

Working Title: Full Halls, Full Hearts: Increasing Emotional Resonance and Engagement among Classical Music Audiences

Project Purpose:

Music has always been known to have a special power. Whether that is to excite, calm, or heal, music serves a variety of purposes to listeners and performers alike. Although the benefits of music are well documented, there has been a downward trend in audience participation and retention in the classical music sphere. The purpose of my project is to implement audience engagement techniques by creating an interactive concert series this summer for all ages in the Provo community area. Over the course of the concert series, audiences will be surveyed to discover what techniques prove most beneficial in increasing engagement and enjoyment of concert goers.

Project Importance:

Each year, more and more orchestras nationwide are having to close because of a lack of funding. Since the Covid pandemic in 2020, many orchestras noticed a decline in ticket sales and audience attendance. Between the years of 2019-2023, orchestral organizations experienced an average 25% drop in ticket sales, with some as much as 40%.¹ In traditional orchestra administration, tickets sales have been a driving force in keeping orchestras afloat financially. In recent years as cultural trends have evolved, orchestras have increasingly relied on philanthropic donations to meet their financial needs. "The report found that in 2014, an average of 43 cents of every dollar orchestras received came from contributions, while 40 cents came from ticket sales, touring, hall rentals, parking and other sources of earned income; and the remainder from investments."² This shift in revenue resources has consequently prompted new initiatives in marketing techniques and strategies to fill concert halls.

In order to keep up with the changing trends of music culture, entertainment opportunities, and desires of audience members, orchestras are in need of modern, relevant resources to engage audiences. In conducting this project, orchestras will gain valuable resources for selecting repertoire, engaging with audiences, and structuring their programs. By implementing its techniques and analyzing audience data, orchestras will be able to provide audiences personalized and impactful experiences with classical music.

It is so important to engage audience members as that allows them to have individual, personal experiences with music that can truly transform their lives. It is because of these individual experiences that will keep a constant flow of concert goers and donations supplied, therefore keeping community orchestras and music groups alive.

¹ "Audience Growth Resources." americanorchestras.org, October 4, 2023.

<https://americanorchestras.org/learn/audience-engagement/audience-growth-resources/#:~:text=Pandemic%20audience%20trends%20vary%20widely,some%20as%20much%20as%2040%25>.

² Cooper, Michael. "It's Official: Many Orchestras Are Now Charities." The New York Times, November 15, 2016. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/16/arts/music/its-official-many-orchestras-are-now-charities.html>.

Project Overview:

I will design an interactive concert featuring my quintet ensemble where we will implement a series of established techniques for audience participation. Over the course of the summer, we will hold 4-5 performances, roughly 40 minutes to an hour long, in various venues in the Provo Utah area. Repertoire will consist of music designed for the quintet ensemble, and during each piece, a different musical element will be introduced and featured. With featuring various musical elements in the pieces we play and defining them to audience members, audiences will be taught concepts such as rhythm, form, dynamics, and phrasing (to name a few). Through this process of incorporating engagement techniques, audiences will be actively engaged in the learning process and be able to participate in the music making process.

After performing these interactive concerts, we will use an online, 5 question survey to receive feedback from audience members after the performance. Some of the questions ask concert goers what resonated with them about the performance, what they understood about the story of the music, and if they would want to come back to another performance that had similar techniques applied. By gathering this data, we can create performances that better cater to the needs of audience members and build more enjoyable, interactive events for communities at large.

Qualifications of Honors Committee:

Neil Thornock will be acting as my Faculty Coordinator for this project. Dr. Thornock primarily considers himself a performer/composer. As a composer who truly seeks to test the limits and creativity of untraditional instrumentation, he has had the opportunity to play at a variety of venues and expand the repertoire of instruments not commonly considered soloistic in nature. These venues include Imagine 2, NASA, SEAMUS, Eccles Organ Concert Series, and San Diego State University. For his work in composition, he has won three Barlow commissions and was commissioned by the Thomas Rees Memorial Carillon Society to commemorate the 75th anniversary of their carillon. His music for carillon has been regularly performed on carillons around the world. Thornock's works have been described both as "richly scored, moving, resonant" and as possessing "cool understatement."

Nathan Haines will be acting as my Faculty Advisor for this project. Dr. Haines is an incredibly accomplished conductor and educator, and is currently the Director of Orchestras at BYU. Beyond conducting the infamous and highly accomplished BYU Philharmonic Orchestra and Chamber Orchestra, Dr. Haines is deeply passionate about new and innovative techniques in Orchestral Programming and audience retention. While pursuing his doctoral degree at Florida State University, Dr. Haines created the FSO Studio Orchestra. This group largely played music from film scores, video games, and other various forms of commercial media to test out theories of audio-visual media and how that affected overall performance as well as audience engagement. Organizing a group of over 80 students and staff to accomplish this, he presented

research on his findings at the National Association for Music Education Conference in Washington D.C. Prior to this project, Nathan Haines was the Music director and principal conductor of the Utah Philharmonic Orchestra. Over the course of three seasons, he led initiatives that “doubled the size of the orchestra and significantly increased audience attendance through his innovative and engaging programming.”³ Dr. Haines is excited to continue to build the prestige of the BYU Music program, as well as continue to bring musical opportunities to the community at large with creative programming.

Jihea Hong-Park will also be serving on my Thesis Committee due to her extensive background in community engagement in music. Professor Hong- Park was a lead teaching Artist for the New York Philharmonic before coming to BYU to be a part of the piano faculty. Serving as a teaching artist, “she led a faculty of conservatory-trained musicians and taught in the nation’s largest orchestra-school partnership residency program serving over 3000 students across the five boroughs of New York City. She has also organized numerous projects to raise funds for non-profit organizations and established community concert residencies to bring arts to underserved communities.”⁴ I have previously taken a class from her titled “Community Engagement in Music,” which first piqued my interest in this subject matter regarding how to properly engage audiences and the benefits of bringing music to everyone within a community. During that class, we had to create, organize, and perform an interactive concert for Refugees here in Utah County. With her leadership and support, incredible things were able to come about in terms of creating themes, incorporating interactive techniques, and playing music that truly resonated with the audience and us as musicians. Since that time, she has been a helpful and encouraging mentor for me to really dig deep and continue to find more ways to perform for a greater variety of audience demographics here in Utah county.

Rob Dunn is a part of the Music Education Faculty here at BYU. Dr. Dunn has a special interest in music philosophy, motivation, listening maps, and in teaching music principles to children and adults alike. Through Dr. Dunn’s research, he has been awarded the Outstanding Dissertation in Music Education Award from the Council for Research in Music Education. His research has allowed him to be a credible source for Interactive engagement techniques in the Orchestral world and is the author of educational materials for the Cleveland Orchestra and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Dr. Dunn is also the main curator for the BYU Family concert series, a bi-annual concert series held specifically for children in the community. Dr. Dunn continues to publish in national and international journals, and has presented at many national and international venues.

Project Timeline:

³ “Nathan Haines.” BYU School of Music. Accessed April 15, 2024.
<https://music.byu.edu/directory/nathan-haines>.

⁴ “Jihea Hong-Park.” BYU School of Music. Accessed April 11, 2024.
<https://music.byu.edu/directory/jihea-hong-park>.

IRB is not applicable to this project. The online survey that I will be having participants fill out is considered a case study and does not require approval.

April 15th 2024- May 15th 2024: Research Various Engagement Techniques and Philosophies, Begin creating a script and concert set up

May 16th 2024- June 16th: Finalize Survey Questions, Perform 2 Interactive Concerts

June 17th 2024- June 30th 2024: Analyze survey data thus far, perform statistical analysis on that data, create a plan to make small adjustments for the next 3 concerts

July 1st 2024- July 21st 2024: Perform next 3 concerts with added adjustments made from audience feedback survey

July 22nd 2024- August 22nd 2024- Run statistical analysis on recent concerts, compile all data and outcomes to present to Dr. Haines, meet with Dr. Haines and Dr. Dunn to begin scripting repertoire and engagement activities for the BYU Family concert with incorporation of the most successful engagement activities

August 23rd 2024- Sept 30th 2024: Perform Family concert with BYU Philharmonic, collect survey data from that concert, Finalize Thesis write up and reflection.

October 2024- Defend Thesis

Funding:

In terms of funding for my project, I will need funding for buying sheet music, paying musicians to play alongside me, and to pay for any rental fees that might be incurred with venue spaces. Because of this, I will be requiring the full \$1000 in experimental funding. I will aim to perform in spaces that are free to the public and use music rentals as much as possible to save on sheet music expenses so that a majority of the money can go to paying musicians for their time, equipment rentals for venue spaces, and any travel expenses that might be incurred. Further discussion regarding equipment and repertoire chosen to perform at the interactive concert will be discussed further with Dr. Haines.

Culminating Experience:

As I finish my Thesis, I hope to present at relevant conferences where this information can be dispersed and data can be used effectively for maximum impact. The conference where this project would be well suited to present at is the National Association for Music Educators (NAfME) that meets in the Spring of 2025.