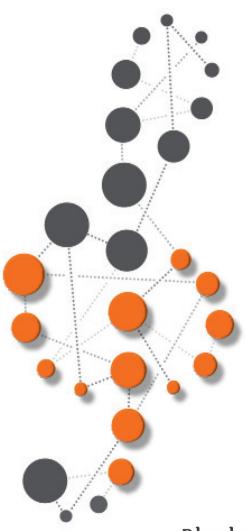# Psychological Perspectives on Musical Experiences and Skills

Research in the Western Balkans and Western Europe

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7. How Professional Musicians Can Better Connect to Audiences for Live Classical Music: Assessing Theory And Practice in the Light of the COVID-19 Crisis

John Sloboda

Introduction

Attendance at live classical music events in many countries has been steadily declining for decades, both in absolute terms and relative to other arts. For instance, the USA National Endowment for the Arts has periodically surveyed public participation in the arts. Attendance at classical music concerts has steadily declined over the period 1982–2017, whereas other participation, such as gallery attendance or attendance at pop concerts has not declined. Specifically, in 1982, 13% of the US population had attended at least one classical concert in the year. By 2017 this percentage had fallen to 8%.

One of the most striking contributors to this decline is the changing age profile of audiences. The average classical music audience is getting older, as is shown clearly in the 2017 data from the USA (National Endowment for the Arts, 2018) and also the UK. Data from the UK Office for National Statistics (Sigurjonsson, 2005) showed that while 16% of the 55–64 age group had attended a classical concert, the figure for under 35s was around 5%. This compares with 90% attendance from that same cohort for films and pop concerts.

Since live performance is at the heart of classical performance training and practice, this decline presents challenges for the profession, and an

urgent need for greater understanding of its causes and how it might be reversed. One potential line of explanation is that classical concerts have been failing to give contemporary audiences, particularly the under-50s, what they seek. In support of this, Dobson (2010) analysed the responses of culturally aware young adults attending their first classical concerts and found that they valued inclusion and participation highly, and sought the sense that their attendance mattered to the performers, who wanted to co-create with them a unique encounter, not just exposure to works they could have heard at home.

In response to such findings, Sloboda and Ford (2019) have articulated four key dimensions on which live events may vary and which may help to explain why classical music concerts have experienced such difficulties.

The first dimension is *established work versus new work,* and in what proportion. Established work means work that belongs to a repertoire of tried-and-tested value, often by authors or composers no longer alive. In general, the programmes of major classical venues concentrate on established work, particularly of dead composers. In contrast, programmes of major theatres have a very high proportion of new work alongside the established. Even art galleries that build their reputation on established work and the work of dead artists, tend to have major exhibitions of relatively recent work by living artists, or work not exhibited before. For instance, 25% of the special exhibitions at London's National Gallery in 2018 were of living artists, although its main collection focuses on works from the thirteenth to the early twentieth centuries. And at pop concerts it is virtually unknown for the work of dead artists to be performed. As was the case for classical concerts before the mid-19th century, audiences for popular music are primarily interested in the work of living artists with whom they can have a direct encounter, and from whom they can eagerly anticipate the production of further new songs in the future. In general, in the 18th and early 19th centuries, once a composer was dead, his music held little further interest for audiences (Weber, 1984).

The second dimension is *predictable versus unpredictable*. This is determined by such factors as the nature and order of the programme, whether known in advance or not, and the level of improvisatory or ad-libbing moments to be found. Very often there is no advance

programme at a pop, folk, or jazz concert. In theatres, productions typically vary sets, lighting, and costume. Classical concerts, by contrast, are often highly predictable. The programme specifies exactly what will be played, in what order, and the degrees of freedom for the performers are quite limited. What they play, how they are arranged on the stage, how they behave, what they wear, is very similar from event to event. Ad libs are minimal and often squeezed to the margins, as in encores, which in some ways could be seen as acknowledgements from the performers that the main event has failed to meet some important audience need. The more predictable, the less easy it is to generate the sense of an event—something special. Dobson's (2010) research on younger audiences for classical music provides the example of the 'Night Shift' series of classical concerts by the London-based Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. She documents how staging concerts at nightclubs, with no advance written programme, with the audience and players standing and moving around the space and impromptu conversations taking place between the players, all create a sense of occasion through their unpredictability and disruption of conventions.

The third dimension is *impersonal versus personal*. This relates to the level of personal engagement in the projection of performers. There are considerable differences across performances regarding how far performers stay in strict performer roles, or step outside the role and project themselves as people. One kind of projection is talking directly to the audience, either from the stage, or more informally, before or after the performance. This is not a traditional part of the classical performers' persona, but is increasingly being adopted by both soloists and ensembles (for instance, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment; see Sawer, 2018). Another kind of projection relates to the degree of self-conscious acting: for example, the projection of emotional and other qualities through such things as body movement, facial expressions, or vocalisations. In classical music this is often restrained or idiosyncratic. Either performers try to be neutral and invisible, or, as in the case of some well-known soloists, they engage in exaggerated gestures, which are often highly similar across different performances—a kind of gestural personal signature. The piano commentator Frances Wilson (2015) observes that 'the spectrum of gesture in piano playing is very broad, from almost complete concentrated stillness at the piano (Marc-André Hamelin, Stephen

Hough) to exaggerated flamboyance bordering on the ridiculous'. In theatre these things are generally highly consciously managed as part of the stagecraft, an awareness that has prompted pedagogical innovations where musicians work alongside actors to learn this skill (e.g., Rea, 2015).

The fourth dimension is *passive versus active.* This concerns the level of audience behaviour and communication. Live arts vary considerably in what is permitted or expected of the audience in terms of active engagement. In some events active behaviour is allowed or encouraged. In some forms, such as pop, opera, or jazz, it is perfectly acceptable to clap or cheer at points where an audience member feels someone has done something particularly excellent or moving. In classical concerts it is generally expected that audience members wait until the end of a work, even if the work has multiple movements, and will restrict movement to a minimum. In other contexts, more usually associated with popular music, it is permitted or encouraged to move, be it dancing, moving in one's seat, or actually moving around the space. The traditional classical concert places an audience member in the position of a humble viewer, coming into the presence of greatness. In this mode, an audience may feel it has nothing to give, only to receive (an observation articulated influentially by Small, 1998).

It is evident that in general, classical music events are established, predictable, impersonal, and passive in comparison to what else people can pay to go to in contemporary culture. However, the experience of inclusion and participation that contemporary audiences seek is more likely to occur at events which contain elements of the new, the unpredictable, the personal, and the active. Sloboda and Ford (2019) outline some potential historical and sociological explanations as to why classical concerts lag behind other live art forms in these respects, but the question posed here is how can more of what audiences seek be added to live classical events? A working hypothesis is that this can be achieved by shifting the event along one or more of the dimensions identified above, towards an emphasis on the new, the unpredictable, the personal, and the active.

Aims

This chapter aims to increase understanding of how artists and promoters can respond to audience needs through practical but theoretically grounded adjustments to the concert experience. It does this through drawing out key elements of an artist-led series of research projects which brought musicians and researchers together to explore how more of what audiences seek can be added to live classical events through principled innovations in programme design, content, and presentation. These projects drew on the dimensional analysis provided by Sloboda and Ford (2019) to devise concerts which explicitly shifted the audience experience along one or more of the dimensions identified, i.e., towards an emphasis on the new, the unpredictable, the personal, and the active.

These projects were undertaken at Guildhall School of Music & Drama from 2010 onwards within a programme entitled Understanding Audiences. This has allowed practical initiatives within the framework described above to be devised by artists, and the effects to be assessed in collaboration with researchers. These projects have been described in more detail in a series of publications (see Dobson & Sloboda, 2014; Dolan et al., 2013, 2018; Ford & Sloboda, 2013; Halpern et al., 2017; O'Neill et al., 2016; Sloboda, 2013, 2015; Sloboda & Ford, 2019; Sloboda & Wise, 2016; Toelle & Sloboda, 2021).

Here, an overview is provided, illustrating this approach with four case studies from this programme, each case study focusing primarily on one of the four dimensions in the framework, with summary accounts of methodology, findings, and implications.

In the context of the global COVID-19 pandemic where live concerts were initially not allowed, but where there was much online activity, the discussion then turns to a consideration of how the understanding gained previously might be adapted and enlarged to reflect the experiences, challenges, and opportunities faced by musicians during the COVID-19 restrictions, drawing on examples of concerts performed at the height of the global lockdown (March–May 2020). It concludes by assessing some advantages and limitations of the approach taken here and outlining some areas for future investigation.

Main discussion

Dimension 1—Established versus new: Repeating the same work in a concert

Classical concert promoters and programme makers are often reluctant to introduce new or unfamiliar music into concert programmes (Price, 2022). This is because core classical audiences are believed to prefer 'tried-and-tested' familiar works. As a result, programmes of major orchestras and major concert halls are very conservative (Beethoven and Mozart dominate; see Marín, 2018).

Studies using recorded music show that repeated hearings increase enjoyment and understanding of a piece (Margulis, 2014). But there is little evidence regarding the effects of repetition during live concerts. Spontaneous encores have long been a documented feature of live concerts. Planned and programmed repetitions are rarer, but have been featured (see Anderson, 2017), and they mainly feature new, or unfamiliar, work. This study aimed to examine the effects on listener response of deliberately programming repeats of unfamiliar works within the same concert.

In two separate concerts of new music performed by staff and students at the Guildhall School, planned repeats of some performances were introduced into the programme (some pre-announced, others not). After each performance, audience members ($N = 63$, age range 18–84, median 19.5) were asked to complete a four-item questionnaire probing both cognitive and affective variables. The key quantitative items were Likert-scale ratings (two for cognitive and two for affective). Participants were also invited to elaborate on their reactions in free-field responses. For further details see Halpern et al. (2017).

There was a statistically significant increase in ratings of the piece on a second hearing. Audience members liked the piece more on a second hearing and felt they understood it better. This suggests that a good way to increase 'tolerance' for new music amongst more traditional audiences could be to make the practice of repetition a more normal part of concert protocols. This could make such concerts more attractive to those seeking the new rather than the familiar.

Dimension 2—Predictable versus unpredictable: Effects on audience of classical improvisation

Classical improvisation represents a radical challenge to the notion that faithfulness to the score is a core or abiding value. Until the late nineteenth century, improvisation was considered to be a core attribute of live performance. Mozart and Beethoven would have been astonished with the contemporary reverence accorded to their music. They expected performers to take liberties with the score, as they did themselves in performance (Dolan, Sloboda, et al., 2013). It could be argued that a historically authentic performance of much classical repertoire requires (rather than invites) an improvisatory approach, which may be defined as a spontaneous, in the moment, musically informed variation in expressive parameters of timing, loudness, and timbre, along with actual new notes.

Not only is such an approach more historically authentic, it arguably has the power to provide a more intense experience for all concerned in live performance. This is because improvised performances are newer, more unpredictable, more personal, and—arguably—invite more audience engagement.

We evaluated the impact of such an improvisatory approach in a series of experiments exploring the hypothesis that improvisation, and an improvisational state of mind on the part of the performer during performance, is associated with a heightened musical experience in terms of both the performers' engagement and audience response (Dolan, Jensen, et al., 2018; Dolan, Sloboda, et al., 2013). These studies involved musicians playing the same piece twice within a concert, once with a prepared interpretation, and once with improvisation. Three levels of measurement of effects were employed: behavioural (actual sound parameters of performance), experiential (subjective judgement of listeners), and physiological (electroencephalography [EEG] response).

Our specific predictions were for the improvised versions to show (1) increased (more varied) and more 'risky' use of performance-related parameters (timing, tempi, rhythms, dynamics, timbre, and actual extemporised notes) by the musicians; (2) increased ratings by

audience members of performance quality; and (3) increased activation of certain brain areas in both performers and audience, and increased synchronisation in brain activity between performers and listeners. In a live concert by Trio Anima (Dolan, Sloboda, et al., 2013), attended by fourteen individuals, a mixture of students and staff from UK academic institutions, as well as outside guests and casual concert-goers (age not recorded), five pieces were each performed twice in two modes: 'prepared' and 'improvised'. The order of the two modes was varied from piece to piece and was unknown to the audience and any co-author other than the first. On objective performance parameters, the performances displayed clear differences. Greater expressive variation was found in the improvised version than in the prepared version, and also embellishments of the score.

Audience reactions were obtained by asking each audience member to rate each performance on five separate dimensions: improvisatory in character, innovative in approach, emotionally engaging, musically convincing, and risk-taking. A free-response box was also provided for comments on each performance. On all rating dimensions the improvised interpretations scored substantially and significantly higher than the prepared interpretations. The ratings were supported by written comments which exemplify the very different feel of the two types of performance. Prepared: 'Pleasantly played, though tame and conventional.' Improvised: 'It was very intense. Musically a lot happened. The musicians were really making music and telling a story together.'

Brain measurements (EEG) from performers and two audience members showed substantial differences between prepared and improvised performances, for both performers and listeners. One particularly striking finding was a contrast between performers, whose brain centres for focused attention were less active during improvisation, and listeners, who showed more activity in these areas (signalling a greater attentive involvement). A second finding was that improvisation yielded greater activation in areas of motor control for both performers and listeners, even though listeners remained very still. It seems as if improvisation was particularly effective in allowing listeners to mirror the movements of the musicians in their imagination. This adds a

specific dimension to the wider body of research linking music listening to brain activation in the motor areas (Gordon et al., 2018)

Thus, there is consistent evidence that improvised classical performances are experienced as significantly different by participants, as indicated through both conscious verbal and unconscious brain responses, as well as the musical features of the performances. This is a part of the case for suggesting that improvisatory elements will enhance audience engagement.

Dimension 3—Impersonal versus personal: Effects of attending an open rehearsal

The audience experience of a live event is not solely determined by the experience of the concert itself. The surrounding context—before, during, and after—can shape the experience in a number of ways. Rather than altering some aspect of the concert itself, some artists have chosen to enhance the experience through events planned to accompany the concert. One such event is the open rehearsal.

As part of a project on audience development in a professional chamber orchestra (collaborators Helena Gaunt, John Rink, Karen Wise, and Britten Sinfonia), an opportunity arose to examine the effects of attending an open rehearsal on audience experience. Seventy-two audience members (age data not collected) attended an open rehearsal given by a professional chamber orchestra, followed later that day by the concert. During the open rehearsal, audience members were able to witness conversations between the musicians, and the consequent adjustment of performance details. The concert contained new works including a world premiere. Audience reactions were probed by a post-concert questionnaire. One focus looked at how attendance at the rehearsal had affected the concert experience. Thematic analysis on the free-form responses yielded evidence of three main influences on the concert experience.

The first influence was one of orientation towards the music, creating familiarity and recognition when in the concert itself. One respondent wrote: 'Both rehearsal and discussion helped towards enjoyment of the concert as growing familiarity breeds enjoyment.' Another wrote: 'Having been in the rehearsal, it was wonderful to have these moments

of recognition in the concert.' This is another indication that repeated hearing is a key route to greater enjoyment.

The second influence was one of connecting with the process of artistry, and therefore feeling more a part of the artistic journey. One respondent wrote:

> Having listened to the rehearsals/behind the scenes, I felt more connected in some way. Even if they were rehearsing snippets, I felt more involved. I loved hearing them discuss and talk about the process that went towards this concert. I enjoyed it more, having listened to their process, and I felt like I was part of a journey.

The third influence was one of connecting with the musicians, thereby seeing artists as fallible and human. One respondent wrote:

> I found the rehearsal interesting. It made the performers seem more human in the sense of being fallible and subject to variation and imperfection. This made the occasion of the concert feel more unique and special, and in fact I felt more empathy with the performers (with them being less like untouchable perfect gods) and because of that more involved with the whole event.

These findings suggest that audiences seek a more personal relationship to musicians, and being let in 'behind the scenes' makes for a stronger and deeper experience. This contrasts quite markedly with the traditional training of classical musicians, which encourages process to be hidden in favour of a 'perfect' end product. Allowing the audience into the process involves a degree of risk-taking for which many classical musicians have not been prepared. Even more risk attaches to improvisation on stage which, in crucial respects, cannot be prepared in advance.

Dimension 4—Passive versus active: The audience as artist

One strong, but rarely adopted, method of bringing an audience into active engagement is to involve them as performers. Such a direct participatory role has been offered to audiences in some works by composers such as Iannis Xenakis, François-Bernard Mâche, Malcolm Williamson, Luc Ferrari, Mauricio Kagel, John Cage, Dieter Schnebel, Louis Andriessen, and Cornelius Cardew. However, no systematic data collection has ever been undertaken on audience members regarding the effects of this on their engagement and satisfaction. Toelle and Sloboda

(2019) rectified these gaps through a study of audience reaction to two new works commissioned by the Art Mentor Foundation Lucerne, which were performed in four European cities by four different professional new music ensembles. The method of investigation was a questionnaire completed by audience members in the concert hall at the end of the performance.

The works were by composers Huang Rao and Christian Mason, and audience data was collected at three of the four performances (by the London Sinfonietta, Ensemble Modern Frankfurt, and Asko Schönberg Ensemble Amsterdam). The pieces were composed with parts written for the audience to play instruments, make sounds (including reading poetry extracts), and move. In publicity material, the artistic rationale was described as to 'inspire composers to experiment with the idea of shared curation, encourage musicians to lead public participation, and empower audiences to play their own role in great art' (Press release Art Mentor Foundation Lucerne, 2015). Audiences performed under guidance (visual and sonic cues) using voice, gongs, bells, harmonica, and so on. There were also rehearsals and warm-ups (some in the concert, some optional at advance sessions).

There were 638 attendees over the 3 venues (50 attended preparatory workshops) and 273 (43%) participated in the research. The age of the participants was not recorded. The key data came from open-ended questions asking for positive ('best thing about the performance') and negative ('was there anything you did not like or find difficult?') opinions.

Responses were predominantly positive. Thematic analysis yielded four main categories of audience reflection. First was the Special group experience (e.g., 'sharing the experience with composer, performer, audience'; 'musicians around the room made it feel like we were in the piece'). Second was the Interactive musical experience (e.g., 'seeing how the music came together through rehearsal'; 'participating gave me a greater appreciation of the structure behind the two pieces'). Third was the Evaluation of the participatory situation (e.g., 'it was wonderful to engage with poetry again, inspired me to read some poetry to my hospitalized mother'; 'participating made me watch and listen closely: more than I usually do'). The fourth category was the Experience of shifting power relationships. Here, some respondents were more cautious (e.g., 'child-like participation in the Mason';

'I think the audience could have managed a bigger/more complex part. This would avoid the "cameo" sensation'; 'it did feel more like an experiment than a performance, which was rather weird as an audience member'). This was an indication, perhaps among the more musically advanced audience members, that audience participation was too tokenistic, with the real artistic interest remaining with the professional performers. This could be a difficult balance to strike with a mixed-ability audience.

Nonetheless, this first extensive study of audience reactions to a participatory composition demonstrates a high level of engagement (both with the activity and the research on it) and a variety of benefits of taking part. In particular, such participation heightens appropriate attentiveness and connection to the musicians and each other, and validates the uniqueness of the live concert experience.

As this example shows, one means of involving audiences actively is to proactively seek their feedback after the event, either through dialogue or through written feedback. A range of interventions outlined in Dobson and Sloboda (2014) showed that post-concert feedback events increased a sense of agency in the audience, and also the artists' sense of connection to the audience, with a levelling of the traditional power relationship.

Adapting concerts to the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic: Audience experience through the dimensional lens

From March 2020 the world was plunged into a new and unprecedented situation of social isolation in which concerts were suddenly stopped or disrupted. The situation changed very rapidly over successive months and may further change in the future. It is worthwhile, however, to look at early reactions to the pandemic when artists and researchers were struggling to make some immediate but focused responses to their new circumstances. The analysis here was developed in a series of three online practice-based seminar-recitals presented with singer Rafael Montero during April and May 2020.[1]

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1   Hosted by the Instituto Katarina Gurska, Segovia (17 April 2020), the Maastricht Centre for the Innovation of Classical Music (14 May 2020), and the Guildhall School of Music & Drama (26 May 2020).

Even under strict lockdown the impulse for live face-to-face performance was strong. Small groups of co-quarantined musicians immediately started to perform in the streets and on balconies. One UK example was a husband-and-wife duo who performed music in the street near the homes of quarantined families, described as 'Cuppa Concerts' (World Harmony Orchestra, n.d.). But unless asked for and pre-agreed, these audience members didn't choose to be the audience—therefore this was more like busking (street entertainers) than a mutually agreed concert.

Very quickly, many musicians began live-streaming concerts from their homes. This was possible for solo performers or musicians who happened to live in the same house. An early UK example of this was Stephen Isserlis's children's concerts for solo cello (Tutti.space, 2020). He talked between pieces and answered children's questions posted online. This set-up required a 'live-in' cameraman producer—who happened to be his son.

More common than live-streamed concerts were pre-recorded concerts with each performer in a separate home. In such performances the sense of 'liveness' was lost as audience members were not co-present in time or space with the performers. However, audience response was possible post-performance, for example from the comment facility in platforms such as YouTube. An early and now famous example of this was the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra's (2020) recording of Beethoven's *Ode to Joy* on 25 March. Within a few days there were more than 2,500 viewer comments—some highly emotional; for example, 'I haven't cried like that since my father died. I'm a nurse in the National Health Service. We need art like this right now. Thank you.' However, there was little opportunity for audience-artist dialogue, or artist response to such comments.

Another type of concert that appeared was a hybrid model, where performances were pre-recorded but curated/presented in real time by performers, or by a host in real-time communication with pre-registered audience members, through conferencing software such as Zoom. This allowed immediate real-time comments and questions, to which performer/hosts could respond. This was the model we adopted in our seminar-recitals, a model which also allowed a global audience from several continents to interact with us and with each other, in discussion

about the music and the modality of its presentation, thereby giving audience members considerable agency. In these new forms of concert, how does this new situation impact on the four dimensions of live events discussed earlier? Can the priorities of delivering new, unpredictable, personal, and active experiences still be upheld, and if so, how?

In relation to *established versus new*, virtuality imposes no restrictions on the familiarity/unfamiliarity of the repertoire. Repeated hearings of performances remain possible.

In relation to *predictable versus unpredictable*, new formats in experimentation made concerts under COVID-19 potentially more unpredictable. At least initially, there was a sense of shared adventure under adversity. However, 'standard' formats quickly became dominant, drawing on established models such as that used by the Virtual Choir (Whitacre, n.d.), founded in 2010. These formats were substantially determined by the functionality of common online platforms, to the point where a screen full of heads and shoulders became almost a cliché and highly predictable. Other dimensions of unpredictability, such as those introduced by improvisation, became technically problematic when performers were communicating with one another over the Internet, although institutions that could afford it invested in low-latency technology, requiring ultra-fast broadband, to eliminate the typical internet-induced delay between people performing in different locations.

On the *impersonal versus personal* dimension, it was noticed that the pandemic crisis gave more opportunity for musicians to be seen as human, performing in their own homes, wearing informal clothes, and backgrounded by their personal effects. Often the situation would inspire musicians to talk about why they were offering the performance, with unusual intensity (for example, on 15 March 2020 the operatic soprano Joyce DiDonato offered an impromptu concert in her New York apartment of arias from the recently cancelled Metropolitan Opera performance; DiDonato, 2020). However, such events were usually one-way with no opportunity for an audience to respond in real time.

On the *passive versus active* dimension, although remote feedback/dialogue is possible, both spoken and written, interpersonal signalling is limited (e.g., body language, group laughter, and applause are all absent, or highly compromised). Audience/audience interactions are

possible, but a remote concert experience is not easily socially embedded. Audience participation in the music is possible (e.g., sing-along) but normally each person will only hear themselves, thus missing the embedded communal experience.

Devising, executing, and publishing peer-reviewed research is a process that generally requires a greater timespan than was possible after the onset of the global lockdown. Thus, at the time of writing (September 2021), little published peer-reviewed research exists that can directly inform the design of online classical concerts. However, Swarbrick et al. (2021) provide an extensive analysis of 661 respondents' experience of a wide variety of online concerts across the world; and Onderdijk et al. (2021) devised online and socially distanced live concerts which allowed them to manipulate variables which could affect experience of agency, presence, and social connectedness amongst 83 concert attenders. We can expect significantly more findings to emerge in 2022, and beyond, through a range of research initiatives and networks of researchers which have been set up, many becoming active within weeks of the curtailment of normal concert life. These networks include Music Across the Balconies (Davidson, 2020), a resource which documents a large number of specific online initiatives taken by musicians since March 2020. Musicovid (Hansen & Wald-Fuhrmann, 2021) is an international network of researchers who have initiated projects assessing various aspects of the impact of COVID-19 on musical production, experience, and effects. These networks provide information on upcoming conferences and calls for contributions to publications, including special issues of journals, and these initiatives can be expected to bear fruit over time. Since the vast majority of live concerts are of popular—not classical—music, much of the new research (e.g., Rendell, 2021) is similarly focused. In research, as well as in life, classical music occupies a particular niche, and it remains important to be cautions in extrapolating from one genre to another in drawing conclusions.

Conclusion

This chapter has drawn together the findings from artist-involved research into audience experience, where artists play an equal role in the research alongside researchers, thus assessing innovations in concert practice

which are meaningful and relevant to their practice. Practice-based, or practice-led research is becoming an increasingly significant feature of the music research environment, where in-depth understanding of a particular artistic practice or context—with all its individuality—can provide a challenge to the scientific imperative towards generality. This chapter has provided one attempt to outline a conceptual framework of some generality which is, nonetheless, sufficiently flexible to encompass a wide variety of artistic and organisational initiatives around concerts.

However, most of the research described has taken place in the UK (the remainder in north-western Europe), and much of it in the context of just one higher music education (HME) institute. HMEs have the advantage of allowing more freedom and experimentation than is sometimes possible in the commercial arts world, and HMEs are also natural homes for researchers. Embedding research-informed innovation within commercial or municipal arts organisations is a greater challenge, but one which may have more profound effects on the industry, if achieved.

Another challenge is to define more concretely the impact of such research on artistic practice going forward. Although the musicians in our studies were very engaged in the research process at the time, it is less easy to discover and document how the research influenced practice over the longer term, when the immediate collaboration ended.

Concert-going, and the socio-cultural underpinnings which sustain it, also varies quite considerably from country to country. Although the decline in classical concert attendance may be a global phenomenon, its rate and causes may be substantially different from country to country. It would be a productive future development to conduct more comparative research into experiences of, and motivations for, concert attendance in different countries, which could tailor artistic and organisational responses more closely to socio-cultural realities in different countries. There are also other demographic factors which could benefit from a more detailed analysis, and which may interact with location. Age and prior experience of concert attendance are clearly important variables which are not as well understood as they might be; particularly, which differences are generational and thus relate to different social and cultural contexts in different eras, and which are more internal (related to biological, cognitive, and aesthetic maturation, for example).

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