Is Technology the Way Forward for Classical Music?
Exploring Audience Engagement in the Digital Era

THESIS

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Abstract

In the face of declining attendance rates and aging subscriber bases, American symphony orchestras have begun to seek out new ways to market classical music to a younger demographic. This target group includes the Millennial generation, which has displayed a widespread disinterest in classical music alongside a higher level of comfort with (and reliance on) technology than any previous generation. In response, many performing ensembles are experimenting with augmenting their concerts with technology such as social media interaction, projections and smartphone applications. It is important to note that although many new and interesting digital genres are made possible by the advancements of technology, this thesis focuses on classical music as performed by acoustically traditional symphonic instruments.

This study explores the current phenomenon of implementing technology in the concert hall as an audience development tool using case studies of the Philadelphia Orchestra, ProMusica Chamber Orchestra, and Elevate Ensemble. The data suggests that these performing ensembles are including technology in three main areas of their audience development strategy: targeting specific niche demographics, programming new and
community-based repertoire, and increasing social engagement. These themes point to the conclusion that the injection of technology alone into the concert experience is not enough to make classical music concerts appealing to the next generation. Orchestra administrators must be willing to mindfully consider each part of the traditional concert structure as an opportunity to modernize, while still keeping the celebration of quality classical music central to their mission.
Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my mentors, Dr. Wayne Lawson and Dr. Shoshanah Goldberg-Miller, for their kindness, support and tough love throughout this process. Their steadfast belief in me has had an enormous impact on the way I see myself, and I will carry that confidence with me through every challenge that lies ahead.
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Lastly, this thesis would not have been possible without the guidance of my thesis committee and the support of my family and friends. In particular, I would like to thank my parents, Robert and Laura Frantz, who are living embodiments of the vitality that comes from intelligence, integrity, empathy, and the pursuit of lifelong learning.
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Introduction

Overview

Over the past few decades, American orchestras have seen their audiences dwindle and the cultural perception of classical music itself plummet. There are countless factors that have influenced this shift, many of which are outlined in detail in the literature review of this paper. To combat these trends, the classical music field has essentially split into two camps of audience development: orchestras that have preserved the traditions of live classical music performance at all costs despite decreasing revenue, and orchestras that employ tactics like pops concerts and performing in casual clothing in an attempt to appeal to the widest possible audience. Within the industry, these groups have become polarized, caricaturizing traditional orchestras as elitist, stuck in the past, and determined to go down with the ship versus more flexible orchestras, seen as sell-outs who pander to a less sophisticated audience. Amidst this toxic atmosphere, it is not surprising that so few orchestras have been able to embrace innovation and entrepreneurship.

Technology, and the many ways it can be implemented by arts organizations, is still viewed apprehensively by many artists and arts administrators. Each advancement brings
new creative possibilities along with new challenges, often in an undefined gray area of national arts policy. Some uses of technology, such as digital donor databases and wireless microphones, are generally welcomed, while others, such as free online music streaming, are much more controversial. Some developments were initially controversial but have come to be accepted as part of the standard concert experience, as is the case with opera supertitles. Similarly, museum audio guides are widely accepted and can be found at museums of every size. However, the fairly recent trend of introducing technology into the symphonic concert hall is still regarded very cautiously.

Statement of Purpose

Bearing these concepts in mind, the purpose of this study is to explore the recent trend of technology in the American symphonic concert hall and its impact on orchestral audience development strategy. This topic interests me as the researcher because of my experiences from both sides of the stage as an arts administrator, oboist, and classical music enthusiast. My interest in Development and membership leads me to regard this crisis in audience development as a programming and marketing concern, but chiefly as a Development issue. If orchestras, which are nonprofits that rely on private philanthropy and endowments to survive, are not successful in courting a larger percentage of the Millennial generation, their funding streams are going to be severely lacking in 30 years. This potential imbalance affects the other sources for arts nonprofit funding as well, such as the foundations and government granters who will find themselves spread thin under the burden of sustaining classical music singlehandedly. Administrators from other
performing arts genres like opera are feeling the pressures of dwindling attendance and cultural backlash as well, and are closely following the plight of orchestras as they also attempt to navigate the new digital landscape. In fact, it was a production of Carmen at Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts during their Summer 2014 season that first drew my attention to the possibilities inherent in a marriage of cutting edge technology and the performing arts. Wolf Trap’s innovative use of Google Glass and a smartphone application to deliver supertitles to the audience drew a crowd of almost 6,000 people to one opera performance and is still making the news in arts administration publications almost a year later. This is the type of excitement that these performing arts genres need to be generating in order to stay relevant. The questions that came from that performance of Carmen, of whether that excitement is sustainable and transferrable to classical music, have culminated in this research.

Research Question

The primary research question of this study is, “How is technology in the concert hall being utilized as an audience development tool by American orchestras?” Secondary to that are the questions: 1) “Is this technology effective in attracting new audiences to classical music?” and 2) “How is the introduction of technology changing the classical music concert experience?” These questions require an understanding of the context of classical music performances, their traditions, and the problems orchestras are currently facing.
Significance to the Literature

This paper is significant to several fields of scholarship, including audience development theory, trends in classical music, wider performing arts literature, and modern applications of technology. Much of the subject matter of this study is centered on programs and ensembles that debuted within the past two years, making a long-term analysis impossible. However, this extremely recent phenomenon presents an exciting opportunity to study a change in the classical music field as it happens and to contribute my preliminary findings to future scholarship on this subject. Beyond the emerging literature on technology and the arts, there is an abundance of literature focused on the perceived barriers to participation and the efficacy of different strategies administrators are taking to attract new audiences. However, there is a lack of truly forward-focused innovation and entrepreneurship in classical music scholarship, perhaps because orchestra administrators are so afraid to offend any part of their declining subscriber base.
Literature Review

A Survey of Current Issues in Orchestra Audience Development

“I have the impression that many of the elements that are supposed to provide access to music actually impoverish our relationship with it.”
–Michel Foucault, *Contemporary Music and the Public*

*The “Crisis” Facing the American Orchestra*

The National Endowment for the Arts reports that between 1982 and 2012, overall classical music attendance rates dropped from 12.9% to 8.8% and unique audiences declined by 13%, or 3.3 million individual people, between 2002 and 2008 (*How a Nation Engages with Art: Highlights from the 2012 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts*, 2013). Additionally, participation rates have been shown to decrease with each subsequent generation, challenging the perception that consumption of classical music increases at and above age 45. In fact, the classical music audience is aging at a much faster rate than the US population as a whole (*Audience Demographic Research Review*, 2009). Twenty years ago, the New York Philharmonic sold 83% of its tickets on subscription (to season ticket holders); a decade later, that figure had fallen to 70%, and this year, only 54% of ticket sales were sold on subscription (Tommasini, 2014). These
trends show that not only is classical music failing to attract the attention of the Millennial generation, even the most loyal audience members, the season ticket holders, are also losing interest. Orchestra administrators are no longer able to ignore the fact that classical music has a problem.

Although most scholars in the field agree that the genre of classical music is experiencing a crisis, the reasons (and suggested solutions) are as abundant and varied as the scholars themselves. Szántó, Karp and Tung (2008) speculate that in general, audiences attend an arts performance either to experience art intrinsically (music for music’s sake) or as a social experience. One of the problems inherent in the “intrinsic art” explanation is that the contemporary repertoire is not as accessible or immediately understandable to untrained ears (Botstein, 1996). Audiences that are interested in intrinsic art want to experience something that speaks to them on a personal level and connects to their own human experiences. Because contemporary music may not satisfy this, financially insecure orchestras become risk-averse and present programs that cater to the listener’s nostalgia for the great works of the past (Botstein, 1996). The League of American Orchestras’ most recent Orchestra Repertoire Report (Orchestra Repertoire Report, 2011) reflects this trend, affirming that none of the top 25 most frequently performed composers are still living. Without “fresh blood”, the classics become stale, the orchestra stagnates, and the concert hall becomes a museum (Botstein, 1996; Heilbrun, 1993).
Many concertgoers also attend live arts performances for the social experience. This can have several meanings, including audience members who enjoy feeling that they are part of a community of arts lovers, and attendees who enjoy going to the symphony with a certain group of friends on a regular basis (Szántó, et al., 2008). In the mid-20th century, it was seen as fashionable to have season tickets. Regular concertgoers often recognized each other in the concert hall, turning the concert into a chance to “see and be seen” (Botstein, 1996). Tepper and Ivey (2008) offer the theory that this feeling of community is declining as modern audiences flock to more relaxed performances where they are encouraged to actively participate with the art. Concertgoers feel increasingly anonymous and separated from the performance because the orchestra is on a pedestal (the stage), while the audience sits in the dark, listening and watching but discouraged from sharing the experience with others (Tepper & Ivey, 2008).

Shifting Demographics within the Classical Music Audience

Many scholars have speculated about the apparent cultural shift away from classical music appreciation. Most place the majority of the blame on the Millennial generation (Harland & Kinder, 1995; Szántó, et al., 2008; Trezzo, 2013). The National Endowment for the Arts (How a Nation Engages with Art: Highlights from the 2012 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, 2013) reports that only 6.7% of adults ages 18-24 attended a live classical music performance in 2012, and only 3% of adults of any age took classes or lessons for voice training or instrumental study. Paired with the decreased emphasis on, and funding for, arts education in schools, the alarming lack of amateur music making
has a significant impact on an individual’s likelihood to attend a concert. Botstein (1996) likens attending a concert to watching a professional sports event, in that concertgoers often attend out of admiration for the talent and skill of the performers, in search of inspiration for improvement in their own studies, or to see something momentous occur, like a world premier of a new composition or the performance of a young virtuoso. Thus, the decline in amateur music-making whittles away at one of the most powerful and compelling reasons to attend a live performance.

Martin (2007) suggests that despite experiencing decreased funding for arts activities at school, Millennials are actually even more creative than previous generations, calling them the “RenGen” – the renaissance generation. Millennials show more interest in solitary creative processes such as remixing recorded music, photography, and blogging (publishing poetry, creative writing, and personal experiences online) (Tepper & Ivey, 2008). This trend toward independent artmaking evokes political scientist Robert Putnam’s theory of declining social capital (2000). Putnam uses the example of bowling leagues, pointing out that over the previous 20 years, the number of people bowling had increased, but the number of people bowling in leagues had decreased significantly. He argues that technology is drawing us away from our sources of social interaction, such as volunteering and recreational sports, in favor of online social communities. As we abandon the social experiences that bond us to our communities and our country, we lose the “social capital” that makes us good citizens, good friends and neighbors, and makes our democracy strong (Putnam, 2000). Similarly, Millennials’ love affair with social
media and online communities has weakened their social capital, taking away the social incentive to attend live arts performances. This generation is not any more, or less, creative than any preceding generation, they just express their creativity in different ways, using the new technology of their time. However, there is always an inherent danger in making generalizations about a generation that is still maturing (Millennials: A Portrait of Generation Next., 2010).

Peterson (1990) is not so quick to place the blame entirely on the Millennial generation. He puts the burden of classical music’s failure to attract the attention of younger people on the Baby Boomer generation, which grew up listening to music like rock, soul and folk that used lyrics with political and social themes to speak directly to their beliefs and experiences. They rebelled against a perception passed on from their parents that classical music is “what you should listen to as an adult”. Therefore, their children did not grow up with a household appreciation for classical music, and the aesthetic of the genre was so changed that they were never attracted to it themselves (Peterson, 1990).

Heilbrun (1993) muses that it is unclear whether having a younger audience is actually beneficial for future classical music audience development. If an institution can hold onto these new audience members as they age, increased Millennial participation is favorable. However, if audiences simply become resistant to innovation as they age, orchestras will be forced to go through this audience development crisis again and again with each consecutive generation (Heilbrun, 1993).
The other major demographic that is underrepresented at orchestra concerts are families with young children. This trend is most alarming because it may lead to yet another generation growing up without an appreciation for this genre of music. Botstein (1996) cites that suburbanization has factored into the shortage of families in concert audiences. Suburban sprawl causes a divide between the inner city, where the largest and oldest concert halls are located, and the outlying areas, where the majority of families live. The stress and expense of driving into the city creates a financial and comfort barrier to participation for families. Additionally, the rising cost of tickets for a family of 3 or 4 may make the event unaffordable, causing them to seek out more inexpensive entertainment options. Baumol’s theory of cost disease (1966) states that the high cost of tickets contributes to the increasing vulnerability of classical music because the cost of producing a concert, which is already high, will only continue to rise. Musicians must be paid, large concert halls must be maintained and music must be rented or bought and rehearsed, only to be performed a few times (Thomson, Purcell, & Rainie, 2013). A concert cannot be produced any more efficiently, and there is no technology that can be integrated into the performance or administration to make concerts cheaper to produce. As concert expenses increase relative to other entertainment options, ticket prices increase and concerts become more and more of a luxury good (Baumol & Bowen, 1966).
Szántó et al. (2008) assert that the keys to attracting more families with children to the concert hall are to market and utilize classical music as a tool for education and to increase accessibility. In this case, accessibility can mean physical accessibility (the proximity of the concert space to suburban areas), financial accessibility (cost of the ticket), and intellectual accessibility (the ability of the audience to understand and make a personal connection to the art being presented). Sigurjónsson (2010) discusses the importance of “customer comfort” to the perceived accessibility of the concert hall. Someone with no prior experience at an orchestra concert may be deterred by a variety of social barriers, such as what to wear, when to clap, or just not knowing what to expect. To lower these barriers, either the public needs to be educated about the conventions surrounding this particular presentation of the arts, or those conventions need to be changed to match the public’s existing comfort zone. Otherwise, the perceived social risk, combined with the relatively high cost of a ticket, will undermine a new concertgoer’s experience or prevent them from attending at all. (Maitland, 2000; Sigurjónsson, 2010).

Orchestras have addressed this in several ways. Some choose to bring the orchestra out of the concert hall and into more accessible public spaces. Others change their programming by playing the “pops”, such as film scores and symphonic arrangements of show tunes or mainstream pop and rock music. Another strategy is to try to change the atmosphere of the concert hall to be more casual and familiar by presenting “jeans and beer” concerts, where drinks are allowed in the concert hall, the audience is encouraged to talk to each
other, and casual attire is encouraged for both the audience and the musicians (Kotler & Scheff, 1997; Sigurjonsson, 2010). By bringing the music to the audience in these ways, the orchestra frees classical music from “the sterile confines of the concert hall” and rediscovers its social purpose to recapture the imagination of the young (Kolb, 2001b). However, some scholars vehemently disagree with this tactic, stating that divorcing the orchestra from its concert hall harms the aesthetics of the classical music genre beyond repair. Lebrecht (1996) argues that altering the concert hall setting to attract new audiences is a compromise with lower levels of culture by offering instant gratification and shallow experiences (Sigurjonsson, 2010). Michael Steinberg, critic for the Boston Globe, states that “it goes counter to everything that musicians are trained to do… they are used to playing with finesse, care, and concern for detail to an audience that cares about those things. In pops, all those things are cancelled out”, and that the concerts “often take place in acoustically frustrating venues” (Waleson, 1985, p. 79). Botstein (1996, p. 139) warns against the “desperate search for a quick fix” and suggests increased education of the audience so they can appreciate classical music and classical music culture while maintaining its traditional concert etiquette. He also states that there is more than enough repertoire in existence to keep any audience interested, and that “yielding to the temptation to slide into crass simplification and brainless commercialism” by playing the pops is one of the most destructive moves an orchestra could make.

The study of who is attending orchestra concerts, and why they are attending, can be just as meaningful as the study of which demographics are missing. By studying cultural
consumption patterns in the United States, Lopez-Sintas and Katz-Gerro (2005) observed that our tastes are becoming more diverse, a trend they termed “cultural omnivorousness”. People only have a few hours of leisure time a week (Szántó, et al., 2008), and those with the financial capacity to spend money on concert tickets are dividing their time and interest between a wider array of entertainment options. Lopez-Sintas and Katz-Gerro divide cultural consumers (potential concert attendees) into three categories: “highbrow” (those interested in cultural forms that are perceived as serious and sophisticated), “middlebrow” (those interested in mainstream and commercial culture), and “lowlbrow” (those interested in genres rooted in marginalized groups, such as ethnicity, geographic region, religion, etc.) (Lopez-Sintas & Katz-Gerro, 2005). Orchestra concert attendance is normally linked with highbrow cultural consumers; however, Lopez-Sintas and Katz-Gerro noticed a trend of highbrow consumers showing interest in traditionally lowbrow genres, stating that it has become popular for the “elites” to be the first of their social circle to “discover” an ethnic performing arts group. They attribute the rise in omnivorousness to increased income levels, which has allowed the wealthy to travel more extensively, and increased levels of education, both of which allow highbrow cultural consumers to be more aware of the arts of other cultures. Essentially, the “elites” have transitioned from exclusive to inclusive (Lopez-Sintas & Katz-Gerro, 2005).

Peterson and Kern (1996) corroborate this theory, stating that although for many years, appreciation of the fine arts has been a mark of high status, there has been a qualitative
shift in recent years from “snobbish exclusion to omnivorous appropriation” (Peterson & Kern, 1996, p. 900). However, the new inclusive elites still skip over “middlebrow” tastes, causing the divide between classical music and mainstream popular music to grow wider and wider (Botstein, 1996; Savran, 2011). Because highbrow consumers make up a large portion of today’s concert attendees, orchestra administrators need to pay attention to these shifts in taste.

Technology and the Orchestra

The rise of affordable, accessible technology has been greeted with both enthusiasm and distrust within the arts community. In Arts Organizations and Digital Technologies, Thomson et. al. (2013) find that arts administrators are using technology to draw in and engage audiences while in the concert hall, provide deeper context around the art being performed, and disseminate information beyond the concert hall, such as promotional materials, professional development resources, and community-building web forums. However, digital technologies have also disrupted the “traditional” arts world by putting pressure on arts organizations to build a strong online presence and a completely new marketing strategy, undercutting their revenue streams, and revolutionizing how organizations are expected to interact with their patrons (Thomson, et al., 2013). Overall attitudes about our relationship to technology are changing with time. Each generation agrees more strongly that new technology allows them to use their time more efficiently, feel closer to their friends and family (as opposed to more isolated), and that technology is making their lives easier (Millennials: A Portrait of Generation Next, 2010).
Additionally, arts administrators feel that technology and social media have made arts performances more interactive and arts audiences more diverse (Thomson, et al., 2013, p. 2). However, many arts administrators are not willing to embrace innovations (such as smartphone apps in the concert hall or post-concert Twitter Q&A sessions) for fear of alienating their current, older audience base. Although these are the donors who are financing today’s concerts, integrating new technology may be the key to attracting the arts philanthropists of tomorrow.

Many orchestras are integrating technology into their administrative practices, marketing, and artistic product in an attempt to reach the Millennial generation, to stay relevant, and to be as accessible as possible. It can lower what economists call the “transaction costs” (money, effort, and time) of linking people to arts experiences by allowing them to be more spontaneous and flexible in their entertainment decisions (Szántó, et al., 2008, p. 17). Online ticket buying, from an orchestra’s website or smartphone app, makes purchasing a ticket as convenient as possible. Additionally, the field of orchestra marketing has been radically changed by the emergence, now necessity, of social media. In a 2010 study of technology use among arts organizations, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation found that all 594 organizations they surveyed had an online presence of at least an active Facebook page (Technology and the Performing Arts Field: Usage and Issues, 2010). In a society where a rising amount of our social interactions happen online, effective social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) allows an organization to appear “hip”, capitalize on a growing online community, and market itself at little or no cost. In short, a
strong online presence is imperative for any modern organization. However, the proliferation of online marketing has made it more difficult for orchestra concerts to compete with other, more socially engaging entertainment options, and potential concertgoers are barraged with a wide array of arts options to choose from (Heilbrun, 1993).

Szántó et al. (2008) draws a parallel between the online interactive aspect of video gaming and online classical music forums. In the case of online gaming forums, the social, interactive function of the online community, which was only intended to supplement the main experience, is eclipsing the perceived value of the game itself. This idea can be applied to the increasingly disinterested classical music community, where websites and online forums with engaging content are transforming the generally anonymous audience into a more tight-knit, interactive community (Szántó, et al., 2008). This serves the dual purpose of reviving the social aspect of concert attendance, and attracting a younger population to classical music. Ideally, the increased sense of online community would translate to real life concert attendance as contributors invite others with a similar passion for music, form groups, and attend more regularly (O'Sullivan, 2007). However, digital environments like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube also hold organizations accountable for their customer service and artistic product by providing a forum for anonymous unfiltered public criticism (Technology and the Performing Arts Field: Usage and Issues, 2010). The Internet, as a bastion of free speech, disseminates
information almost instantaneously and can build or destroy an organization’s image with unprecedented ease.

One of the most obvious, and most debated, ways that technology has been integrated into the classical music world is through recordings, now most popularly distributed via CD and digital download. There are two camps on this issue – those who believe that recordings are depleting the pool of potential concert attendees, and those who believe that recordings are a way for ardent classical music enthusiasts to supplement concerts with at-home listening. Botstein (1996) states that once a symphonic work has been recorded by one of the “great” orchestras, people will never be as interested in paying to see that music performed live. He extends this argument to specific soloists as well, stating that the demand for any recording of the classical music “superstars” of yesteryear will supersede demand for live performances of contemporary artists. Additionally, revenue earned from the sale of classical recordings almost never recoups the original price of production due to high production costs and relatively lackluster sales (Audience Demographic Research Review, 2009; Lebrecht, 1996). In an attempt to convey the intangible benefit of hearing music performed live, Botstein equates listening to recordings of classical music to looking at two dimensional pictures of sculptures (Botstein, 1996, p. 192), further supporting his view that ticket sales and record sales are mutually exclusive.
However, the League of American Orchestras reports that many orchestras are successfully using recordings, including free digital video carriers like Vimeo and YouTube, as promotional materials (Audience Demographic Research Review, 2009; Thomson, et al., 2013). Digital recordings and video reach a segment of the population who would otherwise never have attended a live arts event (McCarthy, Brooks, Lowell, & Zakaras, 2001). Of this initially uninterested demographic, viewers who watch videos or listen to recordings of classical music are twice as likely to decide to attend a live performance as they would otherwise have been (Cohen, 2013). Kolb (2001a) notes that someone may attend a concert and enjoy it so much that they purchase a recording of the works that were played. In that scenario, the orchestra receives additional revenue from the sale of the recording and the industry is not harmed.

In their survey of technology usage among arts organizations, the Mellon Foundation also found that orchestras are employing technology to make their administrative practices more efficient, such as security systems, acoustic technology, smartphone apps, and data services (Technology and the Performing Arts Field: Usage and Issues, 2010). Since the landscape of classical music is changing so rapidly, it is important that orchestras use the recent advances in data collection, aggregation, and analysis to evaluate themselves and their audience. This research also showed that arts organizations are using smartphone apps to provide information to the public, facilitate work within their administration, sell tickets or services, and train their employees. Integrating technology in this way comes with its own barriers, mainly the cost of the software and programs, extra staff to create
and maintain these systems, and the time and cost of training staff. These resources are temporarily diverted from other projects, which may have some short-term impacts, but the implementation of technology is a positive long-term investment (Technology and the Performing Arts Field: Usage and Issues, 2010; Thomson, et al., 2013).

Despite the frenzy of recent studies on technological innovation in the arts, there is a marked lack of discussion of new technology within the artistic product itself. For classical music, this means the inclusion of technology in the concert hall experience, such as projections, digital visual art in the concert hall, integration of social media, and smartphone apps for audience education. Within the Mellon Foundation’s extensive 72 question survey, only one open-ended question gave respondents an opportunity to describe their experiences with this type of innovation. However, when given the chance, organizations passionately described their use of projections and video alongside traditional repertoire, pointing out that their “increasingly technology-savvy artists and audiences wanted and expected to see video capabilities in their performances” (Technology and the Performing Arts Field: Usage and Issues, 2010, p. 58). The purpose of using technology in this way is to make concerts seem more interactive.

An important distinction should be drawn between technology that assists in an audience’s understanding and enjoyment of classical music and new combinations of technology and instrumentation that create entirely new, digital forms of art. Ensembles like Stanford University’s Mobile Phone Orchestra and Stanford Laptop Orchestra are
prime examples (Wang, Essl, & Penttinen, 2014). These ensembles are digital genres unto themselves, with composers creating commissioned works specifically for laptop and mobile phone orchestra and a small but enthusiastic audience. This research focuses specifically on the classical music concert experience and the way orchestras are harnessing new technology in their artistic product to make concerts more accessible, interactive, and appealing for a wider audience.
Research Methods

Research Design
This study is qualitative with a multiple case study design. Case studies are best suited for studying a phenomenon that the researcher has little control over with many variables at play, or a phenomenon in a real-life context that is emerging as the research is occurring (Schwandt, 2007). Both of these scenarios describe the implementation of technology in the classical music concert experience, which is developing as this data is collected and is a large-scale phenomenon with too many interrelated factors to isolate a strict causal relationship. This research examines the way technology is being utilized in the concert hall as an audience development tool for American orchestras; however, since this is a contemporary trend, this study can only describe what is currently happening and cannot generalize about the permanence of this phenomenon.

Case Selection
Case studies were initially identified based on thorough research of the major actors in using technology in the classical concert hall. These ensembles were then selected based on accessibility and willingness of the organization to participate in this study. One
performing ensemble was unresponsive to all recruitment efforts. The remaining three, the Philadelphia Orchestra, Elevate Ensemble, and ProMusica Chamber Orchestra, expressed willingness to participate after an initial recruitment email. The ensembles were thoughtfully selected to represent both full-time and part-time orchestras, which have different strengths and challenges. The three ensembles also represent a large, major American orchestral institution, a mid-size local chamber orchestra, and a small chamber ensemble. The size of a performing ensemble affects its budget, the repertoire it can perform, and many other strategic considerations. Additionally, the three ensembles span the range of organizational history, from over a century of history to almost 40 years to less than a year. The history and longevity of the organization directly affects its audience development strategy, since a young ensemble will be preoccupied with gaining exposure and publicity, while an older organization is more concerned with pleasing its longtime major donors. Lastly, the Philadelphia Orchestra and Elevate Ensemble were chosen for specific programs they are currently running that involve technology in a manner relevant to this research. ProMusica Chamber Orchestra acts as a quasi-control group in that they have achieved a positive response from younger classical music patrons and established audience intimacy while maintaining a comparatively traditional outlook on technology in the concert hall.

**Procedure**

The recruitment process consisted of a recruitment email sent to a member of the senior management of each organization in January of 2015. The email specified my role as
researcher and my interest in including that organization as a case study in this thesis. It also asked for specific consent in agreeing to participate in this study, and described the measures that would be taken in this research to maintain the interviewees’ confidentiality. Representatives from the three organizations explicitly agreed to participate in this study.

Phone interviews occurred in February of 2015 and lasted approximately half an hour each. The interviews were recorded at the explicit consent of the interviewees, and those recordings will be deleted to maintain confidentiality. The interviewees were instructed that they could skip any questions and that they would remain completely anonymous.

The Ohio State University Office of Responsible Research Practices determined that this research is exempt from Institutional Review Board review under Qualifying Category 2, which specifies that interviews be conducted on adults over the age of 18 with their identities protected. This research was deemed to be of minimal risk to all participants, with no greater probability of harm, discomfort, or loss of employability or reputation to the participants than they would encounter in daily life.

Data Collection

The primary research question of this study is: “How is technology in the concert hall being utilized as an audience development tool by American orchestras?” To determine this, interview questions were crafted that establish a baseline of each ensemble’s
audience demographics and existing audience development challenges. Broader questions about the interviewees’ perception of technology and outlook on the future of classical music were also asked (see Appendix: Interview Questions). These questions were selected in an attempt to equalize these three different organizations by assessing their current audience development status and the effect various technology programs have had on each ensemble. The questions were asked in a consistent and measured manner so that a clear answer was received for each question, allowing the data to be comparable from each interview.

Data Processing and Analysis

The phone interviews were first transcribed by the researcher using the audio recordings. These transcriptions were then coded for main points using a grounded, a posteriori, inductive, context-sensitive scheme, which allows the researcher to alternate between the transcriptions to identify, isolate, and categorize data segments into several main themes that then formed the structure of the analysis in this paper (Schwandt, 2007). All three interviewees mentioned these three themes (demographics, programming, and social engagement) as key components of their organization’s audience development strategy.

In order to provide a historical and structural framework for the organizations presented as case studies in this paper, each ensemble is introduced using a combination of data coded from the interviews and historical and archival materials. The younger
organizations are presented almost entirely with information drawn from the interviews, while there is more scholarship available about the more established organizations.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher does not have any personal ties or biases toward any of these organizations. Although the interviewees will have full access to this thesis once it is complete, the researcher did not allow this potential pressure to affect any negative or positive observations about each organization. The interviewees’ names will be kept completely confidential, and any record of these interviews will be deleted. The interviewees were not asked any questions that would cause them any discomfort. All participants fully understood the nature of the study, that their participation was voluntary, and that they would receive no compensation for their involvement in this research. They were instructed that they can skip any questions and were given information on how to contact the Ohio State University Office of Responsible Research Practices.

As the researcher, I come to this topic with my own experiences and opinions. I have organized, performed in, and attended countless classical music concerts throughout my lifetime, I earned my Bachelor of Arts degree in Music (specializing in Oboe Performance), and I am pursuing a Master of Arts in Arts Administration and Policy with a special interest in Development. I tend to disagree with the general attitude that classical music is boring or outdated; I find it incredibly exciting and moving and have a
hard time empathizing with this view. However, I have encountered it many, many times, and I am well aware of the atmosphere in many concert halls and the opinions of my peers, even within the arts community. From a Development standpoint, I recognize the dire need for performing ensembles to continually attract new audiences to facilitate the philanthropy that sustains classical music. Alternately, as a member of the Millennial generation, I have grown up with technology as a native language. I am a proud iPhone and MacBook Air user with many active social media profiles, and I have an active interest in embracing new technologies as they evolve. I, too, am guilty of passing over businesses or restaurants if their website is not functioning, taking this as a sign that my money would be better and safer spent somewhere else. As a comfortable technology user, and one expectant of others’ technological proficiency and the ease that comes with smartphone apps and wireless connectivity, I am inherently more likely to embrace technology in the concert hall. Throughout this research, I have tried to strip my own biases away and take a fair and balanced look at whether technology is really beneficial in this situation, or whether audience intimacy can and should be achieved through some other means.

**External Validity**

These three organizations are not necessarily indicative of all similar organizations, so the results are not universally generalizable to all orchestras. However, the act of analyzing these three organizations has inherent meaning, and the themes highlighted in each organization’s audience development strategies and technology usage can be
adapted for use by other orchestras. Because this phenomenon is occurring as this research is conducted, some aspects may be out of date by the time it is published; in the rapidly changing field of 21st century technology, this is unavoidable.
Introducing the Ensembles

I: The Philadelphia Orchestra

A Brief History

The Philadelphia Orchestra, founded in 1900, boasts approximately 100 musicians and has been considered one of the “Big Five” since the term was coined in the 1950s. It has long been a leader of innovation and technological advancement in classical music (Pniewski, 2000), and was the first orchestra to produce recordings (in 1925), to appear in their own radio broadcast (in 1929), to contribute to a film soundtrack (in 1937), to appear on a national TV broadcast (in 1948), and to stream a live cybercast of a concert online (in 1997). The orchestra can also be heard in the classic Disney film Fantasia, one of the most famous marriages of classical music and animation. Additionally, in 1973 the Philadelphia Orchestra became the first American orchestra to tour to the People’s Republic of China after political relations were opened in 1972. The orchestra maintains its close connection with China through its partnership with the National Centre for the Performing Arts in Beijing, which facilitates residencies, performances and master
classes in China’s major cities and into the surrounding provinces ("The Philadelphia Orchestra: History,").

Less auspiciously, on April 16, 2011 the Philadelphia Orchestra became the first major American orchestra to file for bankruptcy. Caused by declining ticket sales and donations combined with the economic recession, this event prompted a chain of other orchestra bankruptcies that are often cited as a symptom of the demise of classical music. The union musicians were staunchly against the bankruptcy, arguing that their pensions and benefits were being cut to pay for the orchestra’s deeper financial mismanagement. However, under the guidance of Music Director Yannick Nézet-Séguin and President/CEO Allison Vulgamore, the orchestra exited bankruptcy in July of 2012 and has been garnering increased donations and ticket sales in recent years (Lunden, 2012).

Evolution of the LiveNote App

Despite its rocky financial status in 2011, the Philadelphia Orchestra secured a $150,000 grant through the Knight Foundation’s Knight Arts Challenge to develop a smartphone application that would provide users with program notes in real time during concerts (Peters, 2014). The app, designed by Drexel University’s Expressive and Creative Interaction Technologies (ExCITe) Center, was based on an early 2000s prototype sponsored by the Kansas City Symphony called “Concert Companion” (or “CoCo”). In the original Concert Companion, blocks of text were prompted about every 30 seconds by a computer somewhere in the hall and pushed to PDA (personal digital assistant) devices.
in the hands of the audience, who could read along (Child, 2003). This concept was intended to be somewhat analogous to audio guides in a museum or supertitles at an opera. However, although PDA devices were very popular during this time, they were not as ubiquitous as today’s smartphones. If an orchestra wanted Concert Companion to be successful, it had to purchase hundreds of PDAs and rent them to concertgoers. In the end, the cost of wiring the concert hall and purchasing the handheld devices deterred orchestras from buying into the technology, and the added cost beyond the ticket price deterred newcomers from attending performances – ironically, the very population they were trying to attract (personal communication, February 9, 2015).

The concept of Concert Companion subsided for several years until the Philadelphia Orchestra began researching it in the early 2010s. However, there are still significant technological challenges. At that time, Drexel University had begun working on “Orchestral Performance Companion,” technology that could capture music and identify the title of the composition, as well as follow along in the score (Prockup, Grunberg, Hrybyk, & Kim, 2013). This technology had already been effectively harnessed in smartphone apps like Shazam, which “listens” to music and accesses a database online to match the music with previously recorded tracks to identify the artist and song title. The concept works extremely well for piano repertoire software, but live orchestral performances vary too greatly in their interpretations of classical works (including tempo, percussion, rubato, etc.) for the technology to be reliable. Additionally, unlike sports-related apps, which require internet connectivity and provide a constant but slightly
delayed stream of information during a match or game, an app like Concert Companion needs to be instantaneous to sync up with a live performance (personal communication, February 9, 2015). For these reasons, the Philadelphia Orchestra’s in-concert app, “LiveNote” (originally “iNote”), requires the concert hall to be wired for closed connection Wi-Fi that is equally strong in all parts of the hall, with a specially dedicated system to allow for hundreds of people to connect at once (Prockup, et al., 2013).

In spite of these challenges, LiveNote successfully launched at the Philadelphia Orchestra’s annual Free College Concert on October 14, 2014. The most recent version of the app is free for both iPhone and Android phones, which makes it more accessible to a wider audience and lowers the barriers to usage, and includes a glossary of music terms, facts about the composer and the works being performed, tips on what to listen for, and translations for vocal works (Faulstick, 2014). During the planning stages, it met with significant internal organizational resistance, mostly because it was a change to the established symphonic concert experience. In fact, when the app was debuted, only approximately 20% of the audience used it. Preliminary surveys reported that those who tried the app generally found it usable and useful and would recommend it to a friend, while those who didn’t use it were generally strongly opposed to it. These sentiments are probably correlated more with the audience’s prior openness to trying new technology than the success of the LiveNote app itself. After the initial Free College Concert, LiveNote was introduced at a full weekend of subscription performances, exposing it to the Philadelphia Orchestra’s core audience group. Other similar app-based technology
rollouts, like the integration of supertitles on Google Glass, smartphone and tablet at Wolf Trap’s 2014 production of *Carmen*, segregated those using handheld devices to the back of the seating area so that the lights would be least disruptive to those not interested in using technology in their concert experience (Ruland, 2014). However, LiveNote is designed with a black background and adjustable white lettering to minimize the impact on the rest of the audience. For these three subscription performances, the Philadelphia Orchestra tested LiveNote without segregating it, and the usage rate stayed the same, at about 20%. Given that 80% of the audience chose not to use the app and had reported that they strongly disliked it without ever trying it, the orchestra developed a concert series with the specific purpose of convincing their subscribers to try the app. These programs had a reduced ticket price, earlier start time, and different program schedule, all designed to lower the barriers to participation and make the audience more likely to try something new. The first of these “LiveNote Nights”, January 14, 2015, saw app usage rates raise to 44%, with a much younger crowd in attendance (personal communication, February 9, 2015).

One of the most positive attributes of the current version of LiveNote in comparison to earlier prototypes is that audience members can pause it, flip back and forth in the information, and interact with it at their own pace. This personalization makes the user’s experience with the app more participatory and engaging. The ability to scroll forward and backward also means that the user does not feel like they will miss information if they are not constantly watching the screen. In fact, some users reported that they were so
absorbed in the performance that they stopped using the app (Stearns, 2015). For these users, we can assume that they already had a working knowledge about the piece they were hearing, or the app had already done its job as an educational tool. At the very least, other audience members using LiveNote did not cheapen the quality of their concert experience.

*Purpose of the App*

The purpose of an app like this is twofold. The primary purpose is to make classical music seem more approachable to a new audience. Paired with an earlier start time and comparatively inexpensive concert tickets, LiveNote Nights create a more comfortable environment for classical music “newbies.” After all, for a population increasingly reliant on their phones, the concert hall mandate to shut cell phones off is in and of itself a barrier. The act of allowing and encouraging smartphones to reenter the symphonic concert experience immediately makes the genre more relevant to Millennials by meeting them where they experience culture. The second purpose of the LiveNote app is then to educate these classical music “newbies” once they have been enticed to come to the concert hall. The beauty of classical music, like other performing arts genres, is that it expresses human emotions and feelings and tells stories that are universally relatable, in a language that everyone can understand. By providing information similar to the structure of a self-guided audio tour in a museum, LiveNote allows users to discover the music for themselves and make their own personally relevant connections. Most importantly of all,
the app does not attempt to replace the music as the main focus of the performance; instead, it strengthens the audience’s connection with the music being performed.
II: Elevate Ensemble

*A Brief History*

Elevate Ensemble is a chamber ensemble of 14 musicians based in San Francisco, California. Founded in 2014 by Music Director Chad Goodman, Elevate’s mission is to seek new heights in classical music performance by performing new chamber works alongside the great works of the past, often in unusual spaces ("Elevate Ensemble: Mission," 2014). Their relatively large size for a chamber ensemble allows them the flexibility to break away from the traditional string quartet, woodwind quintet, and brass quintet structures and perform larger works and pieces with unconventional instrumentation. However, the ensemble is still small enough to play in unusual venues, such as their May 2014 premiere concert in a yoga studio and their January 2015 house show. Now finishing their first season, Elevate has already conducted a successful crowdfunding campaign and built a loyal and enthusiastic audience that sold out their most recent performance.

*The Elevate Ensemble Concert Experience*

Their recent salon-style house show included several key features that are indicative of Elevate Ensemble’s unique style. The musicians and the audience are set up on the same level, so no one is looking up or down at anyone else. The image of the musicians in the spotlight on stage and the audience passively watching from afar is one of the standard aspects of a classical music performance. The semiotics of the concert hall clearly defines
the audience’s role as “silent observer. Elevate seeks to disrupt that concept by putting everyone on a flat surface and arranging the audience in front of and around the musicians (personal communication, February 11, 2015). This reinforces a sense of “togetherness”, which makes the act of performing more enjoyable for the musicians and the performance itself more enjoyable to watch. In fact, the musicians are very involved and visible at Elevate performances, most likely due to founder Chad Goodman’s musical background and ongoing performance career. Orchestra musicians often feel “burned out” due to a rigorous rehearsal and performance schedule and lack of control over what they play and how they play it. Additionally, traditional concert etiquette dictates their appearance and behavior on stage so that the visual element of the concert does not distract listeners from appreciating the music. The musicians in Elevate Ensemble are meant to be visible and personally identifiable to the audience. They wear their own clothes with a cohesive theme, and routinely speak to the audience during the concert or during intermission. However, this does not mean that Elevate’s concerts are more casual or that the music is presented with any less respect. In fact, by retaining the dress code and a high standard of musicianship, Goodman “elevates” both the musicians and the audience, demanding that concertgoers take classical music seriously (Gervais, 2014).

Elevate Ensemble has a strong commitment to presenting rare, new and commissioned, and contemporary works alongside the more familiar chamber repertoire. By presenting the great chamber works of the past and new works on the same program, Elevate seeks to show their audience the link between where this music came from and where it’s
headed (personal communication, February 11, 2015), reinforcing the continued relevance of the entire genre. Elevate also works with their composer in residence to ensure that every concert includes a world premiere. The act of experiencing something that has never been performed before, which was written specifically for that ensemble and that moment, creates an intimate and exciting atmosphere that gels well with an audience that is largely new to classical music. In fact, one of the most unique features of Elevate Ensemble is their young audience demographics and equally young Board of Directors. Contrary to other ensembles, who attempt to appeal to as wide of an audience as possible to boost ticket sales and subscriptions, Elevate was created to attract young technology and financial sector professionals in their 20s and 30s. The structure of the organization reflects this purpose, with the majority of their staff and Board falling into the same age bracket and career interests.

Because they are so new, Elevate Ensemble is in a prime position to take risks. Although larger and older orchestras benefit from large endowments and more financial security, these organizations also have to rely on a core group of major donors, and may have to be sensitive to their interests and demands. Commissioning a new work, for example, is an expensive and time-consuming process, and there is a lot of risk involved with presenting a work without knowing how it will be received. Large ensembles have the time and resources to conduct audience development surveys and collect data to find out what their audience likes and dislikes. An ensemble like Elevate has much fewer of those resources – or obligations. As a chamber group, it is also more economical for Elevate to
commission and perform new works. They are able to take risks and experiment with new concert structures, layouts, and compositions because they have no need to continue any longstanding traditions.

*Bethlehem*

Of special note among Elevate Ensemble’s inaugural concert season is the October 10, 2014 world premiere of *Bethlehem* by Elevate’s composer in residence Danny Clay and San Francisco-based photographer and urban archaeologist Jeremy Blakeslee (“Past Performances - Elevate Ensemble," 2015). Blakeslee had photographed the Bethlehem Shipyard at Pier 70, a series of old warehouses in a well-loved San Francisco historic district that were about to be demolished and renovated. Blakeslee’s images are among the last to capture one hundred years of community history (personal communication, February 11, 2015). Inspired by his images, Danny Clay composed a work specifically for Elevate Ensemble that recreates the feeling of being in an old, industrial space. The piece was presented in the dark with the images projected around the space and musicians placed in and around the audience. As each musician’s line ended, they would turn off their stand lights, until the space was lit only by the projections of Blakeslee’s photographs.

Through this cross-artistic collaboration, Elevate Ensemble was able to use technology to recreate a community space within the concert hall. The projections, use of light, and the distribution of musicians within the space helped to immerse the audience in the music.
and make this performance more engaging and meaningful. However, this presentation also walks the line between a scenario where technology is helping the audience connect with music and one where the technology has become part of the performance itself.

Clay’s composition could certainly stand on its own without the projections and Blakeslee’s photographs can be viewed without music, so in that sense they are two separate works by two separate artists. Nevertheless, as often happens with cross-artistic collaborations, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. By presenting these two works together, Elevate Ensemble has created a new concert experience that gives the audience a deeper understanding of the Bethlehem Shipyards and a way to experience its loss through art.
III: ProMusica Chamber Orchestra

A Brief History

Founded in 1978, ProMusica Chamber Orchestra is a mid-size chamber orchestra of about 35 musicians based in Columbus, Ohio. Dr. Timothy Russell, who co-founded the orchestra alongside Richard Early, served as its Music Director for 34 years until his retirement in 2013. The 2013-2014 season welcomed current Music Director David Danzmayr and their Principal Guest Artist, violinist Vadim Gluzman. ProMusica’s mission statement focuses on innovative chamber orchestra programming, educational outreach, and audience intimacy ("ProMusica Chamber Orchestra - About Us."). ProMusica makes a point of commissioning new works at least once a season, often with younger composers, and encourages their musicians to express themselves on stage, making the visual aspect of their performances just as entertaining as the aural aspect.

The Personal Touch

The cornerstone of ProMusica’s organizational philosophy is the importance of personal connections, which is readily apparent in every aspect of their concert experience. Board members wear nametags whenever they attend performances to make themselves more approachable. Music Director David Danzmayr addresses the audience in a familiar manner during every performance, making the audience feel like an old and welcome friend. Greeters are stationed at the door to make sure audience members are thanked for their attendance. This type of personal touch is possible in a smaller chamber orchestra.
like ProMusica. Their home, the historic Southern Theatre in downtown Columbus, is an intimate setting that fits the orchestra perfectly and creates a natural sense of intimacy between audience and performers (personal communication, February 17, 2015). Concertgoers are encouraged to bring wine back to their seat and interact with others sitting near them.

However, the intimate and ornate Southern Theatre also does not lend itself to the inclusion of projections, wiring the hall for smartphone apps, or other possible integrations of technology into the concert experience. This sets them apart from the other ensembles involved in this research. ProMusica could be considered more “traditional” in their approach to audience development. They do not necessarily shy away from including technology; in fact, ProMusica has a relatively young staff and the same level of social media and online presence as most other classical music ensembles. ProMusica’s audience trends slightly younger than the national average for classical music attendees (Brown et al., 2002), and the ensemble has enjoyed a recent increase in both single ticket sales and subscribers from the 35-54 age demographic that has otherwise shown significant attendance decreases across the country (2014 Audience Survey: Summary, 2014; How a Nation Engages with Art: Highlights from the 2012 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, 2013). It is important to note the ways an orchestra can create a substantial feeling of audience intimacy and attract a younger audience, as ProMusica has, without the integration of technology into their concert experience.
IV. Significant Points of Comparison

It is important to note the inherent structural differences between these ensembles that make them difficult to compare. The Philadelphia Orchestra is a full symphony orchestra with approximately 100 paid, full-time musicians residing in Philadelphia. By comparison, “chamber orchestras” are generally smaller and have a slightly different purpose and sound. In general, a chamber orchestra, derived from the French word *chambre*, meaning “room”, can consist of up to 50 musicians and is designed to play in a salon or smaller, more intimate concert setting. ProMusica, with approximately 35 part-time musicians, fits into this definition perfectly. Elevate Ensemble balances out the scale as a “chamber ensemble”, with 14 part-time musicians. Their small size, although actually rather large for the chamber ensemble category, allows them to easily perform standard chamber repertoire like string quartets, brass quintets, and woodwind quintets. These ensembles sound very different due to their varied instrumentations and the repertoire written specially for each category, although there is some overlap between orchestra repertoires. Full symphony orchestras like the Philadelphia Orchestra often employ their musicians full-time, which offers them union protections like pensions, job security, salaries and scheduled rehearsal breaks. Smaller orchestras and ensembles like ProMusica and Elevate employ part-time professional musicians who may live in other parts of the state and perform with multiple ensembles. Because of this, smaller orchestras also generally perform fewer concerts during the year.
Theme 1 – Affinity-Based Audience Development

Introduction

One major theme present among the three research interviews highlights a new approach to the traditional conception of audience development, specifically which demographics the ensemble targets in their marketing and audience development efforts. Audience development itself is a major concern for every orchestra and chamber group as reports show that classical music audiences are aging more rapidly than the total US population and the Millennial age group is largely uninterested in classical music (Audience Demographic Research Review, 2009). The striking similarity between most attendance statistics is that they are preoccupied with the age of classical music consumers. Yes, logically, the lack of interest amongst the new generation is a very valid concern for the long-term viability of the classical music genre. However, the Millennials are so diverse with their interests and spending habits that the ensembles highlighted in this research have taken a different tactic to audience development – targeting populations based on affinity rather than age.

Age-Based Demographics
To establish a baseline with traditional age-based demographics, the Philadelphia Orchestra reported an average audience age of around 62-63, with Friday matinee concerts trending into the 70s and Saturday night concerts ranging from the 40s to the 60s (personal communication, February 9, 2015). ProMusica Chamber Orchestra reported a similar situation, with most concerts attracting audience members in their 50s and a slightly younger crowd attending on Saturday nights (personal communication, February 17, 2015). Strikingly, Elevate Ensemble tips the scales in the opposite direction with a reported audience age range of 25-35 (personal communication, February 11, 2015).

“Bring Your Friends”

However, all three ensembles have almost identical audience development strategies, which can be summed up by the phrase, “Bring your friends!” For example, despite the Philadelphia Orchestra’s Free College Nights and “eZseatU” $25 membership package for students, the bulk of their ticket and subscription-based income is coming from the middle- to upper-class group over age 40. Accordingly, most of their marketing goes to the same group – empty nesters, and encouraging their subscribers to bring other empty nesters in the same income bracket. This type of strategy is built around the mid-20th century notion that classical music audiences are older than the US population average because people naturally come to appreciate classical music later in life (Peterson, 1990). Under this assumption, any effort put into courting Millennials is more of an investment, to make them feel more comfortable and therefore more likely to come back to classical music in 20 years when their tastes have “matured” and they have more money and time.
to spend on entertainment. However, the idea that Millennials don’t spend money and time on entertainment is completely false. Concert tickets for successful popular musicians are in high demand and can be at least as expensive, if not two or three times more expensive, than a night at the symphony. Millennials, as with previous generations, are willing to travel to another city or state to see their favorite groups, and may buy tickets to see the same show in multiple locations.

The US Chamber of Commerce (*The Millennial Generation Research Review*, 2012) reports that Millennials have at least $200 billion in direct purchasing power each year and tend to be extremely loyal to their favorite brands. Elevate Ensemble, founded last year with the express intent of presenting classical chamber works to a young demographic in San Francisco, may see long term dividends from catering to the Millennial generation. For them, the target demographic is not just Millennials but Millennial technology and financial workers, a demographic that is abundant in the San Francisco Bay Area. The “bring your friends” strategy works especially well when the target demographic is grouped by career interests rather than just age, guaranteeing that new audience members will already have something in common with the people sitting next to them. Elevate’s Board of Directors is sampled from the same demographic of late 20- to 30-somethings in the tech and financial sectors, reinforcing their dedication to presenting classical chamber works to the holy grail of target audiences – young, well-connected professionals with high potential salaries. An added advantage is that because this demographic probably wasn’t attending classical performances before, Elevate
Ensemble does not need to worry about having to compete with larger groups in the area, such as the San Francisco Symphony. Their performances become mutually beneficial networking events, social events, and celebrations of chamber music (personal communication, February 11, 2015).

For ProMusica Chamber Orchestra, “bring your friends” is indicative of the emphasis they place on fostering audience intimacy through personal touches and marketing a friendly, familiar persona. The most obvious example of this strategy is ProMusica’s CONNECT program, which offers free tickets to subscribers who bring friends to a concert. Beyond ticket incentives, the staff and Board at ProMusica are very intentional in creating a concert atmosphere and emotional brand that feels comfortable and inviting. Board members always wear nametags when they attend concerts to make themselves more visible and approachable to the. ProMusica also ensures that audience members are greeted when they arrive at the concert hall and are thanked for attending as they leave audience (personal communication, February 17, 2015). In general, older audiences respond best to this personalized model of customer service, but recently Millennials have also been shown to prefer a combination of technology (such as social media) and traditional personal touches to create a marketing brand that is heartfelt but not old-fashioned (The Millennial Generation Research Review, 2012). ProMusica’s small staff allows them to maintain a close relationship with their audience, which makes the concert experience more enjoyable and memorable. However, this strategy may also limit their audience development capacity. A recent audience survey indicated that although
ProMusica has a loyal audience (about two thirds of the audience had been attending for at least 4 years, with 7% having attended for 25 or more years), 12% of survey respondents were attending for the first time (2014 Audience Survey: Summary, 2014).

As their audience grows, they will have to hire more staff to maintain the same level of personal connection, or sacrifice some of the personal touches their original audience had come to expect.

By encouraging audience members to return with their friends, those new to classical music will already have a point of familiarity in the concert hall. However, with the exception of groups with entirely young audiences like Elevate Ensemble, this approach isolates those Millennials who have no ties to classical music and may not see anything familiar in the concert hall environment. Obviously, there is no style of music that appeals to absolutely everyone, so the goal is never to attract 100% of the population. But if so few Millennials are interested in classical music, orchestras and chamber groups need to find a way to reach out with the audience development equivalent of a cold call.

**Enticing New Audiences**

The Philadelphia Orchestra’s LiveNote app is one answer to this question of how to market to those who are completely new to classical music. The spectacle and excitement of experimenting with new technology may bring in some technophiles who are not otherwise interested in classical music. This type of strategy is built on exposure – finding something else the population enjoys, such as food, wine, or technology, and
marrying that interest with classical music (Kotler & Scheff, 1997). The app also serves as an educational tool by not only teaching audience members about the history and significance of the music they are hearing, but also giving them the language to appreciate and discuss what they are hearing, including a glossary of terms to describe the tempo, volume, form, and style of the music. This information is provided to everyone in the hall, so the newcomers do not feel singled out by their usage of the app. LiveNote is packaged with its very own concert series, LiveNote Nights, which has a number of features specifically designed to attract “newbies”. These concerts start earlier and have a lower ticket price, making them more financially accessible for Millennials and families with young children, who may not be comfortable with classical music but want to expose their children to arts and culture in their community. By lowering some of the most commonly expressed barriers to participation, LiveNote and LiveNote Nights create a comfortable atmosphere for complete newcomers to try classical music on for size.

LiveNote also promotes increased engagement and a sense of connection with the music for veteran classical music lovers. In its planning stages, the app was developed as an audience engagement tool for the Philadelphia Orchestra’s core subscription base. When put in the hands of longtime concert attendees, the app becomes a mechanism to refresh classical music and make it newly relevant, allowing that audience to deepen their relationship with the music. Although the app has the potential to bring in new audiences, the Philadelphia Orchestra’s marketing strategy remains targeted at the middle- to upper-
class demographic over age 40. Because LiveNote is such a recent development, it is still too soon to determine whether it will enjoy long-term success or be put on hold again until technological innovations make it more feasible. A chief concern among the Board and staff at the Philadelphia Orchestra is that their loyal audience, including many older patrons, would be distracted or put off by the integration of technology in the concert hall, but the first tests have shown that as many older patrons are using the app as younger patrons (personal communication, February 9, 2015).

The Technology Demographic

If LiveNote is primarily introducing technology into the concert experience for established music lovers, Elevate Ensemble is introducing classical music into the established lives and routines of technology lovers. To do this, Elevate and founder Chad Goodman have crafted a concert experience that caters to their audience without losing sight of their central mission of presenting substantive, quality chamber music. In fact, Elevate markets itself as a “classical music start-up” to make its mission and strategy more readily understandable to its audience (personal communication, February 11, 2015). Part of this process is figuring out this group’s expectations about the classical concert experience. Because Elevate Ensemble is just finishing its first season, it has the opportunity to singlehandedly shape its young audience’s impression of classical music. Additionally, because the ensemble is small and young and their audience does not know what to expect, Elevate is in a unique position to eschew traditional concert structures and create a new, refreshed concert experience. A large orchestral institution may have
the resources to collect data about which strategies would be most effective, but Elevate Ensemble has the freedom to get creative. Most of Elevate’s audience members express that they had never been to see classical music performed before, or that they went to the symphony when they were children on a field trip or with their parents (personal communication, February 11, 2015). This type of “forced” childhood exposure to classical music, with little or no explanation of what they were seeing or why it was relevant to them, can leave a lasting impression of classical music as boring or confusing. To battle these negative opinions, or at the very least lack of opinions, Goodman finds common ground by speaking before each piece is performed. By highlighting some part of the piece to listen for or his personal favorite moment, audience members new to classical music will have something to have an opinion about.

Conclusion

So far, the introduction of the LiveNote app has not yet ushered in a wave of new Millennial subscribers for the Philadelphia Orchestra. However, Elevate Ensemble’s most recent concert sold out, and the group has managed to build a loyal audience throughout their premiere season (Gervais, 2014). Both have been immediately successful in generating positive press for a genre that has otherwise been pronounced dead. The audience development strategy of “bring your friends”, which was echoed by all three ensemble in this study, seems to be most successful when the core audience is grouped by affinity, such as career or hobbies, rather than age. Additionally, if the concert hall is increasingly becoming a dusty museum due to the advanced age of the audience
(Botstein, 1996), encouraging that age group to invite their friends of a similar age will not solve the problem. In an attempt to reinvigorate their subscribers and attract new concertgoers, some orchestras are testing technology in the concert hall, such as the Philadelphia Orchestra’s LiveNote app. Although this program is very new, initial surveys have shown that the app was well received by younger and older patrons and, despite being available in all parts of the hall, did not distract listeners from giving their full attention to the music being performed. As an educational tool, the app provides audience members new to classical music with the terms and information they need to appreciate and discuss the music they are hearing. The role of technology as educator has become increasingly important as funding for public school art education has dwindled. By providing a glossary of terms and information about the composer, musical work, and historical time period of the music, LiveNote takes the place of the music appreciation skills that had been common knowledge for many previous generations. The ability to use smartphones during the performance is also a draw for a younger demographic that is tethered to their phones. From a Development perspective, fostering a love for classical music in each subsequent generation is especially important because classical music, as with many performing arts genres, relies so heavily on private donations. Unlike previous versions like Concert Companion, LiveNote and its concert series LiveNote Nights have been successful for almost a full season. However, not all technology is sustainable. The Philadelphia Orchestra, in partnership with the Knight Foundation and Drexel University, were able to develop this app because they have the subscriber base, the organizational repute, and the financial resources to do so. Smaller orchestras and chamber groups
would not be able to replicate LiveNote’s success. Technological forays into the concert hall may be a successful and flashy way to gain exposure for classical music for one night (Ruland, 2014), but it would be impossible to present a new technological marvel every weekend.

Lastly but most importantly, these programs are designed to augment the listener’s concert experience, not replace the music as the main focus of entertainment. Each ensemble must weigh the time, money and resources they are investing in something that is tangential to the central mission of the organization – performing quality classical music (personal communication, February 17, 2015).
Theme 2 – Cultivating Relevance Through Creative Programming

Introduction

One of the predominant themes present throughout all three interviews was how to use strategic programming as a tool to foster excitement about the ensembles and, more broadly, about the genre of classical music itself. The two main strategies that emerged were performing new works, and performing works with content tied to community interests. Both of these strategies have inherent benefits and challenges that change depending on the strengths of each performing ensemble. In a recent study of 64 American symphony orchestras, Pompe, Tamburri and Munn (2011) found that when ticket sales, endowments, and grants from local government increase, the likelihood that an orchestra will program “nonstandard” repertoire also increases. In other words, an orchestra that feels financially secure will be more willing to take the risk of performing a contemporary, newly commissioned, or rare work. Additionally, the music director has less of an influence on the conventionality of an orchestra’s programming than the strength of an ensemble’s funding sources or the organization’s emphasis on music education. In short, an orchestra can only perform the repertoire they can afford to present and the repertoire their audience will pay to see, regardless of the wishes or
personal style preferences of their music director (Pompe, et al., 2011). The decision to cling to traditional programming choices when the organization is struggling financially is common but extremely counterintuitive; in fact, the best time to try something new is when it has already been proven that the previous approach was not working (Orchestra & Community: Bridging the Gap, 2003). Innovative programming choices often include the integration of technology in the concert hall through community-based cross-artistic collaborations and premieres of newly commissioned works.

The Current State of Programming
The repertoire that is most often performed, generally from the Classical and Romantic periods (Orchestra Repertoire Report, 2011), is regarded as simultaneously the most “stale” and the most beloved. Orchestras program this music because it is least risky; people are familiar with it and will pay to see their favorite symphonies and concerti multiple times. Unfortunately, the music of perennial favorites like Beethoven, Mozart, and Tchaikovsky, the three most frequently performed composers, has become overplayed. Despite this conflicting reputation, several of the orchestra administrators in this research agree that adding a digital element to a performance of this repertoire would be an intrusion (personal communication, February 11, 2015; February 17, 2015). The general feeling is that the classics should be respected, preserved, and presented as authentically as possible. Herein lies the inherent problem with implementing technology in orchestral performances: those already comfortable with the core classical repertoire see no reason to modify their concert experience to allow new audiences to appreciate it.
The remnants of elitism in classical music culture are apparent in the perception that programs educating young or new audiences are somehow a distraction from, or less important than, presenting high quality subscription performances in the concert hall. As music history and appreciation classes in public schools disappear due to decreased arts funding, students must turn to nonprofits to learn about arts and culture. Performing ensembles of all sizes now bear a large share of the responsibility of music education, which makes reaching out to the younger generation not only an audience development concern but also a matter of American cultural education.

The Philadelphia Orchestra’s LiveNote Nights are a prime example of this kind of educational opportunity. With their lower ticket prices, general admission seating, shorter program, and earlier start time, LiveNote Nights are designed to be educational and approachable for a new audience. The three LiveNote Nights this season include Tchaikovsky’s Symphony No. 5, Debussy’s Iberia and Higdon’s Violin Concerto, and excerpts from Prokofiev’s Romeo and Juliet ("Introducing LiveNote Nights," 2014). Of this sampling, Higdon’s Violin Concerto is a contemporary work, while the others are late 19th to early 20th century compositions. Earlier LiveNote-enabled concerts in 2014 also included a composition by Higdon, her immensely popular blue cathedral, and well-known works by Rimsky-Korsakov, Bernstein, Dvořák, and Strauss, demonstrating a well-rounded approach to programming LiveNote concerts (Faulstick, 2014). The advantage of including contemporary classical music on LiveNote Night performances is that the composer can influence the program notes on the app, as is the case with Higdon,
who is very supportive of technology in the concert hall and of LiveNote specifically ("Jennifer Higdon on LiveNote and the Curtis Connection," 2015). The LiveNote slides for blue cathedral include Higdon’s personal notes about the cathartic process of writing a musical conversation between herself and her late younger brother, Andrew Blue Higdon (“LiveNote”, 2014). Having the composer give the audience a personal guided tour of their composition is an enormous boost in making classical music feel more relevant. At the same time, LiveNote Nights are a perfect opportunity to introduce new or seasoned audiences to the core repertoire, as is the case with Dvořák’s “The Golden Spinning Wheel”. This piece is especially well suited for the app because it is programmatic, meaning that the music follows a storyline (in this case, a fairy tale). The app, with its glossary of terms and two separate slide shows synced with the progression of the piece (one for the storyline and one for analysis of the music), not only tells the story as it happens in the music but also educates the audience about the form and structure of symphonic poems, facts about each instrument, comparisons to other classical works, and even the basic components of music like measures and time signatures (“LiveNote”, 2014). Audiences of all knowledge levels can gain a new appreciation for classical music without modifying the performance and presentation of the music itself. From a strategic programming standpoint, there are advantages to programming almost any style of music for LiveNote-enabled performances.

The rest of the concert season at the Philadelphia Orchestra is no less varied in its programming. Pompe, Tamburri, and Munn (2011) created an index that measures the
average number of times an orchestra’s most often performed repertoire is performed by all orchestras, resulting in a ranking where 1 indicates that no other orchestras performed the same work (i.e. a world premiere) and 8 indicates that, on average, seven other orchestras performed that work each year. This way, the conventionality of the orchestra’s programming is measured, rather than the conventionality of the composition itself. Among the major symphony orchestras with annual budgets larger than $12 million that were ranked, the Philadelphia Orchestra scored 8th, with an indexed rating of 4.8. This suggests a strong organizational commitment to performing nonstandard repertoire throughout the entire concert season.

*Programming New Music*

Elevate Ensemble and ProMusica Chamber Orchestra both place increased emphasis on commissioning and performing new works. Every single concert by Elevate Ensemble includes the world premiere of a new composition, an impressive feat made possible by their relationship with composer-in-residence Danny Clay and relatively infrequent performance schedule (about once every three months). New compositions, especially commissions, can be a financial burden and also can be difficult for the musicians, who must learn an entirely new piece, often with technical innovations and a fresh performance style. This challenging programming strategy attempts to attract a new, young audience through the excitement of seeing and hearing a piece of music that has never been performed before (personal communication, February 11, 2015). Musicians and those who are engulfed in the music scene may take for granted the idea of hearing or
performing a new composition, but the idea of being part of a “world premiere” can be incredibly exciting, especially to Elevate’s unique audience demographic of tech and financial sector professionals with little prior exposure to classical music. An added benefit of presenting new or contemporary works, especially world premieres, is that the composer is present to introduce the piece, discuss their composition process, and give the audience clues of what to listen for. This gives this composition, composer, and ensemble a special meaning to the audience members in attendance that night, because they met the artist and were present when they shared their art for the first time. Elevate often focuses on young composers in an attempt to show their audience that Millennials and people of their generation are creating new classical music, reinforcing the relevance of a genre that is often perceived as the artistic domain of dead white men.

ProMusica also commissions and performs a new work at least once each concert season. Although it is not as central to their mission as it is for Elevate, the staff at ProMusica makes it a priority to give contemporary composers a platform to express themselves, which keeps their presentation of classical music inherently relevant. ProMusica is financially stable enough to routinely commission, promote, and premiere new works from a variety of composers, including many young composers. It is important to note that ProMusica gives these composers the canvas (the musicians), but does not dictate the subject matter of the compositions they commission. There is always the risk that the work will not be received well, or that over time that piece will fall in or out of favor. No one really knows how a work will be received, as evidenced by the famous riot at the
premiere of Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring*, now a well-loved staple of classical repertoire. Premiering a new work opens an ensemble up to the risk of harsh criticism, but that risk is balanced with the opportunity to start a dialogue and stretch people’s perception of classical music (personal communication, February 17, 2015).

*Connection to Community Causes*

Elevate Ensemble and ProMusica Chamber Orchestra also demonstrate a strong commitment to programming music with connections to their communities. Many large symphony orchestras become institutions of culture within their city and tour around the world as ambassadors of Western classical music. However, these orchestras also isolate themselves as the creators of “high culture”, and, in doing so, fail to celebrate the innate culture of their surrounding neighborhoods (Hope, 1996). By programming repertoire that is rooted in causes that matter to the community, an ensemble can reach out to a broader audience and generate increased audience engagement.

One of Elevate Ensemble’s recent world premieres clearly shows the merits of programming community-based repertoire. *Bethlehem*, a cross-artistic collaboration between Elevate’s composer-in-residence Danny Clay and San Francisco-based photographer and urban archaeologist Jeremy Blakeslee, attracted audiences from several previously untapped demographics (personal communication, February 11, 2015). For that concert, 20 people purchased single tickets because they knew Blakeslee’s work, despite having no knowledge of classical music or Elevate Ensemble. Others purchased
tickets because they had heard press about Elevate, while still others had no connection to the art at all but had an interest in the Bethlehem Shipyards. The world premiere attracted all of these different, unique audience groups, who were then exposed to Goodman’s eclectic programming, ranging from Wagner to less known composers like Eisler and Piston. Elevate’s entire organizational strategy is built around serving the San Francisco Bay Area population, including specializing their audience development for a specific young professional demographic. Elevate markets themselves as a “music startup” for this very reason. Programming community-based collaborations not only brings in new and unique audiences, but also strengthens the ties within the Bay Area creative arts community (personal communication, February 11, 2015).

One of the main roles the arts can play is to celebrate the culture of a community and establish pride of place by bringing people together in shared arts experiences. Columbus, Ohio, the home of ProMusica Chamber Orchestra, has many diverse neighborhoods with their own unique cultures, traditions and challenges. One such neighborhood, Franklinton, experienced a devastating flood in 1913 and has struggled to rebuild and find its place ever since. Following the installation of a permanent floodwall in 2004, the neighborhood has finally begun to revitalize, including a plan to create a trendy cultural district. ProMusica identified this as a relevant story and a point of pride in their community, and are in the process of commissioning a piece of chamber opera from a local composer. Not only will the work be composed locally and performed in Franklinton, the content of the chamber opera will tell the story of Franklinton. In this
way, the arts can become a champion for an otherwise ignored urban district while simultaneously generating a new audience for ProMusica. Chamber operas, or opera written for a small-scale production of 15-17 musicians, are relatively rare, especially among contemporary composers, so the act of commissioning and performing a chamber opera will generate a larger dialogue within the classical music community (personal communication, February 17, 2015).

**Conclusion**

While incorporating technology into the presentation of new or standard classical repertoire can make that work feel more intimate and relevant to any audience, the technology itself is not necessarily enough. Conversely, programming only the “greatest hits” of classical music, or alternatively only new and contemporary works, is not enough to reestablish relevance for the classical music genre. Relevance itself is difficult to define. Orchestras can establish the relevance of classical music in many ways, including allowing contemporary composers a platform to present music that speaks to a cultural feeling, the same way that chance and atonal music was a response to a society that felt increasingly chaotic (Silva, 2014). Relevance can also be confused with visibility or popularity, which results in pops concerts, performances of film and video game scores, and collaborations with popular music artists. At its core, relevance is the idea that the music being presented matters – that the emotions being conveyed through music are still as human and relatable as they were when the composition was written. When viewed from this perspective, any classical music composition can be relevant, but many of these
works need to be situated in their historical context or analogized with modern experiences. This is where technology can be harnessed to effectively help audiences relate to classical repertoire from every era. Newer works tend to include more technology, although the argument can be made that the musical conventions we hear in earlier works were innovative when they were debuted as well. However, this research focuses solely on technology as an audience development tool, designating digital elements within new compositions as a separate category. Ultimately, symphony orchestras have taken on the unenviable task of not only trying to convince their audiences that they are presenting a superior quality “product” than other music and entertainment options on a nightly basis, but that the entire genre of classical music has any significance left at all. This is an extremely uphill battle – one that the field of American symphony orchestras needs to come together to fight. No individual ensemble’s programming, education, technology, or social engagement experiments are going to fully change the American population’s preconceived notions about an entire genre of music (Orchestra & Community: Bridging the Gap, 2003).
Theme 3 – Increasing Social Engagement in the Concert Hall

Introduction

The audience demographic that is shunning classical music connects predominantly online, through carefully curated Facebook personas and a constant stream of text interactions. Meanwhile, orchestras are firmly and increasingly rooted in the past, celebrating past eras in their programming choices and traditional concert structures. Throughout this research, one recurring theme was examining other “popular” entertainment sources for clues of how to foster social interaction, often through social media or “behind the scenes” marketing strategies. This theme ties into a core aspect of this research: how do musicians and orchestras interact with their audience, and how does that audience interact with each other on the topic of classical music? The interviewees registered an awareness of the need for increased social interaction and a careful look at the nature of that interaction, both inside and outside the concert hall.

Social Media and the Arts

One of the most common signs that a musical performance is about to start is the mandate to “silence your cell phones please”. This makes sense, since loud ringtones disrupt the
music, audience members who are texting or surfing Facebook are not engaged with the performance, and the glow of phone screens are distracting in an otherwise darkened room. However, as social media becomes an increasingly important part of many organizations’ marketing strategies, arts administrators are faced with a dilemma. The free word of mouth marketing that social media provides is extremely appealing, especially to smaller ensembles with limited budgets. All three ensembles in this study use social media to inform their audiences of upcoming shows, congratulate members of the ensemble on their other musical endeavors, and educate their audience on upcoming guest conductors, classical music milestones, and current news in classical music. Music Director Chad Goodman of Elevate adds another layer to the ensemble’s online engagement by curating a monthly playlist on Spotify to keep their unique audience interested in classical music in the two or more months between their performances (personal communication, February 11, 2015). Older institutions like the Philadelphia Orchestra can also tap into the social media craze of “throwbacks” (posting historic photos or milestones) to reinforce their longevity as a cultural entity and strengthen their ties to the community.

But in order to fully harness social media, administrators need to be willing to allow smartphones into the concert experience. Some, like the Pacific Symphony in July 2011, host concerts in large amphitheaters and encourage audience members to “live tweet” during the concert. Members of the orchestra and guest artists not currently on stage tweet facts about the performance and “behind the scenes” pictures during the
performance, and concertgoers respond to them, asking questions or sharing their opinion of the performance (Berger, 2011). This particular event was met with mixed reactions. Some found the Twitter-based premise (“tweet-cert”) distracting, reporting that they couldn’t focus on the music because they were looking for the next of approximately 300 tweets sent out during the performance. However, the concert did draw a respectable crowd of 7,000 people with a younger average age than a typical subscription concert.

Other organizations hold Twitter Q&A sessions to promote increased online connectivity between concertgoers and orchestras. Since audience members cannot speak to each other during a performance, perhaps some form of online forum could open up communication in the concert hall, not only between the audience and the musicians, but also between the audience members themselves (Gerdeman, 2012). However, the representative from ProMusica interviewed for this research expressed their concern that with the increased inclusion of social media during the performance, like live tweeting, checking in on Facebook, or posting selfies, the audience will be too distracted and will leave the concert thinking about the technology rather than the quality and emotional significance of the music (personal communication, February 17, 2015).

Most arts organizations show an interest in participating in social media, with little understanding of what an effective social media strategy would look like (Technology and the Performing Arts Field: Usage and Issues, 2010). ProMusica is a good example of this, having indicated a slow start to their social media campaign so far. Their main reported obstacle is convincing their patrons, staff, and Board members to share, post,
“retweet”, and “like” their content. In particular, ProMusica’s staff has noticed that different generations use social media differently. Their typical audience, Baby Boomers in their mid-50s, are starting to create and use social media profiles, although they are more likely to repost news, reconnect with their colleagues and college classmates, or interact with direct family members and family friends only. (personal communication, February 17, 2015). On the other hand, ProMusica’s target audience for their social media marketing (Millennials) relies on social media to plan social gatherings and decide their entertainment choices on a day-to-day basis. More than 75% of Millennials have created a social media profile, and they spend approximately 1.8 hours out of an 8 hour workday on social media sites (The Millennial Generation Research Review, 2012). Although ProMusica has had trouble spurring their main audience demographic to promote them on social media, they did report that their sponsored digital ads were reaping substantial rewards (personal communication, February 17, 2015).

Comparison to the Social Sports Atmosphere

The amphitheater setting and model of social engagement at the Pacific Symphony concert are strongly reminiscent of a sporting event; in fact, comparisons between sports and classical music are fairly common, and many arts administrators look to sports organizations as a model of effective social media use to increase engagement at a live event. The Philadelphia Orchestra often compares the successes and challenges of its LiveNote app to apps for the National Basketball Association or Major League Baseball (personal communication, February 9, 2015). Both provide a constant feed of data that
supplements the action inside the arena, whether it’s in the form of player statistics and score updates or musical tidbits and facts about the composer. However, where sports apps can allow a delay, it is crucial that LiveNote updates instantaneously, necessitating specialized (and expensive) technology (personal communication, February 9, 2015).

The world of sports certainly doesn’t lack for rabid enthusiasm, and fans are willing to pay (on average) much higher ticket prices for a sporting event than they are for a performing arts event. The psychological impetus behind attending these events is often similar as well – for example, amateur football players and musicians alike will pay to see “the best of the best” practice their art, and most people enjoy seeing someone achieve something that the average person cannot do. The allure of attending a sporting event is the chance that something incredible will happen, and therefore the bragging rights of having been there to see it in person. Sports fans and classical music fans are also similar in their fixation on the past – the great composers and virtuosos or All-Star Hall of Fame players of previous generations – and their hope of discovering the “next big thing”.

Others cite the comparison between live performing arts events and sports events as a sign of the dilution and cheapening of the “high arts”. Despite the fact that both institutions generate cultural capital, the major difference between them is that sports are a powerhouse of private funding, while the arts must be supported with public funding to survive. Sports are classified as “entertainment” but their necessity is never questioned;
the arts are viewed as either entertainment or a vital form of human expression, depending on whom you ask, yet their legitimacy is questioned with every federal budget cycle. Herein lies the core difference between the two. Perhaps the dire financial situation that many orchestras face has prompted them to present classical music in a more serious light to prove its legitimacy, when the field could benefit from an open look at the way other “entertainment” options generate excitement and audience engagement. After all, classical music has legitimacy and relevance that is rarely publicized. Contemporary composers are trying new things and creating raw, fresh, untested music with infinite potential (Lang, 2011). This is where the real excitement and possibility for social engagement lies in classical music. In a digital age where ideas are transmitted and shared instantly, classical music must be open to looking to the future and meeting potential classical music consumers where they are – online.

Fostering Personal Interactions

Part of Elevate Ensemble’s philosophy is to ensure that the organization has made a connection with the audience before a note is played, contrary to other orchestras that rely on the music to make that connection. The first piece of that connection typically comes when audience members sit down in the concert space and face the choice of whether to read program notes. Of the three ensembles highlighted in this research, ProMusica distributes conventional program notes, accompanied by a brief, standard introduction by that night’s conductor and/or Executive Director Janet Chen. This is essentially the “normal” introduction between the orchestra and the audience (personal
communication, February 17, 2015). The Philadelphia Orchestra puts those program notes into digital form through LiveNote, although the physical notes are always available as well. Interestingly, LiveNote is effective at connecting the audience to the music itself, but still separates the audience members from each other by focusing them on their smartphones and ignoring an opportunity to promote social engagement (personal communication, February 9, 2015). Elevate eschews program notes, reasoning that no one really wants to sit down for a nice night out with their friends and immediately read a book. Even worse, once the concert begins and the lights dim, the program notes become all but useless. This is the sort of classical music tradition that often goes unconsidered by orchestra administrators, but could be thoughtfully manipulated to forge a stronger relationship between the organization and its audience. Instead, Elevate’s Music Director Chad Goodman discusses each piece with the audience to establish that connection early. For world premieres, the composer speaks, since he or she is the best person to generate excitement about a new work. Elevate is able to successfully present an extremely wide range of classical music styles, including difficult modern works, largely because they create context for the audience and draw their interest before the music begins. When the audience has something to listen for or has already established an opinion about the work, they will be much more engaged (personal communication, February 11, 2015). This is why an orchestra’s best-attended concerts are often pops concerts, despite the stigma of “popular music” amongst the classical music community – the audience is already familiar with the music and, as a result, is much more connected and engaged with that concert experience.
Elevate also takes control of another staple of the concert experience – intermission. This is the one opportunity a concert audience has to discuss the performance thus far, but it often becomes an awkward period of waiting. Elevate, with their small size and intimate venue choices, are uniquely suited to engage with their audience one on one during intermission. Using Bethlehem as an example, the photographer, composer, musicians, Music Director, and audience all mingle together at intermission. Since community-based programming brings in such a unique and diverse audience, the ability to have everyone mingling and meeting the people who created and performed the music creates new partnerships and friendships and is mutually beneficial for everyone involved. At Elevate’s recent House Show, the concert was broken into blocks of 20 minutes of music or less, with several “intermissions” where the musicians and house show attendees could have some food and talk to each other (personal communication, February 11, 2015). This unusual concert structure highlights the social aspect of listening to and making music together, as the salon concert style originally did during the 19th century. Making music is inherently social, as the vast majority of repertoire is written for a group of at least two musicians. It makes sense that the act of listening to and enjoying music should be social as well. For Elevate Ensemble, the intermissions are almost as important artistically as the performance itself (personal communication, February 11, 2015).

Another theme among the three ensembles interviewed for this study was the focus on going “behind the scenes”. Today’s audiences aren’t satisfied with the glamorous and
polished finished product; they want to see the process that goes into the production. The allure of going behind the scenes has existed for a long time and has resulted in paparazzi and tabloids broadcasting images of celebrities getting coffee, walking their dogs, etc. These images humanize celebrities and make them more approachable. ProMusica makes a point of championing their musicians as classical music rock stars within the organization and making them readily available as spokespersons (personal communication, February 17, 2015). Since these images and videos translate well to the social media environment, almost every creative product in any performance genre is now accompanied by a backstage tour, companion video, or promotional material with the artist giving the “inside scoop”. The same concept has begun to bleed into classical music culture, despite its aversion to pop culture crosspollination. Modern audiences are also generally more interested in seeing the creative process included as part of the public performance (Auner, 2005). All three orchestras in this study have responded to this trend in their own ways. For example, the Philadelphia Orchestra hosts opportunities to meet the musicians, including receptions after LiveNote Nights where some musicians are available to talk with the audience, and Elevate Ensemble keeps a blog on their website with short interviews from their musicians (personal communication, February 9, 2015; February 11, 2015). To many orchestras, the musicians are the root of who that organization is, and the best way to connect with their audiences is to let the musicians express their personalities. For many years, ProMusica asked their musicians to speak during their concerts about themselves and what they love about Columbus, Ohio. This is also an effective audience education tool for students in the audience, who may be
inspired to take up music lessons when they see that musicians are fun, personable, normal people, not just talented performance robots (personal communication, February 17, 2015).

Conclusion
With the decline of subscriptions, the concert hall has increasingly become an introspective event where individuals or couples enter, listen, and leave without really discussing the experience. It seems counterintuitive to perform such moving and meaningful expressions of human emotion without providing an environment where the audience can digest that experience and share it with others. At the same time, the ability to inexpensively produce online content and distribute it on social media has led to a barrage of digital content surrounding live performing arts events, and rapidly changing expectations of how an organization needs to market itself to reach its target audience. This cultural environment has led the three orchestras in this study to produce “behind the scenes” content in their marketing and during their performances, creating a connection between audiences and musicians that builds brand loyalty, especially among Millennials. Elevate Ensemble in particular has mindfully engaged their audience during intermission and with unusual concert structures built around opportunities for the audience to socialize, a strategic decision that could be beneficial for many other performing ensembles.
Conversely, today’s culture has many new and engaging ways to connect with each other through technology, but many people believe that online social interaction is making us even more socially isolated (Turkle, 2011). This adverse response to technological advancements is partially responsible for the strong pushback against the inclusion of technology in the concert hall. This is a large and growing polarization within the classical music community that is generally divided based on age; perhaps the innovative ideas coming from Elevate and ProMusica are prompted by their relatively young administrative staff, a fact that other orchestras struggling with social engagement should take notice of.
Conclusion

Application of the Major Themes

Three themes became apparent from the interviews conducted for this research, highlighting three audience development techniques and the various ways that orchestras are using technology in the concert hall to augment those techniques without displacing or changing the quality of the classical music being performed. The first theme emphasizes the demographics that each performing ensemble targets, with special focus on affinity-based demographic groups rather than the traditional age-based groupings. An affinity-based strategy, such as targeting people working in the same career, ensures that new audience members already have something in common with other concert goers, which in turn increases their comfort in the concert hall and lowers their barriers to participation. It is important to note that no artistic genre can appeal to 100% of the population. Many orchestras are reluctant to change the concert structure and elements of presentation to appeal to a younger audience because those changes may push away another audience group. However, Elevate Ensemble’s success in only targeting one group supports the benefits of niche marketing. If an orchestra is struggling to garner the
audiences it needs to be financially stable, a narrowing, rather than widening, of its scope of audience development may be a stronger strategy.

The second theme focuses on the impact of new, contemporary, and community-based programming on the cultural relevance of classical music as a genre. In general, it is a troubling sign for any organization when they must market not only their own product, but also the very legitimacy of that product. This places an unfair burden on arts nonprofits, which have limited funding to spend on marketing in the first place. A better use of resources might be for the League of American Orchestras or a similar national entity to form a coalition dedicated to reversing the national cultural stigma on classical music. This way, the revitalization of classical music can be marketed with the full attention and resources of its own movement with one unified strategy.

The third theme identified in this research focuses on the social dynamics, and barriers to social engagement, in the concert hall. Despite all the recently proposed “improvements” to the concert experience, including more casual “Jeans and Beer” concerts, performances in public, and “tweet-certs” (Gervais, 2014; Kotler & Scheff, 1997; Sigurjonsson, 2010), very few scholars or orchestra administrators give serious attention to the structure of the concert itself – first half, intermission, second half, leave. Several of the interviewees in this research expressed the importance of fostering social engagement during the intermission, equipping audiences with the vocabulary and educational tools with which to understand and appreciate classical music, and creating a
social forum, both in the concert hall and online, in which to discuss the performance. There is no reason beyond tradition that the concert cannot be divided into several shorter sections of music, or that the intermission(s) cannot be utilized to encourage audience members to connect with each other. The genre loses relevance when its audiences are not enthusiastic enough or do not have the opportunity to share their own personal connections with the music. Additionally, social media is gaining traction as a major source of publicity for arts and cultural organizations, but orchestras miss out on this if they do not foster social engagement with the music. Going to the symphony used to be a social experience – a social fixture of “seeing and being seen” (Peterson & Kern, 1996). Now, it is important to consciously consider both vertical and horizontal lines of communication within the concert hall – social engagement between the musicians, orchestra staff, and the audience, and social engagement between audience members themselves. Orchestras need to be intentionally mindful of the reasons that people attend classical music concerts, and what they expect to get out of the experience. Many orchestras assume that the quality of the music will make that personal connection without any additional effort needed by the organization, and that audiences come to the symphony to hear the music. However, we know that the concert hall is not full of individual ticket buyers attending a solitary cultural experience. The thrill of experiencing a live musical performance is an innately social experience, and most arts attendees bring their friends, loved ones, or coworkers.

Implications of Technology in the Concert Hall
The primary purpose of this research is an exploration of how technology is being utilized in the concert hall as an audience development tool. This is, first and foremost, an exploration of a trend that is still in its infancy. Only time and research will tell whether the technology programs debuting over the past few years will have long-term positive effects. However, the data presented in this thesis points to technology’s positive contribution in the short run. Technology was identified as increasing cross-disciplinary collaborations within local, state, and national artistic communities, unifying communities, decreasing barriers to participation in the arts, educating audiences about music, arts, and culture, changing the way arts experiences are shared via online viral videos and “Behind the Scenes” peeks, exposing a greater potential audience to classical music, and providing a forum for arts consumers to discuss their experiences. These effects are largely positive, but the question still remains: is technology bringing us closer together or making us increasingly isolated? The Philadelphia Orchestra’s LiveNote app is seemingly successful at increasing individual audience members’ connection with the music itself, but the extra emphasis on the smartphone may replace the conversations concertgoers would otherwise have had with each other.

Perhaps the most positive and concrete conclusion that can be drawn from this research is that orchestras are increasingly forward-focused and are now more likely to attempt to alter something about their concert experience to reach out to the next generation. This willingness to critically examine the rigidity, elitism and traditionalism in the classical music field and propose radical change is the first step toward bringing the genre into the
21st century. The interviewees in this research indicated that they are mindfully reconsidering their programming choices, utilization of intermission and social atmospheres before and after the concert, performance venues and times, organizational structure, and ensemble configurations. Even the largely successful LiveNote app was not introduced without its own dedicated concert series, complete with earlier start times and lowered ticket prices aimed at attracting Millennial and student audiences. ProMusica Chamber Orchestra’s culture of audience intimacy and successful efforts to attract a younger demographic show that technology is not the only path to organizational and cultural vitality. Based on this research, the most successful audience development campaigns are focused on the potential audience member’s total experience with an organization from the first moment they discover the orchestra. This includes the orchestra’s online presence, customer service, and constructed concert experience. Technology has established itself as one important piece of this audience experience, but every other aspect needs to be mindfully considered as well.

The Knight Foundation (Orchestra & Community: Bridging the Gap, 2003) identified a parallel between classical music and another industry in peril – newspaper publishing. People care just as much about getting the news as they did 50 years ago, but newspaper subscriptions are rapidly declining. Similarly, classical music itself is just as relevant, vital, and thrilling as it has always been, but orchestra audiences are diminishing and aging at a faster rate than the overall US population. Arts patrons and news consumers alike are confusing the relevance of the content with the outdated nature of the delivery
system. In fact, people have instantaneous access to more news and a wider variety of news sources than ever before due to electronic delivery systems. Newspaper distributors and orchestra administrators share some of the same views about the merits of reading printed newspapers versus online articles, or live symphonic performances versus simulcasts, digital recordings or online video content. The prevailing view is that online distribution somehow cheapens the quality of the content. Administrators must be ready for the fact that technology marches on and delivery systems change.

In 2003, the Knight Foundation’s former Vice President and Chief Program Officer Penelope McPhee expressed a caustic view of the relations between orchestras and classical music audiences:

> From my perspective as an outsider who loves the music but is not an expert, I’d argue that for the most part, orchestras have nothing but disdain for their audiences. The whole notion that doing it differently is “dumbing it down” is disdainful. The attitude you communicate to us audience members is that you’re doing us a favor by letting us pay you to play what you want to play. You want us to pay our money and eat our spinach because it’s good for us.

> Not only do you want us to eat the spinach, you want us to choose it over ice cream every time; you want us to eat it in your restaurant at 8 p.m.; you want us to like it the way you’ve seasoned it. And, God knows, you want us to eat it pure, not in a soufflé or a salad. And oh yes, if we’ve never eaten spinach before, we’re barely worth serving anyway, because if we’ve gone this long without tasting it, we must be rubes anyway and we’ll never appreciate it.

> If we’re going to be serious about serious change, we first have to get serious about this question of mission (*Orchestra & Community: Bridging the Gap*, 2003, p. 9).
The scope and variety of performing ensembles interviewed in this research shows that the historically rigid definition of “orchestra” or “chamber group” is changing. Relevant orchestras must recalibrate their missions to place the celebration of classical music front and center. Once this definition is established, the delivery system can begin to be updated with the right technologies, not simply more technology. I firmly believe that there is still a place for the traditional presentation of classical music, in the same way that there is enough room in the classical music genre for contemporary repertoire alongside repertoire from past centuries – and all of that music is equally commendable. However, the data in this research points to the fact that there is a pressing and urgent need for diversification in classical music, and that technology is a very viable avenue for that transformation.
References


Appendix: Interview Questions

Baseline questions:

1. Please tell me a little more about your ensemble.

2. What do your audience demographics usually look like? Who normally attends your concerts?

3. Who is your target audience demographic? Are you doing any active marketing to a new group?

4. What do you think your biggest audience development challenge is? What demographics are missing from your audience?

5. What factors led you to implement [technology, projections, etc.] into your concerts? Whose idea was it? Was your decision prompted by data, etc.?

6. How was it received by your Board, staff, donors, audience, etc?
7. How much did it cost to develop and implement it?

8. Are you doing any quantitative evaluation to determine if your strategies are successful? (For example: attendance records, earned revenue, surveys)

9. What about qualitative evaluation? How do you feel your audience has responded to this program?

10. Do you have any testimonials from audience members about their experience with technology during your performances?

Broader questions:

11. The LAO’s demographics surveys show that concert audiences are lacking Millennials and families with young children, citing many different barriers to participation. Why do you think these demographics are absent? What do you believe the solution is?

12. What can orchestras do to keep classical music relevant?

13. Do you think your ensemble’s strategies could, or should, be picked up by other orchestras/ensembles?
14. What do you feel the role of technology is in the future of orchestra?

15. Do you know of any orchestras that are not integrating technology? How do they fare?