

Music Experts' Changing Perceptions of Mode Across Musical Eras



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Background

- Mode is a syntactical cue that plays a large role in musical emotion perception and has strong emotional connotations (Kastner & Crowder, 1990).
- Past research suggests that the major/minor mode distinction was stronger in the Baroque and Classical eras, and weaker in the Romantic and 20th century eras (Harasim et al., 2021; Schellenberg & von Scheve, 2012).
- Using data collected by Delle Grazie et al. (under review), we explore how experts' evaluations of mode change with music from different musical eras.

Methods

Baroque Era



J.S. Bach
(1685–1750)

Classical Era



J. N. Hummel
(1778–1837)

Romantic Era



F. Chopin
(1810–1849)



C.-V. Alkan
(1813–1888)

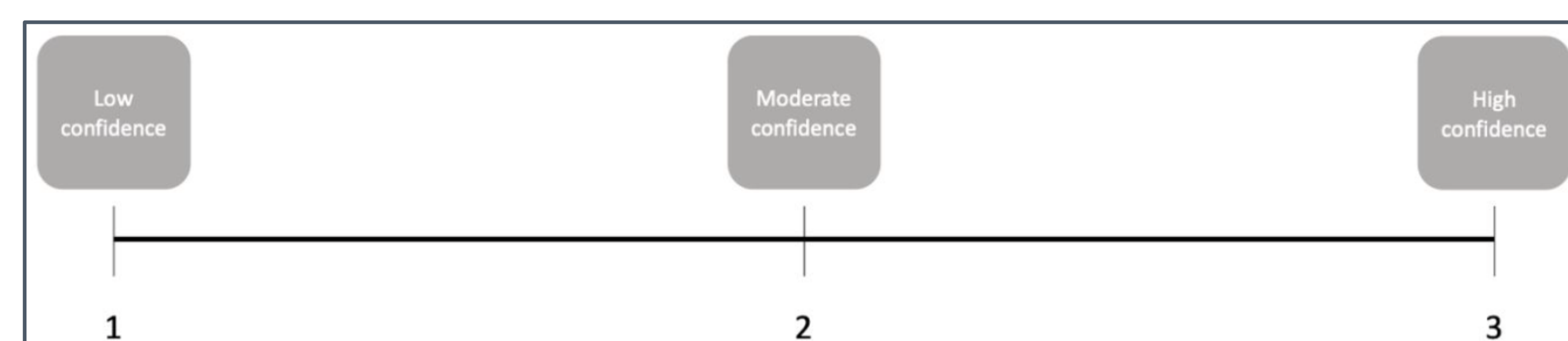
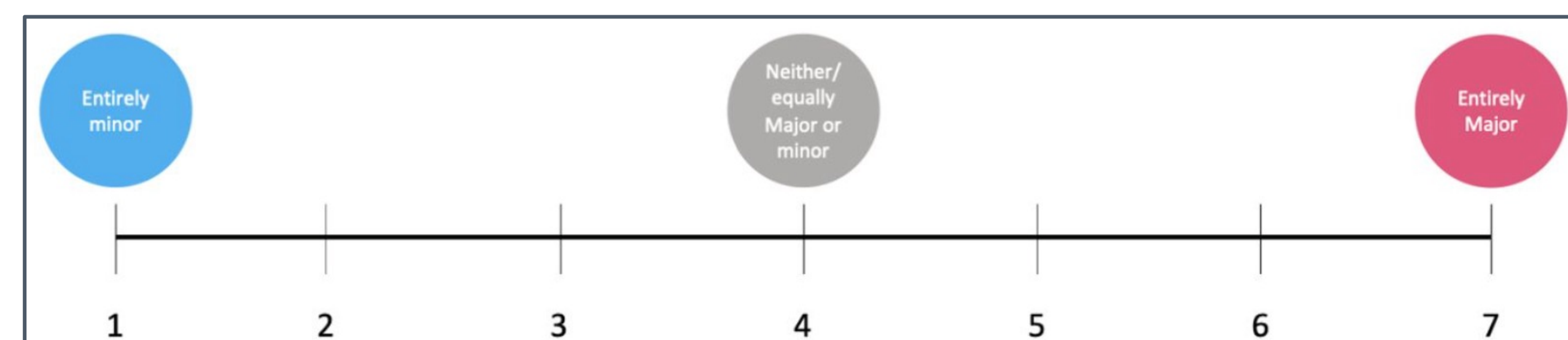
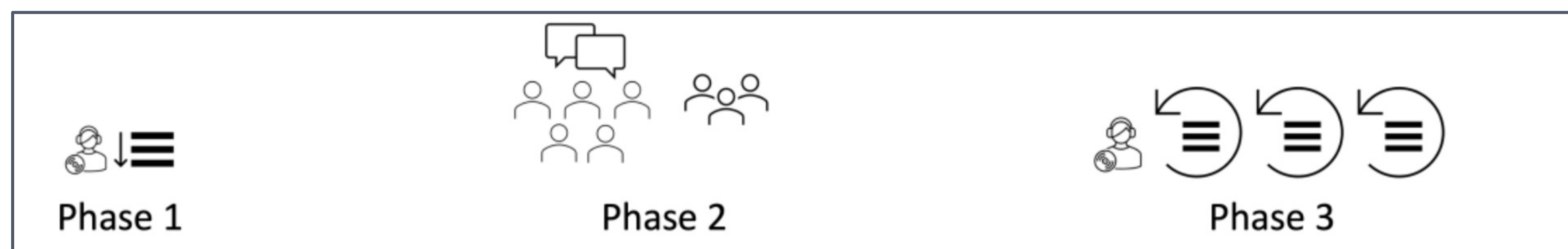
20th Century Era



C. Debussy
(1862–1918)



D. Shostakovich
(1906–1975)



Findings

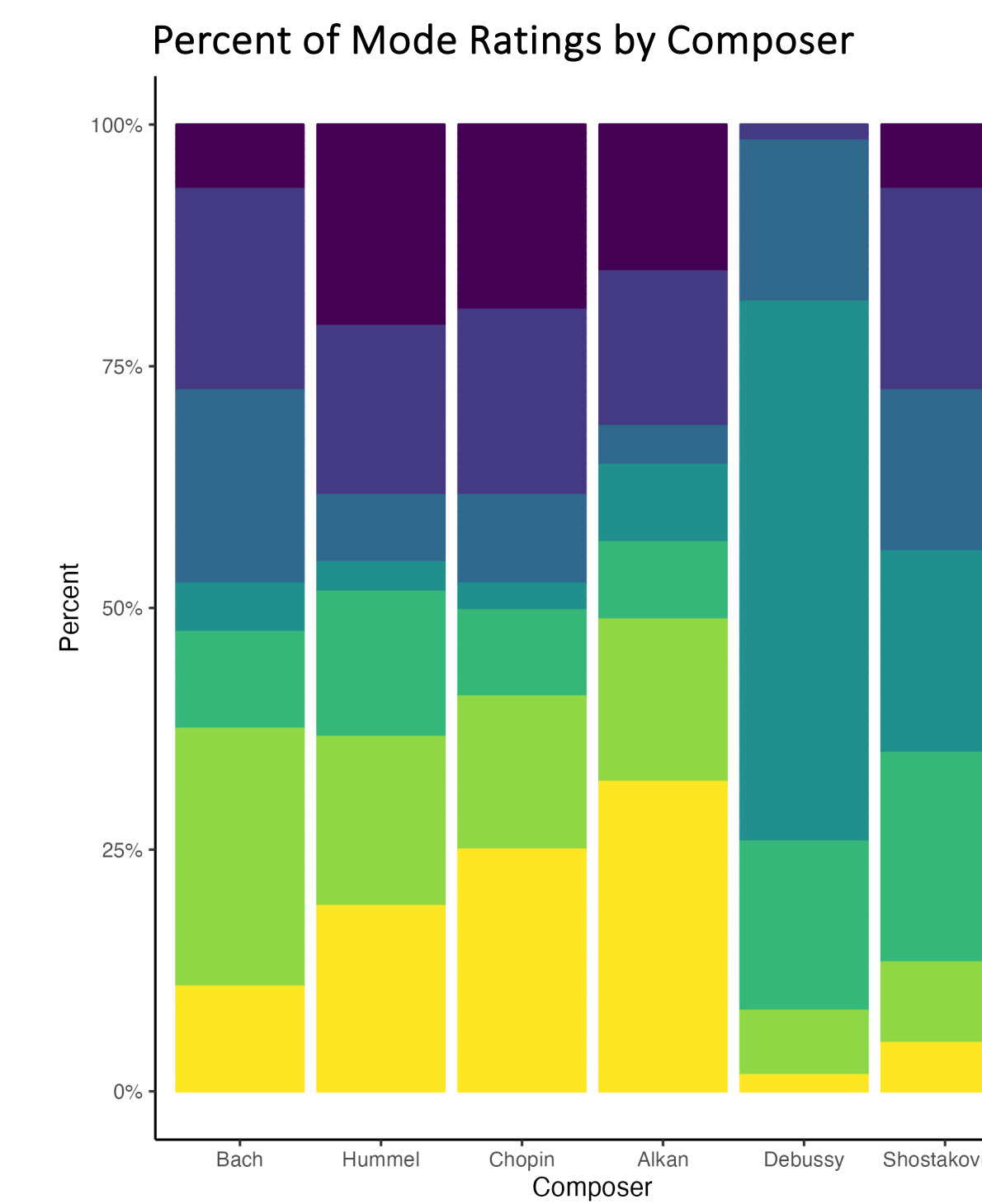


Fig. 1: Cumulative mode ratings for each composer, shown as a percentage and set in chronological order from left to right.

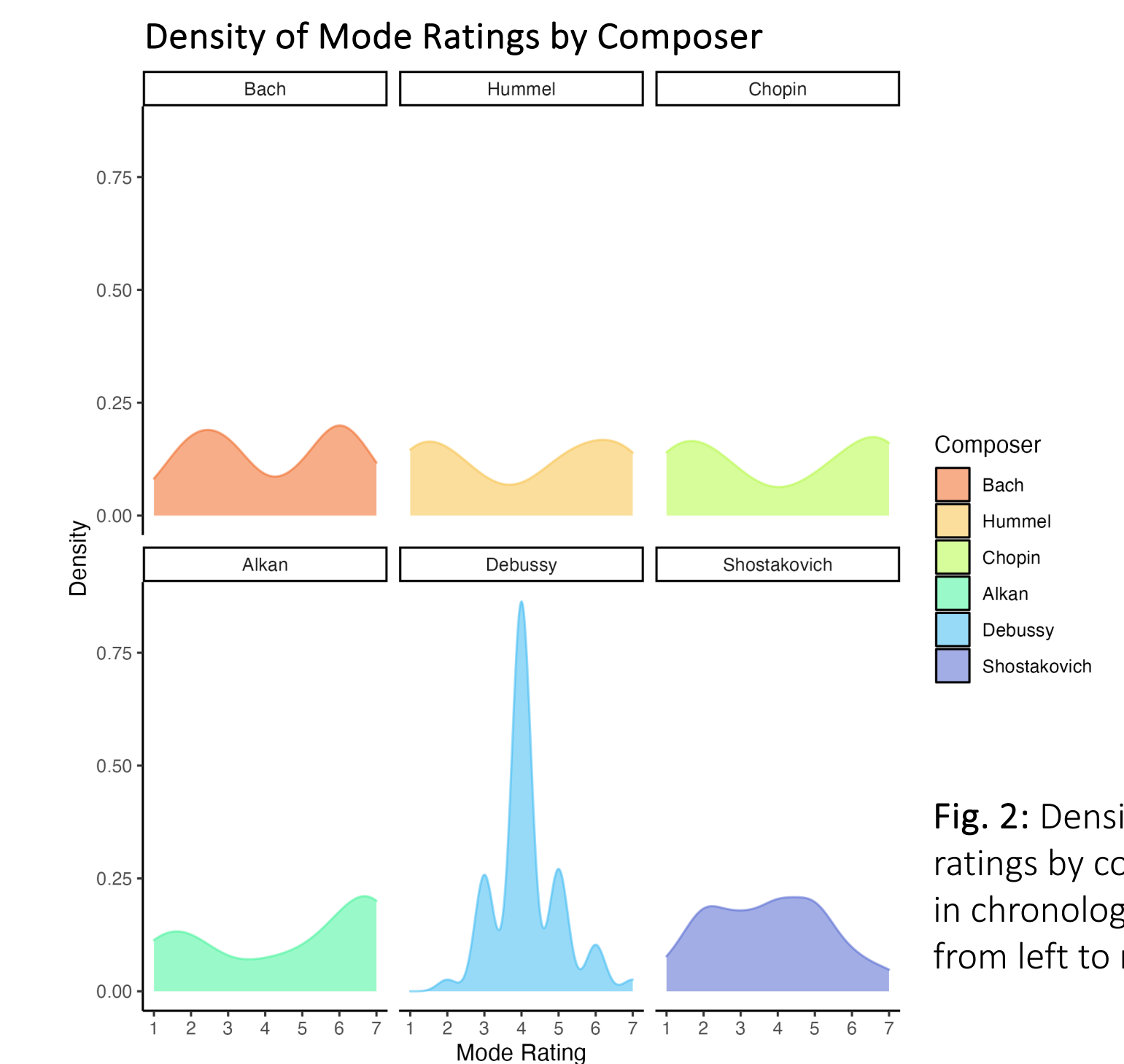


Fig. 2: Density of mode ratings by composer, set in chronological order from left to right.

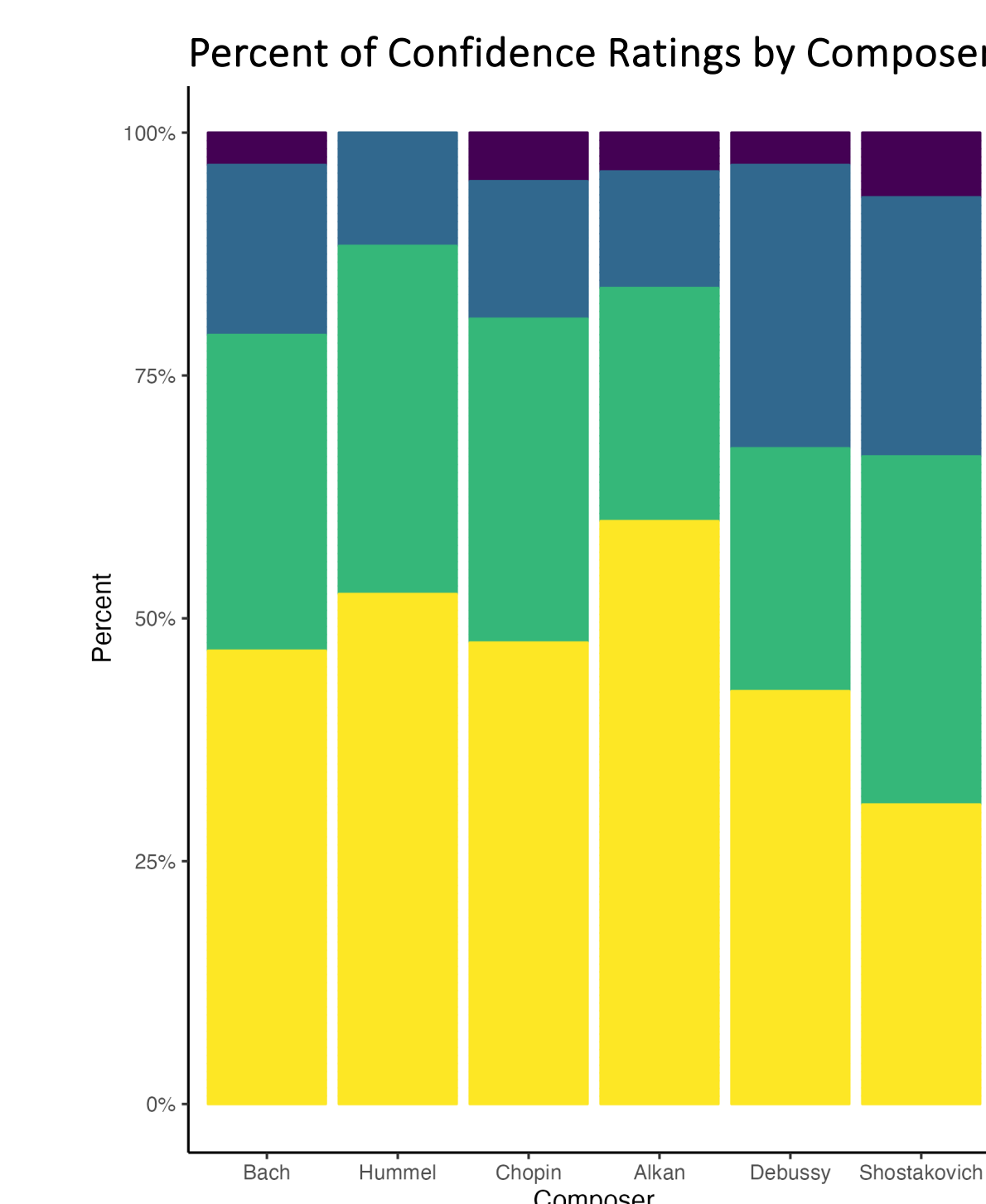


Fig. 3: Cumulative confidence ratings for each composer, shown as a percentage and set in chronological order from left to right.

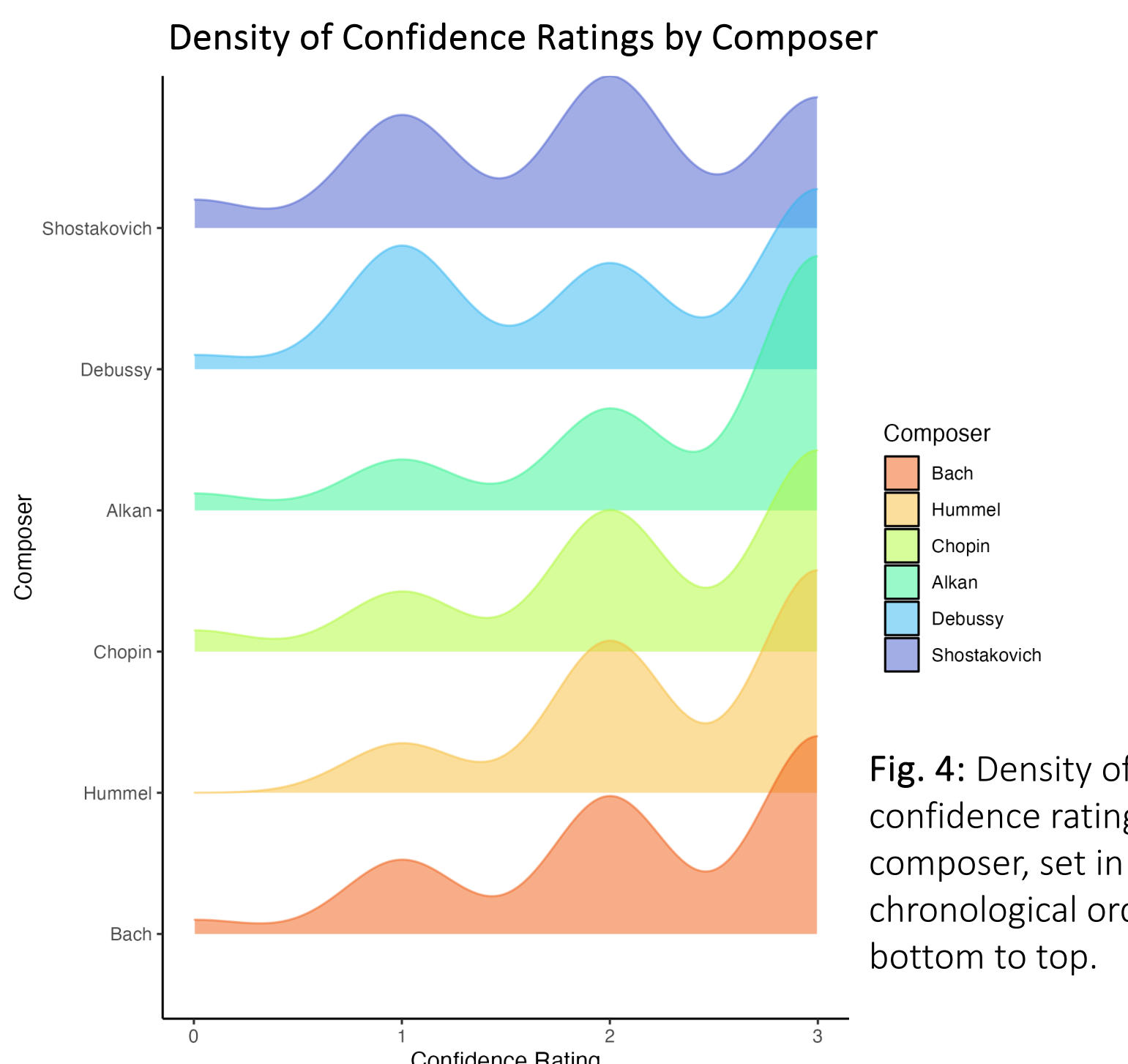


Fig. 4: Density of confidence ratings by composer, set in chronological order from bottom to top.

Summary

- We explored how music experts' perceptions of mode differ for music from different eras.
- Experts rated pieces more major and minor during the Baroque, Classical, and Romantic eras, but there was more modal ambiguity in the 20th century.
- Participants were more confident in their ratings for music in the first three eras compared to the 20th century.
- These findings suggest that the use of mode changed over musical eras, and those changes are reflected in modern listeners' perceptions.

Selected References

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Acknowledgments

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