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Attracting Arts Audiences: An Examination of Historical Perceptions and Current
Marketing Strategies of the Symphony Orchestra in the United States

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When one hears the words “classical music,” several potential reactions may occur. Some people may consider those words to represent an important facet of expression for a cultural group; others might think classical concerts are the domain of a pretentious elite class of people, and still more could express indifference, viewing them as just one type of leisure time entertainment. People have created various forms of music throughout time, but why does the labeling of classical music excite some people and turn others away? In recent history, social developments caused people to view this musical style as a higher form that is inaccessible to a large portion of the population. However, this does not and should not have to be the case. Classical music concerts, like much of the performing arts, provide an outlet for musicians to share creations and viewpoints with the world while educating others about aspects of culture that can expand the audience’s worldview, especially in this increasingly interconnected global society. Therefore, many symphony orchestras have made audience development and outreach a more prominent goal in their operations in an attempt to cultivate growth and promote the idea that the music and experience of an orchestra concert can be applicable to a wide range of people.

Historical Perceptions

While the orchestra today has an attached stigma of being an elite activity, the symphony orchestra concert was not always the domain of those with upper class status and superior musical knowledge. In fact, classical music concerts in the 1800s were readily available to the masses, and attendees of concerts included people who gained

pleasure from hearing the music and viewed it as part of everyday life and culture, as well as more elite groups who were concerned with receiving “social confirmation” of their status by attending these concerts (Levine, 1988, p. 86). The atmosphere of a symphony concert was completely different during this time, with musical selections including lighter, more popular tunes of the day and the more difficult, heavier Germanic western art musics side-by-side to appeal to the wide-ranging musical tastes of the attendees. The music served as a “cultural lexicon that cut through class and income; [it] was welcomed and admired by people from all segments of the society and ‘owned’ by none” (Levine, 1988, p. 108). During performances, it was acceptable for the musicians to make alterations and embellishments to well-known compositions. Audiences had enough knowledge of what constituted a successful performance to “vocally and physically express their emotions,” letting the performer know of their approval or disgust of the performance style (Levine, 1988, p. 91). While some people today believe the value of art comes from its “scarcity, vision, and genius” and that mass production removes some of these values (Kolb, 2005, p. 28), music in the United States at this time had not yet been sacralized, or treated as an unchangeable entity. All segments of society, regardless of class or income level, could access many styles of music, and people enjoyed and appreciated it for both the entertainment and intellectual value it provided.

However, Europe did not experience the same openness of music to all classes. European society contained “hardened crusts between the different strata [that] would never let a taste pass...from one class to another” (Levine, 1988, p. 97). America at this time lacked these entrenched, rigid social classes and so could adopt the music of the European elite classes as part of their own norm. Moreover, the availability of music in

the home under everyday circumstances and events blurred the distinction between amateur and professional musicians.

Despite the wide availability of music, especially during the first half of the 19th century, class distinctions, an import from European sensibilities, began to permeate American culture in the latter half of the century. As the Industrial Revolution progressed, creating mass production of goods, and immigrants arrived in America, defined boundaries began to develop between social classes, as well as between high art and popular culture (Kolb, 2005, p. 26). Musical judgments also became more complicated, as the middle class increased its status and attempted to merge with the upper class tastes by adopting the same views toward art (Frith, 1996, p. 28). The upper classes viewed European attitudes as an ideal and strove to propagate the idea that the “far superior” European cultural products and the approach toward them were the correct way to appreciate higher forms of music. They felt people must treat these “masterworks” with a “disciplined, knowledgeable seriousness of purpose, and with a feeling of reverence” (Levine, 1988, p. 146). Boundaries arose as people chose to regard music either with these serious, idealistic views or with more “frivolous, commercial” meaning derived from simple pleasure (Frith, 1996, p. 27).

The upper classes continued to sacralize music, “endowing it with unique aesthetic and spiritual properties” and treating it with the respect normally reserved for religious worship (Levine, 1988, p. 132). The works themselves became the most important, purest form of music available, and musicians were no longer permitted to stray from the composer’s original intent during a performance. Concerts became less a mode of entertainment and more of a “museum displaying masterpieces in many period

styles” exactly as the composer intended (Levine, 1988, p. 104). Rather than serving as a means of expression for both the performers and audience, orchestra concerts became rigid and exhibit-like. In fact, the upper classes only wanted the masterworks of the European classical composers to be performed in their entirety by professional musicians on “programs free from the contamination of lesser works or genres [and] free from distractions of the mundane” (Frith, 1996, p. 29). This was in stark contrast to the concerts of the earlier half of the century in which new songs were played alongside bits and pieces of old ones while the audience voiced their opinions freely. In the new sacralized concerts, the audience was required to pay the “proper respect and seriousness” to these works and to strive for “aesthetic and spiritual elevation” instead of pure entertainment (Frith, 1996, p. 29).

The increased immigration to the United States during this time period also contributed to an upper class desire to impart its beliefs of proper behavior and style as distinguishing characteristics between increasingly stratified classes. Rather than making concert halls places where people could be entertained, those who controlled the performances, including wealthy patrons, musical impresarios and conductors, the press, and the musical groups themselves, made audiences conform to rigid behavioral standards in order to ensure the proper enjoyment of and enlightenment from culture (Kolb, 2005, p. 31). These upper-class patrons felt that classical music was “too important, too exalted an art form to present itself to an uninformed, eclectic audience, many of whom cared more for the performers than the art being performed” (Levine, 1988, p. 103). Additionally, the pathway of musical communication changed from a circular form to one that traveled from the work to the performer to the listener with no

chance for response. During some concerts at this time, the musicians complained about the audience's apparent lack of respect and often ceased playing until the conductor restored order (Levine, 1988, p. 111). Acceptance of the "genius of the work" became the goal, and social constructs began to promote the common belief that classical music could only be spread to the masses by diluting it (Levine, 1988, p. 126). The idea that many people did not possess sufficient intellectual advancement to properly experience classical music extended, and the middle and lower classes came to believe it themselves (Levine, 1988, p. 115). This led to the decline of amateur musicianship since people regarded professionalism and "correct" interpretations of "great" works as the only true culture.

As a result, classical music audiences became increasingly homogenized, and wealthy patrons who could afford to support the endeavors of the musicians controlled the musical selections and established the protocol of the concert experience. This guaranteed financing gave orchestras freedom from relying on the mass public for revenue and let them perform only "truly cultural" works. Independence from the masses increased the distance between the concepts of popular and elite. While the upper class no longer worried about the "less intelligent, unappreciative" general public, the public began to feel even more separated from classical music. Opera houses and concert halls thus encompassed an "exotic atmosphere in which the normal person [found] difficulty in breathing [because] they [were] too little related to the community" that the upper class created (Levine, 1988, p. 101).

As the people within these classes continued to divide, symphony orchestras' characteristics perpetuated the elite and mass split. Noted briefly above, the performance

space itself can affect communication between audience members and the music, as well as reactions to the music. For example, the traditional concert hall separates seating areas and arranges the seats to dissuade conversation. The focus of concertgoers when inside the hall is entirely on the performers and the music, and there is not any actual contact between the performers and audience. Soundproofing of the hall, darkness, and the lack of windows combine with the direction of the seats to create an environment free from distractions, in which the audience directs all visual attention to the performers and auditory focus to the music itself. Additionally, the concert environment contains traditional “rules,” such as not clapping between movements, not coughing or talking, and not leaving the hall while the orchestra is playing, which are second nature to regular attendees but may seem strange to those unfamiliar with the ideas. Decided upon by the upper class, the “rules” of behavior during a concert make it obvious who is comfortable in the environment and who is not, further exemplifying the stratification of society (Small, 1998, p. 23).

Social Theories

Since this segmentation occurred, the elite and mass contrast found in symphony orchestra audiences has been accepted as a given. Moreover, this segmentation perpetuated the idea that orchestras are accessible only to those with the amount of cultural capital to appreciate the quality of the works being performed. While in the past, consumers might have intentionally positioned the symphony orchestra concert as only acceptable for the elite, Bourdieu posits that classes’ different tastes now lead to social reproduction of those tastes through the unintended consequences of acting upon them (Holt, 1997, p. 94). In other words, people choose and act based upon shared tastes with

others who consume in similar patterns. This in turn leads to the continuation of the division of these taste structures, even if the separation is not intentionally exclusionary. Thus, it would appear that by socially interacting in the ways seen as “proper” with others who share the same views, symphony orchestra patrons perpetuate the idea that the orchestra is only for the elite through unintentional social reproduction.

Holt (1997) says, however, that in order for the elite versus mass theory to hold true, the upper class must only consume those goods considered to be elite, and in order to hold this distinction, all social strata must recognize the goods as elite (p. 95). Currently, though, this is not the case. Those possessing high cultural capital (HCCs) rarely have material constraints and use their tastes as a form of self-expression. They place higher value on experiences than on material possessions and prefer to express their aesthetic sensibilities instead of being concerned only with function. HCCs also appreciate new situations, especially those with high intellectual quality, and they search for cosmopolitan experiences through which they can enhance their knowledge. In contrast, people with low cultural capital (LCCs) prefer functional, practical consumables and value solutions to everyday problems. Cultural ideas that reflect relevancy to their lives attract LCCs more than experiencing new situations. They appreciate their local communities and enjoy applying their skills with others who have the same talents instead of seeking new educational experiences (Holt, 1997, pp. 109-114).

The contrast between HCCs and LCCs demonstrates that these groups value different things; therefore, not everyone recognizes the same tastes as being elite. The arts, including symphony orchestra concerts, are only one area of leisure consumption, and studies have shown that the cultural “elites” also spend more time on other forms of

entertainment during their free time (Peterson, 1992, p. 251). Although many view classical music as the most prestigious style of music and those in higher occupational groups tend to like it more than others do, they are also more likely to participate in a broad spectrum of non-elite activities. LCCs on the other hand, can more easily chose one taste preference and view it as a reflection of their identity (Peterson, 1992, p. 254). They do not necessarily see classical music as being a “better” form of music; therefore, in Peterson’s argument, the elite versus mass theory cannot be upheld because neither the HCCs nor LCCs retain the viewpoint that classical music unequivocally deserves a higher ranking than anything else does.

Instead, Peterson proposes the idea of cultural omnivores and univores, which correspond somewhat to the HCCs and LCCs, respectively. The old model uses a pyramid scheme in which the elite form the top of the pyramid. They are small in number and narrow in scope of appreciation. The mass at the bottom is a much larger segment and sees many types of music as accessible. Peterson flips the pyramid upside down to say that omnivores at the top participate in a wide range of musical styles and leisure activities and are not restricted to only “high art.” In fact, they have a difficult time choosing a favorite activity or style. Univores, on the other hand, identify with only one style (p. 255). Despite this reversal of the pyramid shape, it remains true that cultural omnivores retain characteristics of the former elite class; they have a greater knowledge and cultural capital, but this stems from education rather than birth status and breeding. They are able to understand many different things while univores, the LCCs, have less time to devote to varied intellectual pursuits.

Today's Consumers and Implications for Orchestras

While the idea of cultural omnivores appears to benefit society in that people have a wider range of interests and appreciation for differences in cultures, it can present a problem for the symphony orchestra industry that is trying to retain its core patrons and acquire new ones. Competition comes from all types of leisure activities, and since people have less leisure time, they carefully select which institutions they will support with their time and money. Additionally, these consumers have not been socialized to view "high art" as more valuable than popular culture, so the same customer may just as easily be found at a rock concert as at an orchestral performance (Kolb, 2005, p. 25). Consumers do not accept what is presented to them as what they should enjoy and how they should enjoy it. They are much more likely to make their own decisions based on what they think they will enjoy the most in order to get more value from their limited leisure time. The current fast-paced world presents numerous options for consumers, and it can be difficult to filter through all of the possibilities. Cultural omnivores do not owe any allegiance to a particular art form, and the constant inflow of media messages means that they will not accept and retain everything. When they do consider these marketing communications, it can be difficult for them to commit to a particular organization by means of a subscription, a process that entails making an advance commitment to attend a set number of performances for a block price. Today's consumers like to have options and the freedom to change their minds, so they are less likely to support an organization through subscribing and tying up their leisure time and money so far in advance.

This is quite a contrast from the typical way most orchestras operate. In the past, subscribers made up the majority of the audience, but now orchestras face a problem as

the core base of subscribers ages rapidly. The audience for classical music is quite narrow; 57% are female, 86% are white, 41% are ages 45-64, 42% are college educated and earn more than \$75,000 a year (IBIS, 2007, p. 11). While this core group has high amounts of disposable income with the discretionary power to spend on orchestra concerts, orchestras should be concerned with the aging of this group, as well as the decreasing attendance of younger consumers. In 1982, 15.6% of orchestra audiences were older than 60, and 26.9% of the audience was under 30. Over the next fifteen years, the percentage of attendees over 60 increased to 30.3%, and people under 30 made up only 13.2% of the audience (Peterson, et. al, 2000, p. 2). This trend appears to be consistent across market sizes and locations, as both the Knoxville Symphony Orchestra and Chicago Symphony Orchestra have average patron ages of at least 50 (65 and older for the KSO and 52 and older for the CSO) (Barnett and Gilmer, 2008). A higher percentage of the classical music audience is older than 60 than it is for any other performing art form, and the total audience for orchestras is aging faster than the American population in general (Peterson et. al, 2000, p. 2). Additionally, the National Endowment of the Arts Survey in 2002 found that overall audiences for orchestra concerts are decreasing, too. In 1982, 13% of adults reported attending a classical music concert. This number decreased to 12.5% in 1992 and to 11.6% in 2002 (Bradshaw, 2004, p. 2). The percent listening to or watching classical music performances also decreased across all media, and the actual rate of personal participation in making music was cut in half (Bradshaw, 2004, p. 3). This corroborates with the omnivore theory in that culture consumers now are less willing to make a commitment to one art organization and instead prefer buying one ticket at a time according to availability of time, money, and interest in the content

(Peterson et. al, 2000, p. 4).

However distressing the aging of audiences might be to orchestral organizations, age is not actually the best predictor of whether someone will be a patron. This distinction falls on education levels, including music education. Adults with at least a college degree attend classical music concerts 5.8 times more frequently than those with only a high school degree (Bradshaw, 2004, p. 19). They are also 7 times more likely to perform classical music, which is a good indicator of concert attendance (Bradshaw, 2004, p. 33). However, only 33.9% of adults in 2002 reported taking a music class, either in vocal training or in playing an instrument, at any time during their lives, which is a marked decrease from the 1982 music class incidence rate of 47% (Bradshaw, 2004, p. 40). People with higher education and income levels are also more likely to participate in other leisure activities, but the effect of those variables on participation rates is much less. Since the amount of education, musical and otherwise, has a greater effect on orchestra concert participation rates, it appears the idea remains that many people still believe prior knowledge of classical music is needed to understand and appreciate it, therefore perpetuating the thought that symphony orchestras are primarily for the knowledgeable, elite class.

Other cautionary demographic trends for symphony orchestras emerge as well. Classical music concerts have lower involvement by percentage from other ethnic groups than their respective representation in the U.S. population as a whole. For example, Hispanics comprise 11% of the U.S. population but only 5.2% of the audience for classical music concerts. The age groups of 18-24, 25-34, and 35-44 all make up higher percentages of the U.S. population than the percentages of classical music attendees they

represent. Additionally, the percentage of concertgoers with at least some college education is an overwhelming 85.5% compared to just 53.6% of the population as a whole. Finally, the biggest disparity in the income brackets occurs in those with at least \$75,000 of annual income; they are 41.5% of the classical music attendees and only 22.2% of the entire population (Bradshaw, 2004, p. 14). Overall, this data demonstrates that orchestra audiences heavily skew toward white, educated, upper-income patrons.

These statistics reflect the apparent general public perception that harkens back to the segmentation into the elite and mass divisions of music. Previously, orchestras were free from constraints of the open market and did not have to appeal to a broad section of society because core wealthy patrons and government support sustained operations. However, current cuts in government funding and the higher competition for receiving support grants, as well as the decline in the core patronage of the orchestra due to aging and a wider range of leisure time options, have made it necessary for administrations to carefully evaluate the industry and create marketing plans that appeal to a broader range of people.

Industry Analysis

The degree of competitive rivalry is high in the non-profit arts sector because every organization must work hard to attract consumers who have many choices on which to spend their income and free time. While an orchestra in a metropolitan area might not have another orchestra competing directly against it, it does compete with other area cultural organizations for customers and against orchestras around the country and internationally for the highest level of musicians. The musicians themselves have high bargaining power because orchestras are always looking to increase the quality of their

performances and can lure the best musicians away with more money or a more attractive situation. Additionally, musicians may choose to use their talents in another field. The same situation applies to arts administration. Managers need talent and dedication to operate an orchestra effectively, and other, better-paying fields could lure these individuals away. Suggested above, buyers have a large amount of bargaining power in the symphony orchestra industry. They can choose whether or not to support an orchestra for any reason; attending symphony orchestra concerts is not essential for life. Economic downturns could hurt a buyer's likelihood of spending on this perceived luxury item. Recordings and other forms of entertainment can easily replace live orchestral concerts in the mind of the consumer, so the threat of substitutes, and especially the risk of cultural consumers spreading their time and money around, is high in today's entertainment industry. Moreover, the entry barriers to creating a new orchestra are high. In order to become viable, gathering the necessary talent of musicians and administration is crucial, and since orchestras already have a difficult time maintaining their current operations on limited budgets, creating a new orchestra to compete with one that is already established could prove to be extremely difficult.

The industry analysis demonstrates that culture consumers have a wide range of options from which to choose, and orchestras must work hard to overcome the elitist, inaccessibility stigma attached to the music and the experience of concert-going. A study by the Knight Foundation of fifteen orchestras and their markets found that the potential audience for classical music concerts is actually quite large. Almost 60% of adults reported some interest in classical music, and about one-third made it a regular part of their lives (Wolf, 2006, p. 31). However, less than 5% of those interested in classical

music actually attended concerts presented by their local orchestras (Wolf, 2006, p. 32). Most of those interested did not consider a concert hall the ideal place to listen to classical music; the car was the most popular place to listen, followed by the home. This could reflect the social barriers that the concert hall places upon listeners who are not accustomed to the rituals of attending an orchestral concert (Small, 1998, p. 14). Only 8% of those who attended concerts by their local symphony considered buying a subscription, and only 18% of those who attended concerts were actively involved in the decision to attend (Wolf, 2006, p. 32). Most of those who attended said someone else organized the outing. Additionally, 74% of those who had bought a ticket or were likely to buy a ticket had personally participated in performing classical music at some point in their lives (Wolf, 2006, p. 32). The decline in amateur musicians that began during the solidification of social strata in the second half of the 1800s has contributed to lower confidence about musical judgments, so those who do not have musical experience rely on the critical judgments of others to inform them of what is good (Small, 1998, p. 34). Of the total amount surveyed, 78% described themselves as casual listeners rather than the typical profile of classical music fans being highly involved with and knowledgeable of the music at hand (Wolf, 2006, p. 32).

These statistics reveal several important insights. First, there is a large amount of the population that enjoys listening to classical music on a casual basis but does not attend live concerts. Additionally, a majority of these people prefer listening to classical music in the privacy of their homes or cars. The concert hall presents a challenge for the uninitiated, and some audiophiles may prefer to compare the quality of recordings rather than experience the same music in a live setting. Throughout many musical genres, the

live concert has become secondary to the recording, and the challenge for orchestras is to make the in-person experience more appealing and accessible. Perhaps consumers feel constrained by the experience of the concert hall and prefer creating their own “sonic space” with their own rules and regulations that seem more familiar to them than the rituals of an orchestral hall (Small, 1998, p. 76).

Also, the majority of those attending had personal experience performing classical music at some point in their lives. Maybe those non-attenders are afraid that they do not possess the requisite knowledge to enjoy all of the offerings of the symphony in the way that current educated patrons do. They may feel they cannot form their own opinions about a performance’s quality and stay away (Small, 1998, p. 34). This correlates to audience education, which appears to be extremely important in profiling the typical concertgoer. The decline in music education and personal participation seems to be a major reason why interest in attending is declining. A large segment of the population likely feels that symphony orchestras and their antiquated traditions lack relevance to their lives. Although cultural omnivores tend to seek out new experiences, at least some relevance is necessary to make a lasting connection; otherwise, these consumers can easily find that connection in another form.

Product Considerations

Therefore, the biggest challenge facing symphony orchestras today is creating relevancy for the consumer and building a relationship with those customers who are candidates for increasing their support levels. Organizations should view themselves as an integral part of a community that has something important to share with the population. However, in order to foster meaningful relationships and make the experience

relevant for different people, marketing departments must use a variety of strategies in the marketing elements of product, price, place, and promotion to target various segments in unique ways. Marketing departments face the challenge of maintaining the expectation of exceptional musical quality while packaging the musical experience in ways to both attract new customers and retain old ones.

While the primary goal of a symphony orchestra is to present musical works to the public, this is not the only consideration organizations must take into account when evaluating their product and service offerings. Orchestras should strive to present compelling content to which customers feel a connection. No matter how well music is performed, it “will arouse no response unless [it] resonates, or can be made to resonate, with the desires and values, spoken or unspoken, conscious or unconscious, of those at whom they are aimed” (Small, 1998, p. 188). In order to reach a wider range of customers, orchestras should target different offerings to different segments, and marketing departments must understand a customer’s motivation for attendance. Strategies for increasing motivation include creating educational programs that establish relevancy in the mind of the consumer, social programs and elements for those who see attending concerts as a communal experience, and community outreach to widen the realm in which the orchestra operates.

Consumers today have a wide range of options for entertainment and look for experiences that provide both a good time and a memorable event. However, orchestras do not exist solely for entertainment purposes; they have a responsibility to contribute to the education and broadening of the audience’s aesthetic horizons. Audiences tend to be more demanding in terms of what they expect from an experience and are often grazers,

trying many things out a little at a time before deciding to make a commitment. For instance, the Chicago Symphony experiences a 60% churn rate, meaning that 60% of customers buy a ticket to one event and then do not return regularly (Gilmer, 2008). This likely means that these customers do not find enough meaningful relevance in the total package offered by the CSO.

Orchestras must consider current audience attitudes and desires, as well as industry factors, when designing their product packages. First, the offerings must be audience-friendly and encourage attendance and participation. According to the behavioral model set forth by McCarthy and Jinnett (2001), the socio-demographic factors described above combine with individual taste factors, past experiences, and other socio-cultural factors to create a potential customer's background, shape their beliefs about arts participation, and form perceptions of the social norms toward arts participation (p. 24). The attitude toward arts participation plays a large role in determining a person's intent to participate themselves. If someone feels that orchestra concerts are only appropriate for those older people with a college education, high income, and previous experience, he or she is likely to stay away if he or she does not fit that conceptual profile. The challenge for orchestras is to overcome these stereotypes by creating programming that is applicable for a wider range of people and successfully communicating it to encourage trial and first-hand reactions to the experience.

While the music remains the core product of the orchestra, unique ways of packaging music can make it relevant to a larger number of people and increase their knowledge of the art form. Traditionally, there is a repertory of acceptable works that generally attracts a large audience, so orchestras may stick to what they know will draw a

crowd (Small, 1998, p. 32). However, this does not necessarily create new appreciation for the orchestra. Orchestras around the country have begun implementing programs to educate the audience members about the background of the music and explain why it is important and relevant even today. These programs then allow the audience to listen to the actual concert in a new way that is engaging and enlightening. Different tactics include pre-concert lectures, artist residencies, open rehearsals, brown-bag concerts, collaborative projects, and a variety of performance types.

For example, the Chicago Symphony has implemented several programs to make the music relevant to the consumer. *Beyond the Score* is a new program in which the first half of the concert presents an historical overview of the piece and its importance in the past, present, and future. Visual elements such as film footage or photographs accompany this narration, as well as performance examples played by the orchestra to illustrate points. The second half of the program features the piece played in its entirety by the orchestra. Rather than being passive listeners as they might have been before, the audience now knows some of the reasoning behind the music and can listen actively and increase their understanding of the piece. Critics might claim that the visual element is simply a gimmick and that including visuals “just to have them” and to appeal to today’s shorter attention spans is a bad idea. However, Gardner’s educational theory states that stimulating multiple senses at once actually causes people to store information in a different way that allows the brain to process that information better and make it more relevant and interesting for the listener (Armstrong, 2008). Another criticism may be that deeper educational programs such as *Beyond the Score* do not successfully attract new audiences but simply provide more content for those current customers. This claim is

false, as the attendance for these concerts at the CSO divides evenly between old subscribers, those who have attended once, and those who have never attended at all (Gilmer, 2008).

A variety of programming, provided the orchestra has the means to produce different series, can also attract different audience segments. The KSO presents Masterworks, Chamber, and Pops series in order to appeal to different audiences while hopefully increasing total attendance numbers. The Pops series appeals to those who want to attend a concert more for the entertainment value, and these concerts generally present more familiar works with a well-known soloist or group as a headliner. The more traditional patron likely prefers the Masterworks and Chamber series that present more typical classical music concerts in a more formal setting. The hope is that these two segments might eventually experience some crossover; Pops attendees may try a Masterworks concert and be surprised to find that the experience is not as stuffy or inaccessible as previously thought, and Masterworks patrons might attend a Pops concert and realize that there is more value to Western art music than just the “classics.”

Even the programming within a single concert can broaden the audience's knowledge. For example, the CSO will often program something familiar with something new. A Beethoven symphony has become so commonplace in society that it will probably draw a crowd to every performance because it is accessible and well-liked. The CSO can then program something else that is lesser-known or brand new. People might not attend performances of these works on their own, but since they are in the hall ostensibly to hear Beethoven, they will also listen to the unfamiliar works and perhaps be pleasantly surprised (Gilmer, 2008). This practice is actually quite similar to the

programming in the first half of the 18th century in which lighter, more familiar works were performed alongside more difficult-to-understand works (including Beethoven, oddly enough) to encourage a broader listening spectrum.

Finally, it is not just the music itself that may appear irrelevant to the audience; the orchestra members and administration must also be actively involved in the audience experience. Since the sacralization of classical music and the elite/mass stratification occurred, there has been a lack of interaction between the musicians and audience in a classical concert, which is quite different from the interaction at a rock concert where the audience and musicians feed off each other's energy. The model described above of one-way communication needs to be broken down and replaced with a more circular system. Every member of an orchestral organization plays a role in how the audience experiences the event, so if there is no communication between the groups, audiences will feel that orchestras ignore their interests for the sake of art. To avoid losing these audiences, organizations must be audience-friendly by encouraging interaction with the musicians and the administration. The musicians can break down the barrier that separates the two sides by interacting in small group settings to make it obvious that they are real people presenting this music that has importance to their lives. The administration also plays a role by constantly examining the reactions of the audience to discover what tactics are working and which are not. Orchestras must now be responsive to audience desires in order to remain viable as an art form. Everything the customer encounters, from the box office staff, ushers, the building, ease and cost of transportation, the program booklet, the restrooms, the concessions, and of course the musical performance itself, all play a large

role in attracting and retaining customers, but different variables matter more to patrons in diverse locations.

Community outreach is one way to learn more about potential audiences. In a survey conducted by the League of American Orchestras, the majority of citizens believe that live performing arts in a city improves the quality of life, promotes understanding of other cultures, fosters pride in the community, and contributes to the education of children (League, 2005, p. 3). As mentioned above, having personal music experience is a very important factor in predicting if a person will attend an orchestra concert. Government cuts in music education funding have made the issue even more crucial for the sustenance of the orchestra in the future. The lower emphasis placed on classical music education is contributing to the shrinking of orchestra audiences, so orchestras would do well to educate children in their local communities to foster a lifelong sense of appreciation. The KSO has created programs to introduce young children to classical music with the simultaneous participation of their parents or grandparents. The orchestra is also supplementing programs in the schools to assist underprivileged children in learning to play musical instruments themselves.

Place Considerations

One way that orchestral community outreach operates is by presenting concerts in non-traditional locations. Removing the socio-demographic stigma of the fancy concert hall from the equation often results in more people trying classical music. For example, outdoor concerts often attract large numbers of people who can come as they are, bring food and drinks, and enjoy the freedom of the open space. Runout concerts to community sites such as libraries, schools, hospitals, and more can bring classical music to potential

new audiences with little risk involved. The low level of risk will hopefully encourage more regular attendance in a more typical concert hall setting.

However, in order to attract and retain customers in the traditional setting, the place must be comfortable, appealing, and easy-to-reach. Many customers today perceive orchestras as stuffy and old-fashioned, so organizations must be sure to make the venue audience-friendly and have the support staff to maintain this reputation. Additionally, orchestras need to consider the timing of their programs. People today have less leisure time and more choices on how to spend it. Flexibility and the ability to change one's mind are very important considerations for consumers, and orchestras traditionally have not operated on such a model. Subscribers, while very important to orchestras, are declining because of the perceived long-term commitment that many people are not sure they want to make. Therefore, orchestras are creating more flexible plans that still encourage multi-concert purchases. The KSO allows subscribers to exchange tickets for different concerts, release their unused tickets for a tax credit, and choose from a selection of concerts across the different programmatic series to create their own packages (Barnett, 2008). The day of the week and time of day of the concert greatly affects the makeup of the CSO audience; the orchestra offers different plans based on day and time and has increased exchange benefits if the customer needs to make an alteration in his or her ticketing plan (Gilmer, 2008).

Price Considerations

In conjunction with location, date, and time of a performance, price plays an important role in consumers' decisions to attend. A person's economic condition may determine if a ticket purchase is possible, but the variety of activities available in today's

leisure market can also play a role. Customers must perceive that they are receiving enough value from an orchestra concert to justify spending the money on a ticket. Traditional subscribers value their orchestral experience greatly and will pay the amount for a full season of concerts in order to maintain that valuable experience. Conversely, those who are not yet heavily personally invested in the symphony orchestra are unlikely to make a long-term commitment of money and time. One of the key elements is determining how to keep attracting those potential churners and convincing them to make a greater commitment to the organization. Discounts for new customers, such as two-for-one pricing, are incentives to get people in the door initially. This also reflects the social aspect of attending a concert, as well as the important influence of peers. However, it then becomes a question of how long discounts and incentives should continue in order to hook a customer. The orchestra must generate enough meaning for the new customer that he or she is then willing to pay full price for the experience.

Regular pricing levels are also an area of concern. Some critics might say that orchestras should discount prices of unsold seats in order to get people in the building. However, that strategy teaches people simply to wait until the last minute in order to get a good deal. The ultimate goal is to make an experience so desirable that people want to pay full price right away in order to guarantee themselves a good seat. Additionally, the utilization of the internet has made it possible for organizations to implement dynamic pricing schemes. If a concert is selling very well, the system can increase price levels across the board to generate more income. While this may deter some customers from attending, the hope is to encourage earlier purchase in order to save money. This idea is also a selling point for subscriptions. In addition to gaining benefits such as a definite seat

location and backstage tours, subscribers have the potential to save money because they received locked-in ticket prices that cannot increase over the course of the season.

Promotional Considerations

Promoting season subscriptions, as well as individual tickets, is becoming more difficult as people have more options to spend their money on and live in a society highly saturated with advertising messages. Therefore, orchestras must create promotional plans that will be most effective for certain segments of consumers. Orchestras should not market to longtime season subscribers in the same way as potential newcomers, for instance. For many of these older patrons, tradition is one of the main selling points. They appreciate the event as a whole, from the idea of dressing up to hearing musical “works of genius.” Newcomers, on the other hand, need to be convinced that the orchestra has offerings that they will appreciate and enjoy. Additionally, they might be turned off by the traditionalist approach and instead respond to efforts of a more social nature. The Knight Foundation identified a relatively small group called initiators who are more likely to actually get a group of people together, make plans to attend, and purchase the tickets to an event (Brown, 2004, p. 9). The other portion of society (the group the initiator gets together) may have an interest in the event but is unlikely to act on their own. Part of the reason some people stay away from the symphony is they are afraid they will feel out of place in that particular environment. Being with friends who have spread the word about the event, as well as looking around and seeing people who look similar to themselves, can be an important motivating factor in getting those with an interest but who are not involved to attend. Marketing communications from an orchestra should

emphasize the diversity, relevance, and approachability for which they are striving to this segment of people.

Marketing departments should carefully evaluate advertising methods, especially in terms of the market location and trends. Some larger cities have so much advertising that an orchestra's offering can be lost or overlooked in the shuffle. Print and electronic media might still be very viable in a smaller market. As mentioned above, word-of-mouth can be a big benefit for orchestral promotions. People often place high value on the opinions of their peer group, so if a trusted friend suggests attending a concert, people are probably more likely to respond. In order to fully utilize the potential power of these initiators, orchestras need to develop close relationships with them and let them be among the first to learn of new programs or offerings. Attractive direct mail, while it can be expensive, is a catchy way to inform current customers of future offerings and specials. The internet has revolutionized the way people communicate, so orchestras should take full advantage of this medium. Email listings and websites allow customers to receive instantaneous information and easily transmit it to friends.

In addition to gaining new customers by encouraging the social aspect of the orchestra experience, orchestras can try to attract crossover audiences who patronize other institutions by forming collaborative relationships. An event that involves more than one cultural group will probably receive more media attention and will draw customers from both. Each group receives exposure to the other institution and will hopefully recognize the value of supporting both of them. These collaborations could also help increase diversity in the orchestra audience. Everything that the orchestra does

should promote the idea that the art form is not elitist and is relevant to other segments of society.

Overall, this creation of relevance for a more diverse audience helps form a positive cycle of support that will help sustain and grow the symphony orchestra as a community art form. Cuts in government funding for music education are one of the main reasons that people no longer feel equipped to understand classical music. This in turn perpetuates the stereotype of the orchestra as an elitist organization that only has relevance for a select group of people. The opposition to government funding of music education uses this stereotype to justify its budget cuts, saying that the arts further separate classes along social and racial lines. However, rather than promulgating this division, arts organizations can use government funding in new and creative ways to educate new segments of consumers and increase the number of cultural omnivores. This would actually help break down more social barriers and structures by demonstrating a commitment to making the symphony orchestra relevant to a broader segment of the population. In turn, these new patrons will likely pass along their fondness of music to younger generations and create higher audience numbers through the peer influence of inviting their friends. The government, orchestra, and community can work together in this cycle to create positive effects for all involved.

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