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Leiden University Ph. D. Application

Title of the research proposal

Restructuring Classical Music

Brief summary of the research proposal (max 150 words)

Classical music in the United States has been declining since the 1960s when the Ford Foundation funded orchestras during a time when great classical artists like Heifetz, Bernstein and Stravinsky were household names.

Today, classical music has moved almost completely out of public awareness and we now have the phenomenon where wealthy contributors donate to the New York Philharmonic, but their concerts are filled with empty seats. Professional orchestras have declined in number, yet our colleges of music continue to graduate roughly 15,000 music performance majors annually, preparing them for orchestra jobs that virtually do not exist.

This dissertation will come up with models and methodologies that will preserve the availability of great classics while developing and proving in performance solutions to these problems, including addressing the Baumol Syndrome and Rightsizing, The Brooklyn Model and Extreme Scoring. These will address many of the economic, ethical, mainstream and compositional issues facing classical music.

Description of the proposed research including a brief contextualization: what is the current state of affairs and why is this research needed (max 2000 words)

It is extremely expensive to stage concerts of the symphonic music of classical composers with a full symphony orchestra.

Professional orchestras in the US have had a challenging history. Classical music in the United States of America has been the import of a European tradition. Indeed, our top-ranked symphony orchestras are a relatively recent phenomena: the San Francisco Symphony was founded in 1911, the Cleveland

Orchestra in 1918 and the Los Angeles Philharmonic in 1919. America has always called itself a “nation of immigrants” and they brought their culture with them, including their music.

Symphony orchestras tended to be collocated in our largest population centers, where the concentrations of wealth could afford to fund large labor-intensive ensembles of this type. Unlike Europe, which has a long tradition of state support for the arts, there has been little governmental support for the arts in the U.S. Indeed, our federal government-operated and funded National Endowment for the Arts was only begun in 1965, when it was created by the US Congress and President Lyndon B. Johnson as part of his “Great Society” tranche of legislation to “nurture American creativity, to elevate the nation’s culture, and to sustain and preserve the country’s many artistic traditions.”¹ Since that start in 1965, the number of operating orchestras in the United States has increased from barely over 100 to 1800 in 2008.

Also starting in 1966, the Ford Foundation launched their Symphony Orchestra Program.² This program ran from 1966 to 1976, during which the Ford Foundation contributed \$80 million to symphony orchestras in the United States and Puerto Rico but left these orchestras with financial difficulties once their funding was terminated.

While these two programs were instrumental in propagating the growth and spread of symphony orchestras into secondary and tertiary-sized cities in America, they concentrated the availability of funding in only two sources without creating a long-term foundation for the financial health of orchestras. Today the health of professional orchestras is tenuous, and all it takes is a financial recession and they teeter on the edge of bankruptcy. None of them are immune: during the Great Recession of 2007, the Philadelphia Orchestra – one of the “Top Five” - declared Chapter 11 (reorganization) bankruptcy, and my dear friends here in the Colorado Symphony kept their orchestra afloat by involuntarily cutting their salaries. They are still earning less money than they did 13 years ago.

New York University economist William Baumol observed what became known as “Baumol’s Cost Disease” or “The Baumol Effect” and noted that the rise of wages in jobs with little or no increase of productivity leads to institutional problems. Indeed, he pointed out that the same number of musicians is needed to play a Beethoven string quartet today as was needed in the 19th century; the productivity of classical music performance has not increased. On the other hand, the real wages of musicians (as in all other professions) have increased greatly since the 19th century.³ Musicians, like everyone else in society, want the same aspects of prosperity: to buy a house, a car, put their kids through school, etc.

This has resulted in professional orchestras in America that are replete with labor problems by musicians that want more money, and managers trying to keep their organizations afloat in the face of enormous operating expenses seeking to reduce costs. This is all tied to the labor requirements in symphony orchestras: that it takes 80 or more musicians to play these great works of music that we love at a cost exceeding \$16,000 per rehearsal or performance.

Yet the same concert hall can be filled with the same sized audience to listen to a Beethoven string quartet with only four musicians on stage instead of 80-120 people. So, an obvious solution is to eliminate symphony orchestra concerts and instead perform cheaper concerts with small chamber groups. But where does that leave Strauss: Till Eulenspiegel? I want to hear Till Eulenspiegel (or even better, *play* bass clarinet on Till Eulenspiegel!

¹ National Endowment for the Arts – A History 1965-2008, National Endowment for the Arts, Washington DC
<https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/nea-history-1965-2008.pdf>

² The Ford Foundation Symphony Orchestra Program, Journal of Musicological Research, Volume 36, 2017 Issue 2
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01411896.2017.1294959>

³ “Baumol’s cost disease” Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baumol's_cost_disease

Orchestras generally get revenue to cover the cost of performances through three primary sources: ticket sales, grants and fundraising. With ticket sales, you can only raise the cost of tickets until they become so expensive that audience attendance drops. With grants, they are available within limits from private and government sources, but in the case of the US National Endowment for the Arts and their first round grants for 2019, orchestras are already receiving about a third of those grants.⁴ Orchestras also compete for private donations with every other arts organization, and there are many in this country across a broad spectrum of genres.

The larger question that is proposed to be researched and addressed in this dissertation is how classical music can be restructured while still retaining the core of what we love about its repertoire and our ability to share it with audiences, while coming up with ways of making it financially viable.

This means addressing the Baumol Cost Disease directly and coming up with solutions to the challenges outlined in this Description:

- How do we address the fixed labor cost for symphony orchestras?

The United States does not have a history of institutional support for the arts as has been the case in Europe, where Joseph Haydn was court conductor to Prince Esterházy, and Johann Sebastian Bach was sponsored by the Protestant and Lutheran churches. Most of the professional orchestras have been funded mostly by rich patrons, therefore supporting a stage with 80 – 120 musicians highlight major challenges. According to the League of American Orchestras⁵ 2014 statistical data, of the 1,224 orchestras, 1,127 of them have budgets of \$300,000 or less. This means that the vast majority of US orchestras are either avocational or have extremely limited or part time schedules. Only 21 orchestras are considered “major orchestras” that have 52-week seasons. There are more United States Senator jobs in the US than full time orchestra clarinet jobs.

Large orchestras are very expensive, and artistic expenditures account for nearly half of their annual budgets. If orchestras could be “rightsized” and made smaller, then we could financially support many more orchestras. This dissertation will look at chamber orchestras as an alternative to full symphony orchestras.

- How do we continue to present large symphonic works?

As seen in the preceding point, one way is through amateur or semi-professional presentations, which represent most orchestras in the United States. But Americans want the best and given the small budgets that most of them have, the public is clearly not willing to underwrite the cost of amateur or semi-pro orchestras. Ways need to be found to continue to present the traditional literature of large orchestras by cutting down on the labor cost of presenting these large symphonic works.

- How can we rescore classical music and retain its richness while making it less labor intensive?

Purists complain that rescoring classical music, especially large symphonic works, is sacrilegious, and violates the artistic sanctity of the music. In fact, each December Tchaikovsky’s Nutcracker Ballet is performed across America with reduced scores. Ballet companies cannot afford to staff the full symphony orchestration but feel it is better to perform with live music than with recordings. I believe that you can capture the essence of reduced orchestration through my “Extreme Scoring” techniques,

⁴ National Endowment for the Arts Fiscal Year 2000 First Round Grants: <https://www.arts.gov/grants/recent-grants>

⁵ Orchestra Facts: 2006 – 2014; League of American Orchestras, November 2016

which will allow these great pieces of music to become more accessible by being presented to concert audiences with fewer musicians.

- If we can successfully address the three points preceding this one, what are the implications of altering musical “masterpieces” to suit our needs?

When Beethoven, Bartok and Richard Strauss scored orchestral works (or any work, for that matter), they were compositionally conceived not only harmonically but with a particular orchestration in order to achieve a certain unique blend and sound that the composer wanted to convey. As alluded to in the previous point, modifying a piece like Rimsky-Korsakov’s *Capriccio Espagnol*, which was written for a fairly large orchestra, so that it fits a chamber orchestra instrumentation raises profound issues that will need to be explored as a vital part of this dissertation: If you rescore an orchestral work to fit another format, is it still that piece? If I rescore a piece of public domain music, I have the right to copyright my arrangement making it my intellectual property. But if I rescore Beethoven, does it become Drapkin or is it still Beethoven? Should we be creating and performing non-authentic derivative versions of these works, or do the ends justify the means as a way of helping deliver classical music to a wider audience? Will this undercut traditional full-size symphony orchestras and hasten their demise? Clearly US ballet companies don’t have a problem performing a reduced orchestration version of Tchaikovsky’s *Nutcracker* score because of the costs involved, and concert bands and marching bands have been performing transcriptions and arrangements of orchestral music for a great many decades. But a conflict that frequently arises in US orchestra labor negotiations is that when management wants to cut down the number of full time players to save costs and/or meet their budgets, the musicians argue that it will cease being a symphony orchestra and “lose its sound” if there is a player reduction. In this dissertation, a traditional piece like Beethoven’s 5th Symphony is being proposed to still be presented as Beethoven’s 5th Symphony with a caveat “Rescored by” beneath the composer’s name on the score. These issues need to be thoroughly explored.

- How do we transform classical music organizations from being dusty museum pieces with sparsely attended concerts to leading the arts in their community? Are there alternative ways of financing orchestras by changing the basic mission of classical music?

In 2013, I was solicited by Executive Director Richard Dare of the Brooklyn Philharmonic to join their Board of Directors. That orchestra was developing and using a groundbreaking model which became known as “The Brooklyn Model” which integrated leading popular artists as artists-in-residence, and singer/songwriters as orchestra composers into their artistic model, while still presenting traditional literature. I had the firsthand opportunity to see it in action, and work with their music director Alan Pierson.⁶ It was highly popular with the general public – concerts were jammed. Since then, other orchestras have held “Brooklyn Festivals”⁷ but the Brooklyn Phil’s model has never been documented nor applied to other orchestras. My dissertation will fully develop this model, apply it in practice and document best practices.

In conclusion, this dissertation will research and develop solutions to these questions, document them and prove them in practice by applying them to key ensembles and presenting these results in performance.

⁶ Maestro Pierson is still the Artistic Director of the avant-garde contemporary music group *Alarm Will Sound*.

⁷ “Brooklyn Festival samples the new classical music of the borough” Los Angeles Times, April 14, 2013.

<https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/la-xpm-2013-apr-14-la-et-cm-brooklyn-festival-los-angeles-philharmonic-20130414-story.html>

Methodology that will be used (max 600 words)

The following are the methodologies that will be used to address the challenges that were outlined in this dissertation proposal:

- How do we address the fixed labor cost for symphony orchestras?
- How do we continue to present large symphonic works?

The challenge of how to reduce the number of musicians needed to perform symphony orchestra literature will be researched by experimenting on the literature of large symphonic works with smaller ensembles and presenting them in performance. These will range from chamber orchestra to chamber music groups.

- How can we rescore classical music and retain its richness while making it less labor intensive?

The dissertation will employ the author's Extreme Scoring methodologies developed for concert band and chamber music formats and employ them for rescoring large symphonic works for smaller sized orchestras. This will transform them from their original full symphony orchestra score to chamber orchestra format and instrumentation. An example of this is rescoring Beethoven's 5th Symphony or Richard Strauss' Dance of the Seven Veils for chamber orchestra and presenting and performing them in public.

This concept is not totally new, as was mentioned earlier regarding the various commercial reductions of Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker Ballet score for smaller ballet companies. Also, in the mid-20th Century the Goldman Band⁸ introduced the vast majority of New Yorkers to the latest symphonic works from Europe through presentations of transcriptions for concert band in their heavily attended Central Park concerts. There are also student versions of many large orchestral works meant to reduce the difficulty of these pieces, but not the size of the ensemble. What is proposed in this dissertation is the deliberate rescoring of standard symphonic works, such as Beethoven's 5th Symphony, or Mozart's Clarinet Concerto K.622 as smaller works as the norm and not as the exception and as the beginning of a library of reduced standard works so that they can be performed by smaller orchestras.

- What are the issues and the impacts associated with the alteration of great works of classical music?

The impact of creating a successful business model based on rescoring great musical works will be thoroughly explored, researched and documented. The social, ethical and aesthetic implications will be addressed, as well as the potential future effect upon traditional classical music.

- How do we transform classical music organizations from being dusty museum pieces with sparsely attended concerts to becoming leaders for the arts in their community? Are there alternative ways of financing orchestras by changing the basic mission of classical music?

The "Brooklyn Model" developed by the Brooklyn Philharmonic and its music director Alan Pierson will be fully documented, applied in performance, and best practices established. In addition to producing the definitive plan for the Brooklyn Model, it will also be employed in performance by one or more of the reduced ensembles listed above.

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goldman_Band

Research outcomes and contribution to knowledge, understanding, and musical practice (max. 750 words).

The measurable outcomes from this research are as follows:

- A model for the performance of orchestra literature in professional ensembles that address the labor challenges of producing large symphonic works, making it easier and less financially burdensome to present orchestral music, and more economically viable. With the labor cost of one full professional symphony orchestra, four chamber orchestras could be funded, and give employment to more of those 15,000 music performance majors that we graduate each year in the US.
- The development of techniques for rescoring large symphonic works for smaller ensembles using the Extreme Scoring methods that the author has successfully used for other literature and other types of ensembles.⁹
- Creating understanding and best practices that show that rescored scores of symphonic works can be successfully presented to audiences using smaller ensembles as a normative practice and give audiences and performers the opportunity to enjoy these works without the need for a large ensemble.
- A thorough examination of the ethical and aesthetic issues and outcomes associated with modifying classic musical works.
- The genesis of a library of standard works written for large orchestra that may be performed by smaller ensembles, such as a chamber orchestra.
- A methodology for adoption and implementation of the Brooklyn Model that can be used by any classical orchestra of any size anywhere in the world. This has the capability of changing the role of orchestras within their community as well as provide significantly increased funding to facilitate all kinds of musical presentations.
- Finally, recognition that there are ways for orchestras to present works of all sizes to audiences as well as taking their place in society as a leader in music across all genres by using the Brooklyn Model – not just the classical music that Maestro Leonard Slatkin said does not “anticipate much more than 4% of the population as regular concertgoers.”¹⁰

Links

Bio: <https://www.drapkin.net/musica/>
Compositions: <https://www.drapkin.net/compositions/>
Performances: <https://www.drapkin.net/audio/>
Books: <https://www.drapkin.net/books/>

⁹ Trios for Two Clarinets and Bass Clarinet – Volume 1, Drapkin Music Publications 2017, <https://www.bassclarinet.net/trios/>

¹⁰ Virtual Discussion Panel: Engaging the Community, Polyphonic.org, August 21-31, 2006