly play alone, performing socially distant music high up in their bell tower. A comparison will reveal the different impact the lockdown has had on their respective musical communities.

Introduction

On Wednesday 12 August 2020, Luc Rombouts opened his weekly performance on the carillon of the Abbey of Park in Leuven (Belgium) with Simon & Garfunkel's 1965 song "The Sound of Silence," in support of the culture sector. Earlier that week, the Belgian event sector had launched a campaign on social media, bearing the song's name. It asked people to place an orange cross with the words "sound of silence" on their profile pages on social media. This was to draw public attention to everyone in the culture sector who had been unable to perform, rehearse, or teach since March 2020 due to the outbreak of COVID-19.¹ The song suited in two ways. It drew the attention to the way musicians had been silenced since March, and—not coincidentally—the song's acronym 'SOS' emphasized the cry for support.

1. Sokken, K. (2020, August 19). "Doorbreek de Stilte, Geef Ons de Kans om te Ondernemen": Evenementensector Lanceert Actie "Sound of Silence", *VRT nws*.
<https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/nl/2020/08/10/sound-of-silence-actie-evenementensector>.

While a full lockdown was not declared until 17 March 2020,² all recreative activities had already been prohibited since 14 March.³ This stopped nearly all public musical life. Venues and music schools had to close. Concerts and rehearsals were canceled. The only exception to this was the carillon. As the obliged social distance of 1.5 metres is not an issue during carillon performances, these performances continued, and even thrived, during the lockdown. For other performers, like musicians in wind orchestras, things changed more drastically.

This paper draws on research conducted by CEMPER, the Centre for Music and Performing Arts Heritage in Flanders in May-July 2020, assessing the impact of the first COVID-19 lockdown (March-June 2020) on musical traditions in Belgium. While the research involved performers of over 60 music genres, this paper focuses on two traditions, with whose community CEMPER has worked closely over the past years: carillon music and *hafabra*. The research seeks to answer two questions: (1) how did the performers experience this unusual period, and (2) in what way has this impacted them as musicians, the groups they play in, and their genre as a whole?

These questions are a result of thinking about these musical practices as a form of intangible cultural heritage and recognizing the consequences of the pandemic as possible threats to the viability of these traditions. Exploring this further, I will first introduce the context in which the research took place, as well as the research methods that were used. Then, I will present and compare the results of the two musical genres.

Five months have passed since the research was done and this paper was first presented at the 7th Symposium of the ICTM Study Group on Applied Ethnomusicology.⁴ The pandemic, however, has not yet passed. The first lockdown was followed by a short summer in which small events and rehearsals were possible. In the autumn, the number of COVID-19 infections rose again and almost all public musical activities were canceled again from 29 October onwards.⁵ Formal music education is able to continue, but physical musical performances and rehearsals remain prohibited at the time of writing, in January 2021. While no additional research has been done since August 2020, the current situation will impact the interpretation of the original research. Taking this into account, this paper's

2. Nationaal Crisiscentrum. (2020, March 17). *Blijf Thuis, Zorg voor Jezelf en Anderen*. Federale Overheidsdienst Binnenlandse Zaken. <https://crisiscentrum.be/nl/news/crisisbeheer/covid-19-blijf-thuis-zorg-voor-jezelf-en-anderen>.

3. Nationaal Crisiscentrum. (2020, March 12). *Coronavirus: Fase 2 Gehandhaafd, Overgang naar de Federale Fase en Bijkomende Maatregelen*. Federale Overheidsdienst Binnenlandse Zaken. <https://crisiscentrum.be/nl/news/crisisbeheer/coronavirus-fase-2-gehandhaafd-overgang-naar-de-federale-fase-en-bijkomende>.

4. This paper is based on my video presentation during the 7th symposium of the ICTM Study Group on Applied Ethnomusicology on 25-29 August 2020. The original presentation can be viewed on as a private video on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pNRgFOQgkUs>.

5. Vlaanderen. (n.d.). *Vlaamse Coronamaatregelen Rond Cultuur, Jeugd, Sport, Vrije Tijd en Toerisme*. Vlaamse overheid. <https://www.vlaanderen.be/vlaamse-maatregelen-tijdens-de-coronacrisis/vlaamse-coronamaatregelen-rond-cultuur-jeugd-sport-vrije-tijd-en-toerisme>.

conclusion will differ slightly from that of the video paper presented at the symposium by briefly reflecting on the period of the second lockdown, since October 2020.

Research during lockdown: context

Since the implementation of UNESCO's 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, much attention has been given to music as a form of intangible cultural heritage as well as to its safeguarding.⁶ This also comprises the daily work of CEMPER, the Centre for Music and Performing Arts Heritage in Flanders, the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium. Working for the organization as an ethnomusicologist and intangible cultural heritage (ICH) expert, I work with heritage communities⁷ to map, document, safeguard, and stimulate research about their ICH of music and performing arts.

Prior to the pandemic, this involved face-to-face meetings with the heritage communities and field research to investigate the viability of their ICH, moderate discussions about safeguarding actions, or offer hands-on assistance with documenting a practice. Online interactions were limited to practical emails, in preparation for or as a follow-up on face-to-face communication, and providing feedback on written texts such as applications to the Flemish Inventory for ICH. Teleworking became obligatory in March 2020. This changed the interaction between CEMPER's employees and the communities we work with. Some work switched to online alternatives; other work was postponed.

In addition, by working from home and experiencing the world via the news and social media, I noticed two immediate reactions to the abrupt halt in Belgium's public musical life. First, the culture sector called for support. The lockdown hit professionals and amateur musicians alike. Without concerts or the ability to teach, professionals lost their (main) source of income. The government paid compensation to the temporarily unemployed, but this was difficult to obtain for musicians, who are usually self-employed. When compensation was granted, it was hardly enough to cover the costs of living.⁸ For amateur musicians in Belgium's numerous music societies, it was a blow to their musical and social lives. Second, it seemed to induce a creative period to explore new possibilities. My Facebook homepage, for example, revealed the rise of online performances, tune challenges, videos of people singing out of their windows, and edited videos of people making music together whilst apart in digital performances edited together into a single

6. See for example: Howard, K. (Ed.). (2012.) *Music as Intangible Cultural Heritage: Policy, Ideology and Practice in the Preservation of East Asian Traditions*. Routledge, and Norton, B. & Matsumoto, N. (Eds.). (2019). *Music as Heritage: Historical and Ethnographic Perspectives*. Routledge.

7. 'Heritage community' is used in this paper, as in the Council of Europe's definition, as 'people who value specific aspects of cultural heritage which they wish, within the framework of public action, to sustain and transmit to future generations' (Council of Europe 2005: Article 2). This does not necessarily overlap with local or ethnic communities, but rather are a so-called 'community of practice' (Wood and Judikis 2002: 12), which Catherine Grant (2014: xiii) describes as 'a group of people bound together first and foremost by their linguistic of musical practice and interests.' For a musical practice, this includes, among others, musicians, audiences, composers, concert organisers, costume makers, instrument makers.

8. L. Mostin, interview with author, July 17, 2020.

video. Individual musicians and music organizations alike were creative in finding new ways of performing and making music.

Seeing this dual reaction, I set up a research project to investigate which new musical possibilities arose during the lockdown and assess the lockdown's impact on musical practices. The collected information is used to raise awareness of this impact and see how CEMPER can help to safeguard these practices in the future. This is in line with UNESCO's recommendations in their "Operational principles and modalities for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in emergencies." The document was endorsed in 2019 – prior to the outbreak of COVID-19 – and does not name pandemics among the natural and human-induced hazards that may affect the viability of ICH practices. However, the recommended actions, including awareness raising, reaching out to communities, and capacity building, are also applicable in this context.⁹

Research during lockdown: process

Suitable to the lockdown, all research was conducted online. Research data was collected through an online questionnaire and individual interviews via videocall. The questionnaire was launched on 26 May. Around that time, the different aspects of the lockdown were gradually lifted, leading up to a relatively "free" period in July and August, during which small open air events and indoor rehearsals could take place.¹⁰ It therefore allowed people to reflect on the strictest lockdown period in which teleworking was obligatory, non-essential travel prohibited, and schools, venues, and non-essential shops closed.¹¹ By 30 June 2020, when the questionnaire was closed, it had received 118 responses from performers of over 60 different genres.

The questionnaire consisted of three parts designed to examine the participants' music making activities:¹² (1) music making in "normal times," i.e. before the lockdown, (2) music making in "corona times," i.e. during the lockdown, and (3) the lockdown's impact.

9. UNESCO. (2020). *Operational Principles and Modalities for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in Emergencies*. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

<https://ich.unesco.org/en/operational-principles-and-modalities-in-emergencies-01143>.

10. Nationaal Crisiscentrum. (2020, June 3). *Start van Fase 3 van het Afbouwplan Vanaf 8 Juni*. Federale Overheidsdienst Binnenlandse Zaken: <https://crisiscentrum.be/nl/news/crisisbeheer/start-van-fase-3-van-het-afbouwplan-vanaf-8-juni>.

11. Nationaal Crisiscentrum. (2020, March 17). *Blijf Thuis, Zorg voor Jezelf en Anderen*. Federale Overheidsdienst Binnenlandse Zaken. <https://crisiscentrum.be/nl/news/crisisbeheer/covid-19-blijf-thuis-zorg-voor-jezelf-en-anderen>.

12. I specifically refer to 'music making activities' rather than 'musical activities' to highlight the fact that the questionnaire only investigated activities related to playing, performing, or creating music. It did not examine other musical activities such as listening to music, attending concerts, or dancing.

In the first and second parts, the participants were given a list of offline¹³ and online¹⁴ music making activities and were invited to indicate how often they did these respectively before and during the lockdown. The third part asked participants about the lockdown's impact¹⁵ on their personal musical life, on the group or ensemble they play with, and on their music genre in general. Most of the questions were multiple choice (for example, see Figure 1). In addition, participants were invited to explain their answers in open text boxes. The questionnaire was circulated in Dutch, French, and English to allow maximum participation of musicians living in Flanders, including those who do not speak Dutch, and to keep open the possibility of expanding the research to a broader area of investigation.

In which OFFLINE ways do you make music during the lockdown?

Please indicate all activities that you do during the lockdown, even if you did not do these before. If an activity ceased, please select the 'never' option that is the most applicable to you. If you didn't do this activity before and not now either, select 'not applicable'.

	Daily	Once or more a week	Once or more a month	Never, because I can't	Never, because there is no reason or motivation now	Never, but that's not due to the lockdown	Not applicable
Play and practice at home	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Take music lessons	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teach music	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Compose	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Perform during concerts/gigs (music is the main activity)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Perform at other events (music liven up the event, e.g. feasts)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Figure 1. Sample of multiple-choice question in the English version of the questionnaire.

In July and August 2020, I interviewed nine of these respondents across five genres: carillon, *hafabra*, metal, folk, and opera. In the semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions, we discussed the participants' musical activities during the lockdown, their

13. The offline activities included (1) playing/practicing music at home, (2) follow lessons, (3) teach music, (4) compose, (5) perform during concerts where music is the main activity, (6) perform at other events where music is used to liven up the event, such as celebrations, (7) playing music together with other people in public spaces, such as jam sessions, (8) studio and recording work, (9) rehearse and/or play with people you live with, (10) rehearse and/or play with a group or society, and (11) perform on the street.

14. The offline activities included (1) take online lessons, (2) teach music online, (3) perform online, such as watchparties or livestreams, (4) play together apart in edited videos, (5) discover new music to play, (6) share audio recordings of yourself making music, (7) share videos of yourself making music, (8) share photos of yourself making music, and (9) share audio, videos or photos of others making music.

15. The questionnaire examined five types of impact: (1) financial, (2) social, (3) mental, (4) artistic/technical, and (5) continued existence of the ensemble or genre in the future.

musical activities since the first lockdown ended (i.e. in July and August), and their hopes and concerns for the future. This paper will focus on the carillon and *hafabra* music communities. These were chosen because CEMPER has worked closely with them in the years prior to the outbreak of COVID-19.

Carillon

The carillon is a keyboard instrument comprised of at least 23 bells. It is typically housed in a bell tower, and the bells are struck by clappers connected to a keyboard that is played with the fists. The carillon is played by a carillonneur who sits in the tower, usually invisible to passers-by. The music can be heard by anyone near the tower. “Flemish Carillon Culture” was inscribed on the Flemish Inventory for ICH in 2011.¹⁶ The carillonners’ efforts to safeguard their tradition were subsequently internationally recognized, when “Safeguarding the carillon culture: preservation, transmission, exchange and awareness-raising” was selected on UNESCO’s Register of Good Safeguarding Practices in 2014.¹⁷ CEMPER is a member of the Belgian Carillon Heritage Committee, whose purpose it is to raise awareness about safeguarding ICH to carillonners and other heritage communities, and to report on the carillon community’s safeguarding actions.

Five carillonners responded to the questionnaire. All five were professional musicians. Four were still professionally active, meaning that they are the appointed carillonneur of one or more carillon(s) on which they give regular performances. The other one was retired. Figure 2 shows their music making activities before the lockdown. All five indicated that they play or practice at home on a daily basis. The four active professionals indicated that they performed and taught on a regular basis – i.e. daily, weekly or monthly. Online music making activities were rare before the lockdown. Only one carillonneur gave online music classes and only two livestreamed performances. All used the internet daily, weekly, or monthly to look for new music to play.

16. Werkplaats immaterieel erfgoed. (n.d.) *Vlaamse Beiaardcultuur*. Vlaamse overheid. <https://immaterieelerfgoed.be/nl/erfgoederen/vlaamse-beiaardcultuur>.

17. UNESCO. (2014). *Safeguarding the Carillon Culture: Preservation, Transmission, Exchange and Awareness-raising*. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. <https://ich.unesco.org/en/BSP/safeguarding-the-carillon-culture-preservation-transmission-exchange-and-awareness-raising-01017>.

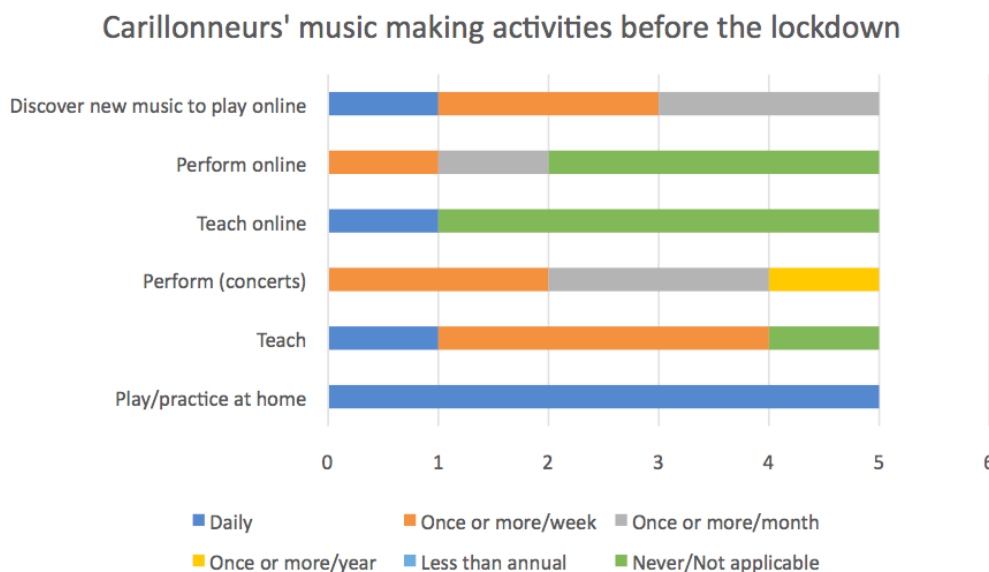


Figure 2. Carillonneurs' music making activities before the lockdown.

Their responses to the multiple-choice questions showed that three carillonneurs were able to continue their performances throughout the lockdown. Three carillonneurs (60%) performed as often as before, for one the question was not applicable (20%), and the fifth (20%) could not perform anymore. In comparison with performers of other genres who participated in the questionnaire, these numbers are remarkable. Of the 118 respondents, 69 (58%) could not perform at all during the lockdown and one (0.8%) performed less often. Six people (5%) indicated they performed more often, and for 5 (4.2%, including the three carillonneurs) it stayed the same. For 37 participants (31%) the question was not applicable, meaning that they never regularly performed music prior to the lockdown, nor did they do so during/afterwards.

One carillonneur's answer to an open question confirmed these numbers, saying that "carillon concerts are just about the only concerts that can still happen."¹⁸ This is because social distancing is never an issue during carillon performances, neither for the performer nor for the audience: The carillonneur sits alone, high up in a bell tower. They play for passers-by in the immediate surroundings, rather than for a seated crowd. This does not mean that nothing changed for the carillonneurs at all. Their responses to the multiple-choice questions revealed that carillonneurs increased their online teaching (three respondents taught weekly and one monthly) and livestreamed performances (two respondents weekly and one monthly) during the lockdown.

However, the comment section revealed that the multiple-choice questions did not show the full extent of the change. One respondent wrote that:

A number of duties stopped (tower visits, special concerts related to other concerts that were cancelled...). On the other hand, I gave 2 extra performances per week for a period of

18. Respondent No. 68, response to questionnaire, author's translation.

10 or 11 weeks ('anti-virus programmes' in the Abbey of Park and Groot Begijnhof Leuven); those were livestreamed on [Facebook] live.¹⁹

Therefore, the activities offered as options in the multiple-choice questions did not assess all the aspects of being a carillonneur. In addition, this respondent's number of performances and livestreams actually increased, but remained within the "once or more per week," rather than "daily," option, so this shift to more performances was not shown in the multiple-choice question. For that purpose, the quantitative data of the multiple-choice questions should be carefully interpreted in combination with qualitative data, collected in the open text-box questions of the questionnaire and individual follow-up interviews. Two carillonneurs responded to my invitation for an interview.²⁰ These interviews gave more insights into the change in online activities and the impact of the lockdown on carillon culture in more detail.

The first interviewee was Carl Van Eyndhoven, carillonneur in the cities of Mol (Belgium) and Tilburg (the Netherlands). The second was Luc Rombouts, carillonneur on four Belgian instruments: the carillons of the library of the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, the Groot Begijnhof, and the Abbey of Park in Leuven, as well as the carillon of Tienen. Both were able to continue their performances of about one one-hour performance per week on each instrument. Rombouts even gave two additional concerts per week, one each on the carillons of the Groot Begijnhof and the Abbey of Park. The lockdown brought on significant changes to these performances in terms of their use of social media, repertoire, and the interaction with their audience. This, they both felt, had a positive effect on the carillon culture in general.

Van Eyndhoven had only recently before the lockdown begun to use social media to promote his music. Rombouts already used social media regularly, but only one of his weekly performances was livestreamed on YouTube.²¹ During the lockdown, they both livestreamed all their performances on the Facebook pages or groups of their respective bell towers.²² As everybody had to stay at home, fewer people would be able to hear the music live while walking in the neighbourhood of the carillon. Because people were not able to come to the

19. Respondent No. 51, response to questionnaire, author's translation.

20. Out of the five carillonneurs who participated in the questionnaire, four indicated that they wished to be contacted for an interview. Of those, two answered positively to the invitation.

21. Rombouts' livestreamed performances on the carillon of the library of the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven can be watched weekly and are saved on his YouTube channel:
<https://www.youtube.com/user/zingendbrons/featured>.

22. See Facebook groups Beiaard Mol <https://www.facebook.com/groups/407049066837360/> and Beiaardier Tilburg and <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2664030103828829> for Van Eyndhoven's online activities.

Facebook groups Vredesbeiaard Abdij van Park

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/VredesbeiaardAbdijvanPark>, Stadsbeiaard Tienen

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/StadsbeiaardTienen/>, and The Carillon of the Groot Begijnhof

(<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1972163546423385>) show Rombouts' activities.

carillon, these livestreams brought the carillon to the people. Rombouts said “it really was home delivery of carillon music, that’s how I presented it.”²³

The livestreams changed the audience’s perception of the music. Carillon music reached wider audiences, as people who did not live near to the carillon could now hear the performances. Van Eyndhoven noticed that he had people listening in from places as far away as the United States and South Korea.²⁴ At the same time, while the audience reached further, the experience of a sound that usually rings out over a large space around the bell tower was suddenly “reduced to the visually and auditory small space of a small iPad or iPhone screen.”²⁵ Furthermore, during livestreams, the camera is directed at the performer. In contrast to regular live performances, the audience can now see how the instrument is played, whereas they otherwise only see the tower from which the music is heard.

The performers adapted their playlists to the situation. Rombouts, for example, created playlists according to relevant topics like resilience, loneliness, and peace. Both carillonneurs played songs like “We Shall Overcome” or “You’ll Never Walk Alone.” Such songs were played and shared more widely as a way of connecting people during this time. For example, at 8:45 on 20 March 2020, over 180 radio stations across Europe played Gerry and the Pacemakers’ “You’ll Never Walk Alone” to “bring people closer together in these uncertain times.”²⁶ Furthermore, both artists included requests in their playlists. The cities Leuven and Tienen called for requests on their Facebook pages. Other than that, Rombouts received requests via email, text message, Messenger, and WhatsApp. He was able to honor about two thirds of the requests. He endeavored to reply to the others to explain why he could not honor the request – for example because a song or piece does not lend itself to being arranged for the carillon.²⁷ Van Eyndhoven took a different approach. Every week, he released a poll on his Facebook group in which he listed 40 songs. People could vote for their favorites to create that week’s playlist.

Both performers indicated that it was an intense period. The livestreams and dealing with the requests required a lot of extra work. It generated extra interaction on social media with which they had to keep up. And to honor the requests, they had to arrange and study new repertoire. Rombouts, for example, said that his “repertoire expanded again by some fifty songs.”²⁸ The interviews with Van Eyndhoven and Rombouts showed similar trends for carillon music during the lockdown. And they were not the exception. Both performers noticed that other carillonneurs in Belgium and abroad did similar things during the lockdown. This, they felt, had a positive effect on the carillon culture as a whole:

23. L. Rombouts, interview with author, July 10, 2020, author’s translation.

24. C. Van Eyndhoven, interview with author. July 8, 2020.

25. C. Van Eyndhoven, interview with author. July 8, 2020, author’s translation.

26. De Roover, K. (2020, March 20). Mensen Verbinden Helpt: Meer Dan 180 Europese Radiozenders Draaien Tegelijk “You’ll Never Walk Alone”, *VRT nws*. <https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/nl/2020/03/20/mensen-verbinden-helpt-164-europese-radiozenders-spelen-tegelijk/>.

27. L. Rombouts, interview with author, July 10, 2020.

28. L. Rombouts, interview with author, July 10, 2020, author’s translation.

The carillon got new supporters, in emotionally trying times. If you can offer something as a carillonneur, there is a chance it has a sustainable effect on the audience. [...] If you know that your choice [of music] helped to determine the soundscape of a city, I think that is nice to experience. So I hope that it has created an emotional bond, which will remain, and that can be built on.²⁹

The period, in short, had shown that the carillon can withstand crisis, raised the people's awareness of the instrument, and intensified the interaction between performer and audience.

Hafabra

Hafabra is an acronym, used as the collective term to refer to three types of wind ensembles: *harmonies*, *fanfares* and brass bands. They differ mainly in their instrumentation. A *harmonie* consists of both woodwind and brass instruments. *Fanfares* consist of brass instruments – particularly of the saxhorn family,³⁰ saxophones, and percussion. A brass band also uses brass instruments, but differs from a *fanfare* in its fixed line-up of instruments and number of players of each instrument.³¹ With 303 *fanfares*, 499 *harmonies*, and 36 brass bands in Flanders alone, these orchestras form an important part of Belgium's amateur music life.³² CEMPER has worked the most closely with *fanfares*, in the project that led to the inscription of "Fanfare culture: the fanfare orchestra of the Low Countries" on the Flemish Inventory of ICH.³³ We have fewer contacts with *harmonies* and brass bands, but because the way in which these orchestras work is similar, and because *hafabra* is regarded as a unity in, for example, music schools, the three orchestra types are discussed together for the purpose of this paper.

Nine *hafabra* performers responded to the questionnaire. All of them—as is typical for these orchestras—were amateur musicians. The questionnaire revealed their musical lives before the lockdown, as Figure 3 shows. The majority had weekly rehearsals. Their frequency of performances ranged from several concerts per year to several concerts per months with their orchestra. All but one practiced their instrument at home on a weekly or daily basis. Hardly any of them made much use of the internet or social media for music making

29. L. Rombouts, interview with author, July 10, 2020, author's translation.

30. The primary and characterizing instrument of a fanfare is the flugelhorn. Other saxhorn instruments used include the alto/tenor horn, baritone horn, euphonium, and tuba.

31. Brass bands in Flanders are modeled on the British-style brass bands with a line-up of 28 players. According to the Flemish amateur music organization, VLAMO, the standard line-up of a brass band in Flanders consists of ten cornets, four alto horns, two baritone horns, two euphoniums, three trombones, four bass tubas and three or more percussionists, see: <https://www.vlamo.be/brassband>.

32. These are the most recent numbers published by VLAMO, the Flemish Amateur Music Organization of which the majority of Flemish *hafabra* orchestras are a member, see: VLAMO. (2021). *Voortgangsrapport 2020-2021*. VLAMO.

33. Werkplaats immaterieel erfgoed. (n.d.). *Fanfarecultuur: het Fanfareorkest van de Lage Landen*. Vlaamse overheid. <https://immaterieelerfgoed.be/nl/erfgoederen/fanfarecultuur-het-fanfareorkest-van-de-lage-landen>.

activities, with the exception of looking up new music to play and occasionally sharing videos or photos of themselves making music.

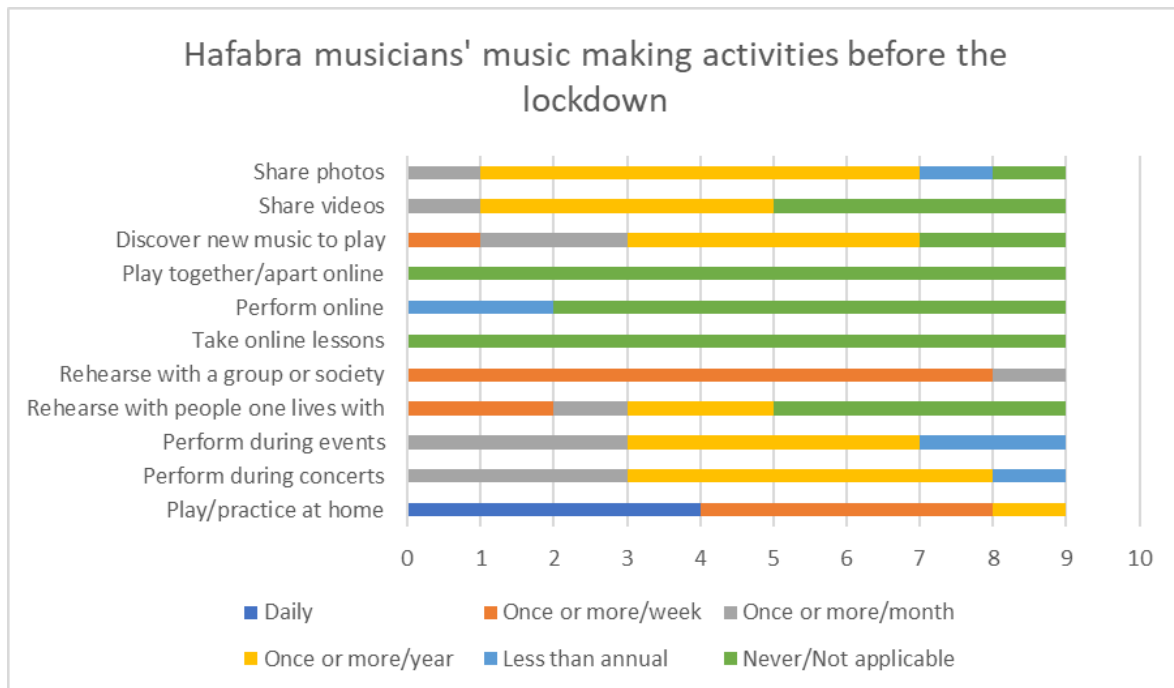


Figure 3. Hafabra musicians' music making activities before the lockdown.

Unlike the carillon players, every public musical activity stopped during the lockdown for *hafabra* musicians. Barring one exception, all the respondents' rehearsals and performances were canceled. The questionnaire showed a favorable effect on private musical activities. The lockdown did not affect the time spent practicing music at home for eight respondents. There were more possibilities for private and online activities. Only one musician indicated that they practiced at home less often than before; for others it stayed the same. Two respondents took more time than before to practice music at home with the people they lived with. Furthermore, the questionnaire showed a slight increase in online activities. One person gave more online performances. Five were part of a playing "together-apart" video, in which separate videos were compiled into one digital performance, whereas none had done that prior to the lockdown. Others shared audio recordings (five respondents), videos (six, and one indicating that they still planned to do so), and photos (six respondents) of past performances. In the open questions, the respondents indicated that this was a way of "keeping the fire burning, keeping in contact and followers, keeping the network alive for after Corona."³⁴

Interviews with two musicians offered further insights as to how they had experienced the lockdown and its immediate aftermath: Kasper Vanoverbeke, a soprano saxophone player in a *fanfare* and Pascal Poot, a percussionist in a *harmonie*.³⁵ Both musicians did not practice at

34. Respondent No. 19, response to questionnaire, author's translation.

35. Of the nine respondents to the questionnaire, four indicated that they wished to be contacted for a follow-up interview. All four were contacted and two consented to the interview.

all at home during the lockdown. They admitted that, before the lockdown, they did not practice regularly either. Without a specific rehearsal or performance to work towards, they lacked the motivation to practice altogether during the lockdown. Vanoverbeke said that because of the lack of rehearsals there “was almost no purpose to practice [at home].”³⁶ In addition, as a percussionist, Poot did not have access to his instruments: “I always have to go to the [rehearsal] room, because all the percussion material is there. I don’t have anything at home.”³⁷

For both, music making activities were limited during the lockdown. Vanoverbeke’s orchestra created one “together-apart” video, in which he participated along with 28 other members. They each played and recorded their own part, which was then compiled into a single performance and published on Facebook.³⁸ The experience was positive, yet challenging:

I had to play and record it several times before I got a decent version. (...) I think 80% of our members participated. It was well received by outsiders. (...) It also made the local news. Received good comments.³⁹

Other than this, he listened to a lot of music to discover new pieces which he would suggest to his conductor for when the rehearsals would resume. For Poot, “everything stopped during the lockdown. Everything. I wore the drum once. When we were playing for a care home. We played for an hour on a Saturday morning to entertain the people. And that was it.”⁴⁰

For them, the impact of the lockdown was mainly a social and artistic one, as music is a hobby for them, and the normally weekly rehearsals are social as well as musical gatherings. Personally, they had no financial losses, as Poot put it: “For professional musicians, of course, it’s another story than for amateur musicians. We don’t earn money with playing music. On the contrary! It costs us money.”⁴¹ The same cannot be said about the orchestras themselves, whose income partly depends on ticket sales. Although no numbers were given, both indicated that their orchestras suffered financial losses because of the canceled performances. The same goes for other fundraising activities, such as street markets. Such financial losses may, depending on the financial status of the orchestras, cause issues in the long or short term.

In addition, orchestras risk losing musicians as a direct result of the lockdown. Vanoverbeke mentioned that they had already “lost four musicians in that period” for various reasons.⁴²

36. K. Vanoverbeke, interview with author, July 10, 2020, author’s translation.

37. P. Poot, interview with author, July 17, 2020, author’s translation.

38. Kmv De Leiezon. (2020, May 2). (Untitled video). Facebook. Retrieved February 3, 2021, from <https://www.facebook.com/kmvdeleiezonen/videos/547731945933099>.

39. K. Vanoverbeke, interview with author, July 10, 2020, author’s translation.

40. P. Poot, interview with author, July 17, 2020, author’s translation.

41. P. Poot, interview with author, July 17, 2020, author’s translation.

42. K. Vanoverbeke, interview with author, July 10, 2020, author’s translation.

For an older musician who was already thinking of quitting the orchestra, the lockdown spurred him on to retiring from playing. Some rediscovered the value of more free time, to the detriment of the *hafabra* ensembles. Time that was previously spent at rehearsals was instead spent with their families or other hobbies during the lockdown. This led some to quit the orchestra in order to hold on to their family time or continue with their other hobbies. This, if those members are not replaced by new ones, might have negative effects for the *hafabra* tradition in the future.

Impact on ICH

Working for a heritage organization, I needed to consider the ways in which this period may impact these traditions in the future. At the time of the interviews, in July 2020, the worst of the lockdown had lifted, although the culture and event sectors remained severely restricted in terms of the sizes and types of events and rehearsals that were allowed. At that time, it was difficult to say anything with certainty about what the previous months meant for the future of either the carillon or the *hafabra* traditions. Nevertheless, the interviewees reflected on the possible impact of the lockdown on the future of their traditions.

Neither carillonneurs kept up with the extra performances, livestreams, and requests as the lockdown lifted. Rombouts explained that “those livestreams were merely useful as long as the people had to stay at home.”⁴³ However, they both felt that some things should be kept. Occasional livestreams can be useful to continue to reach out to wider audiences, beyond the immediate surroundings of the carillon. Carillonneurs should continue to pay attention to the interaction with their audience:

[Carillonneurs] are typically paid by public money (...) via tax money. Those people pay taxes to listen to carillon music. So you have to try and charm that audience and keep their diversity in mind (...). I assume that most listeners will only hear me for a few minutes, so I try to give them different musical experiences in those minutes. That increases the chances of touching them at a certain moment.⁴⁴

Finally, carillons were already used to highlight certain events before the lockdown, but the lockdown highlighted to communicating about those adapted playlists via social media to show the instrument’s relevance in today’s society.

As the lockdown lifted, *hafabra* ensembles remained restricted in terms of number of people and social distance. Rehearsals could not have more than fifty people and the space should not have more than one person per square metre. This took away a lot of the social interaction between musicians, which is crucial for these amateur ensembles. Poot, at the time of the interview, was still in doubt about whether he would go back to the rehearsals:

43. L. Rombouts, interview with author, July 10, 2020, author’s translation.

44. L. Rombouts, interview with author, July 10, 2020, author’s translation.

“You are sitting so far away from each other. (...) Of course the music is important [but] in the end it’s about meeting and making music together with friends.”⁴⁵ Apart from the social aspect, the restrictions created practical issues with the existing rehearsal spaces. Both musicians mentioned that their regular rehearsal space was too small to house the entire orchestra while keeping the required distance.

Their major concern was that there was, and remains, no certainty when they will be able to perform again. Although concerts were allowed over the summer, the audiences were limited to 200 people for indoor events and 400 people for outdoor events.⁴⁶ Because of these limitations, concerts were not financially viable, and they feared that audiences might stay away out of fear of infection. Nevertheless, Vanoverbeke saw a possible bright side:

I think that *fanfare* orchestras and all orchestras in general will find their ways to [perform] in another way. (...) With the restrictions we have at the moment, concerning distance and performing etc., I think that every society will think about it, and come out of it in a positive way.⁴⁷

His orchestra, for example, decided against performing indoors. Instead, they were able to play an outdoor concert whereby the musicians walked through the streets performing for the public.

Since the original presentation of this research, Belgium has gone back into lockdown. Although it is, in general terms, less severe than the first lockdown of March-June 2020, the culture sector has been closed since the end of October 2020. At the time of writing, the government has not given any indication of when group rehearsals and live concerts might resume, in any capacity.⁴⁸ Although no additional research has been done since this original survey, it seems that for both the carillonners and the *hafabra* musicians everything has returned to how it was during the first lockdown. The orchestras are left waiting while their rehearsals and concerts cannot take place and, based on their Facebook pages, the carillonners have resumed livestreaming their performances.

Conclusion

This article opened with two questions. First, how did the performers experience this unusual period? And second, what lasting impact did the lockdown have on the musicians, their ensembles, and the genre they safeguard? The responses to the questionnaire and the

45. P. Poot, interview with author, July 17, 2020, author’s translation.

46. Nationaal Crisiscentrum. (2020, June 24). *Vanaf 1 Juli Gaat Fase 4 van de Afbouw in*. Federale Overheidsdienst Binnenlandse Zaken. <https://crisiscentrum.be/nl/news/crisisbeheer/vanaf-1-juli-gaat-fase-4-van-de-afbouw>.

47. K. Vanoverbeke, interview with author, July 10, 2020, author’s translation.

48. ‘Het Overlegcomité’, a committee consisting of Belgium’s different governments that oversees the measures to counter the spread of COVID-19 announced on 5 February 2021 that they would discuss culture, alongside pubs, restaurants, events, travel and social contacts on 26 February 2021. Willems, F. (2021, February 5). *Kapsalons, Vakantieparken, Campings en Dierentuinen Mogen Weer Open: Dit Heeft het Overlegcomité Beslist*. VRT nws. <https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/nl/2021/02/05/beslissingen-overlegcomite/>.

interviews conducted answered the first question. The performers' experience mostly depended on what was possible and what was not during the lockdown. As carillon music was the only live music that remained possible, carillonneurs used the opportunity to raise awareness about their instrument and its music. For *hafabra* musicians, so little was possible that, due to the tradition's distinctly social character, the pandemic severely affected both their musical and social lives. As the pandemic continues into 2021 and musicians of any genre remain uncertain about the future, the second question remains more difficult to answer with certainty.

The sudden rise in online musical activities at the beginning of the first lockdown, which inspired this research in the first place, did not last into the second lockdown. While that same Facebook homepage still shows some livestreamed performances, other initiatives have stopped completely. More research is necessary to fully understand these actions but overall it seems that online music experiences are not a viable and satisfying alternative for live music experiences, or as one respondent to the questionnaire put it: "music is too inter-human to even consider doing anything online with it."⁴⁹ This does not mean that the possibilities afforded by the lockdown will have no impact on musical practices like carillon and *hafabra* in the future. Performers of both genres indicated that lessons can be learnt in terms of ways to engage with your audience, finding alternative performance formats, and communication.

Looking at this from an intangible heritage perspective, it will be important for CEMPER to follow up on these musical practices, to help heritage communities to make up the balance against the pandemic's impact, and to help them safeguard their intangible musical heritage. Over the past months, we mapped the needs of the heritage communities through research and raised awareness by sharing their stories. We have joined, and continue to join, calls for support for the culture sector and ensure that the competent authorities are aware of the communities' needs.

Placing this in a larger context, and following the UNESCO's definition, "intangible cultural heritage (...) is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history."⁵⁰ The pandemic and the consequent lockdown form a liminal stage between an "old" and a "new normal." Which long-term effects this stage will have on music genres is impossible to predict. The measures taken to deal with COVID-19 will undoubtedly leave their impact, creating a new environment to which both carillon and *hafabra* music, as well as other musical practices around the world, will respond and adapt.

49. Respondent No. 29, response to questionnaire, author's translation.

50. UNESCO. (2003). *Text of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. <https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention>.

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