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Book Section:

Pitts, S.E. (2014) Musical, social and moral dilemmas: investigating audience motivations to attend concerts. In: Burland, K. and Pitts, S.E., (eds.) Coughing and Clapping: Investigating Audience Experience. SEMPRE Studies in The Psychology of Music. Ashgate, Oxford, UK, 21 - 33. ISBN: 978-1-4094-6981-0.

This is an Accepted Manuscript of a book chapter published by Routledge in Coughing and Clapping: Investigating Audience Experience (2014), available online: https://www.routledge.com/products/isbn/9781409469810

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Chapter 3

Musical, Social and Moral Dilemmas: Investigating Audience Motivations to Attend Concerts

Stephanie Pitts[1]

Who Goes to Concerts – and Why?

In *Musicking* (1998), the exploration of classical concert life that was one of the inspirations for this book, the ethnomusicologist Christopher Small describes the scene in the foyer of a concert hall, a few moments before a symphony orchestra concert is about to begin:

> Even if we have come alone and know nobody, we can still feel a part of the event as we buy a cup of coffee or an alcoholic drink and look around us as we sip. Amongst those present we might recognize celebrities – a famous violinist, the music critic of a quality newspaper, even perhaps an eminent politician. The latter may be taking cocktails with a group of expensively dressed men and women whom we can assume to be executives, and their wives, of the corporation that is sponsoring tonight's concert. […] All appear casually at home in this place. We remember our manners and do not stare. (Small, 1998, p. 24)

Now it is entirely possible that the late Christopher Small habitually attended concerts in a different social league to the ones that I go to; or equally possible that times have changed since cocktails were drunk before concerts and executives were assumed to be male and married. Certainly the surface description of this pre-concert scene seems thankfully unfamiliar in the week by week concert life of most regional orchestras and chamber groups. Yet within this scene are some lasting insights on the experience of concert-going that transcend boundaries of musical genre: that even individuals who attend alone do so in relation to the larger social group, that conversation and refreshment are an important part of the

[1] The research reported in this chapter was funded by two small grants from the British Academy, a Knowledge Transfer grant from the University of Sheffield, and a Business Link award from Yorkshire Forward. I am grateful to the research assistants and participants in each project, and to the collaborating organisations, for their involvement and interest in the research.

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social interactions surrounding live music listening, and that feeling at home in the performance venue contributes to the pleasure of concert attendance, while risking excluding those who stand at the edges of the event. These elements of live music listening apply equally (though in different forms) in the jazz club, the opera house and the pop arena, and are part of the expectations of arts events that shape potential audience members' motivations to attend, and cause them to maintain or withdraw their attendance when other commitments come into competition with their live arts preferences.

An updated attempt at Small's foyer scene might include a hurried office worker eating a sandwich from the concert hall canteen, having come to the concert straight from work; a group of students clutching heavily discounted tickets, who have been persuaded that attendance will help with their musical studies; a retired couple reading their programme and waiting to secure their favourite seats when the doors of the hall are opened; and any number of other keen recorded music listeners, devotees of the composer or the group on the programme tonight, habitual attenders who like to support their local arts organization, or curious first-timers who would feel more readily at home in the cinema or theatre. Their motivations for attending will overlap to an extent, influenced by their previous attendance and musical engagement, the social choices they have made in inviting friends or coming alone, and the level of value they are able or willing to give live music in relation to other financial and practical aspects of daily life. Yet each will have made a distinctive, individual decision to attend, fitting a concert into their everyday consumption of music and other arts, and relating their experience to other social and musical dimensions of their lives.

Less observable, though equally important to an understanding of the contemporary concert hall, are the people who are not here – perhaps put off by an expectation of feeling out of place among the 'expensively dressed […] executives' (Small, 1998, p. 24) that they, like Small, assume will form the majority of the audience. Research on audience demographics has raised concerns that classical music audiences are generally ageing, predominantly white, middle class, and in the more educated and affluent sectors of the general population (Kolb, 2001). Furthermore, this audience appears to be declining, with each generation participating less as they reach the equivalent age, resulting in a loss of 3.3 million American concert-goers between 2002 and 2008 (League of American Orchestras, 2009: 11), and similar patterns in Australia and Britain of a low proportion of potential audience members actively engaging in the arts (Australia Council for the Arts, 2010; Martin, Bunting and Oskala, 2010).

These data on declining audiences have prompted 'audience segmentation' studies, in which the attitudes and arts engagement of a population are categorized into groups towards which arts organizations can direct their marketing efforts (Clopton, Stoddard and Dave, 2006). The Arts Council England's (2011) groupings include the highly engaged 'traditional culture vultures' (4%) and 'urban arts eclectic' (3%), through those who may attend 'dinner and a show' (20%) or are 'mature explorers' (11%), to the 'time-poor dreamers' (4%) and 'older and home-

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bound' (11%) who may be interested in the arts but limited in their opportunities for participation. The Australia Council for the Arts (2010) labels its categories rather more directly: 'the lovers' (38%) who are highly engaged, 'the flirters' (26%) whose attendance is influenced by friends, 'the un-attached' (19%) who have limited recent or past experience of participation, and 'the outsiders' (17%) who believe that the arts are pretentious, elitist and 'not for them'.

While the English set of labels prioritize behaviour and the Australian ones focus on attitude, both approaches attempt to correlate the relationship between these two aspects of arts engagement – an interest in the art form, and an inclination to actively engage with it. It could be argued that audience motivation rests at the crossover between interest and inclination, capitalizing on people's curiosity, past experience and attitudes to the arts, and overcoming the practical, social and financial barriers to converting interest into attendance.

Turning Up and Fitting In: Empirical Evidence from Jazz and Classical Music Audiences

The remainder of this chapter will draw upon empirical evidence from audiences in a range of contexts, including new and long-standing attenders at a chamber music festival (Pitts and Spencer, 2008; Dobson and Pitts, 2011), jazz listeners at a festival and in a local jazz club (Burland and Pitts, 2010; 2012), and audience members at an orchestral concert series (Pitts, Dobson, Gee and Spencer, 2013). Each of these case studies has been presented in detail elsewhere, but this is my first opportunity to compare the decision making and range of motivations that are to be found across the various audiences in their different musical contexts. The methods, settings and co-researchers for each project are outlined in Table 3.1:

Table 3.1 Audience studies 2003–2010

2003 Music in the Round (MitR): Audience experience of a chamber music festival
Audience questionnaires distributed throughout the week-long festival (347 responses) Semi-structured interviews with a sample of questionnaire respondents (19 interviews) Diaries completed by 13 members of the audience during the festival
2006 MitR: Audience loyalty in a time of transition (with Chris Spencer)
Audience questionnaires distributed through the Friends of MitR mailing list (78 responses) Semi-structured interviews with a sample of respondents (16 interviews)
2007 Edinburgh Jazz and Blues Festival: Audience experience in a range of venues (with Karen Burland)
Audience questionnaires distributed at a range of gigs and venues (701 responses) Semi-structured telephone interviews with a sample of questionnaire respondents (36 interviews)

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2009 Spin Jazz, Oxford: Audience experience at a jazz club (with Karen Burland)
Online questionnaire advertised through flyers at gigs and on the club's website (91 responses)
Semi-structured telephone interviews carried out with a representative sample of those who provided contact details at the end of the questionnaire (15 interviews)
Online diaries completed by six respondents, fortnightly for two months

2009 MitR New audiences for classical music: Recruiting listeners aged 21–30 (with Melissa Dobson)
Focus group study, involving six first-time attenders going to two concerts, and participating in group and individual interviews

2010 City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO): Investigating performer and audience loyalty in the symphony hall (with Melissa Dobson, Kate Gee and Chris Spencer)
Online audience questionnaire distributed via mailing lists and through flyers given out at concerts (174 responses)
Semi-structured interviews with a sample of audience respondents (20 interviews)
Semi-structured interviews with CBSO players (6 interviews)

This sequence of audience studies evolved to explore differences, initially between audience members and participating amateur musicians (Pitts, 2005a), then between audiences of different musical genres – chamber music, jazz, and orchestral – and in the different settings of an intimate 'in the round' concert venue, large formal halls and above-the-pub jazz clubs. While differences were certainly evident, in the prominence of socializing around the music, for example, or the emphasis placed on performers or repertoire in selecting which concerts to attend, the similarities across the audiences were also striking. Every audience included frequent attenders who were committed specifically to that organization or venue, as well as those with a broader profile of live arts consumption, supported by extensive recorded music listening. Among regular listeners in each context were those who attended more selectively, prioritizing repertoire or performers that they knew or, less often, seeking out rarely heard pieces to supplement their already extensive live listening experience. While audience members often viewed their own experience as distinctive, making reference to their level of knowledge or past attendance habits, they were also reassured to be among like-minded people, expectant of friendly conversation in the interval and being made welcome by venue staff and fellow listeners.

In the questionnaires that I have distributed to audience members over the past ten years, there has often been a slightly cheeky question which asks first 'How would you describe a typical audience member?', with prompts for age, gender, likely occupation and musical interests, and follows this up by asking 'How closely do you fit this pattern?'. While a few respondents have quite reasonably refused to stereotype their fellow audience members, many more have engaged in a moment of self-realization that runs something like this:

> *Age/gender:* 'Mixed but with perhaps quite a lot of "mature" people'
> *Musical interests:* 'People who like to hear good music played superbly'

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> *Likely occupation:* 'I've no idea but I suspect many are of retirement age'
> *Other characteristics:* 'Polite and well behaved'
> *Own fit:* 'I have probably described myself'
> (CBSO audience member, November 2010)

This response shows respect for fellow listeners, noting their serious attention to 'good music played superbly', while expressing implicit regret at the ageing profile. Being among like-minded people, assumed to share the same values, is an important part of audience experience (Pitts, 2005b) and here provides clues also to audience motivation for attendance. As some other respondents reported from their own experience, the ageing audience is in part a product of the difficulty of getting to concerts straight from work, or fitting attendance around family commitments: while retired audience members are more likely to book a season ticket and prioritize regular attendance, arts organizations are struggling with the increasing tendency of younger age groups to socialize spontaneously, making last minute decisions to go out for the evening only when all other pressures on their time have been accommodated (Kotler and Scheff, 1997, p. 9). The uncomplicated classification of CBSO's repertoire as 'good' music is perhaps also a feature of the educational and social background of an older, professional group, whose respect for and familiarity with the classical canon is more established and open to both reinforcement and extension through concert attendance. Likewise, the tendency to be 'well behaved' suggests an experienced audience, aware of the conventions of concert listening and the effects of their own quiet attention on the listeners around them.

Another respondent reflected on these factors in greater detail:

> *Age/gender:* 'There is a range of ages from children to very elderly people. I would say that the 60+ age category is represented more than in the population generally'
>
> *Musical interests:* 'It is clear that many audience members attend regularly and are serious listeners. Some of these doubtless have a high degree of musical knowledge, and from overhearing conversations some are accomplished amateur musicians. A second important group are those who attend infrequently, possibly for the first time, but who have a genuine desire to learn about, or simply listen to, some classical music. A third group are those who attend, not always enthusiastically, with a partner or family member'
>
> *Likely occupation:* 'A significant proportion of the audience are clearly retired. Of those still working I would guess that many are professional or managerial but that may be prejudice. A former concert-going acquaintance of mine was an amateur violinist and earned a living as an HGV driver'

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Other characteristics: 'Audience members generally are more to the formal and considerate end of the behaviour spectrum'

Own fit: 'I am in my early fifties, male, attend concerts alone, and have actively listened to classical music since childhood. I have no formal musical education, and I have developed myself as a listener through radio (mainly BBC Radio 3) and commercial recordings, and some reading. Starting with "mainstream" composers I progressively widened my interests and I have listened to a fair deal of contemporary music, and less well known composers of all eras. Recently I have taken a keen interest in opera, encouraged by the increasing availability of high quality commercial video recordings. My interests are not restricted to "classical" music but that is the majority of my listening and exclusively what I attend concerts for. I enjoy popular (but not "pop") music particularly from the middle part of the 20th century, and I am also very fond of listening to blues when it is done well, and in the right setting' (CBSO audience member, November 2010).

This respondent is keen to illustrate the individuality of concert-going experiences, presenting his own listening preferences as resistant to classification, and offering a reminder that among the highly motivated audience members will be their sometimes reluctant or recently-converted companions (Upright, 2004). In his description of his 'own fit' to the audience, he shows the serendipitous, exploratory nature of musical engagement, as one genre of music leads him into another, and increasingly available recordings supplement his live arts attendance. Quality is paramount, both in recordings and in live music 'done well and in the right setting': this is a discerning, relatively open-minded audience member, making informed selections from the programme offered by CBSO and interweaving other arts consumption among his live concert attendance.

This audience member is unusual in mentioning watching recorded music, arguably an accessible middle ground between attending live arts events and hearing them on recordings, but one not often referred to by other respondents. Although Michael Chanan (2002, p. 373) describes how television could provide viewers not only with broadcast music but also with 'insight into the everyday world of the musician', glimpses of which are highly valued by many audience members in their live attendance, empirical evidence is so far lacking on the extent to which concert-goers make use of such resources, whether on recorded or downloadable visual media. None of the audience respondents made reference to digital streaming, a recent phenomenon that redefines notions of 'liveness' by simultaneously broadcasting a performance from, say, an opera house to a cinema, so linking two audiences in different places to the same performance at the same time. Martin Barker's (2013) research on these hybrid arts events reports low ticket sales and mixed reactions from audience members, but demonstrates the cinema-based audience's critical awareness of the creative layers of the opera and its presentation, through their comments on everything from the camera angles to

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the emotional connections between characters. Free from the distractions of the opera-house audience, yet with 'a new sense of communality of experience' (p. 29), those in the cinema are able to feel closer to the stage yet more relaxed among the familiar surroundings of a film-going audience. Perhaps more significantly, the new mode of presentation throws open to question the conventions of live music listening, disrupting the behavioural patterns of Christopher Small's (1998) imagined concert hall, and prompting audience members to question why they are there – and not somewhere else – and how their interaction with the live event is meaningful to them and to those around them. This critical distance, while risking alienating an audience who become too much aware of their dissatisfaction with the event, could be a valuable tool in engaging audiences and communicating their perspectives to arts organizations – an idea also demonstrated through post-concert conversations with artists (see Dobson and Sloboda, this volume) and focus-group discussions with researchers (Dobson and Pitts, 2011).

Across the 197 CBSO audience members who answered the survey question described above, the majority reported a close (46%) or partial fit (35%) with their description of a typical audience member, while (11%) felt different from the collective norm, usually through being younger or less musically experienced, and (8%) said they did not know or declined to answer. This demonstrates that, despite occasional reluctance to acknowledge the homogeneity of the group – 'I hate to think of myself as a typical anything' – audience members generally found themselves to be surrounded by people like them or (since these were speculative rather than evidenced observations) were making the assumption that others in the hall shared their motivations, musical experience and enthusiasm for the event. A few went further in acknowledging that these assumed similarities presented their own risks for drawing new audiences into classical music: while some newcomers will quickly feel 'at home' in a group that seems familiar to them, those who are in a minority – whether through ethnicity, age, social background or assumed musical experience – might feel more conspicuous and therefore less engaged. While audience segmentation research goes some way to identifying the preoccupations and priorities of different arts attenders, the complexity of individual experience illustrated here shows that there is more work to be done on understanding and engaging audience members once they have made the first step in attending a live music event.

Self and Others in Audience Motivation

As Jennifer Radbourne and her co-authors reflect later in this book (see also Radbourne et al., 2009), understanding of audience motivation through market research has historically focused on the practicalities of attending: how much are people prepared to pay for tickets, how easy do they find it to park near the venue, how satisfied are they with the interval refreshments? These factors are undoubtedly important barriers or incentives to participation, particularly for first-

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time or infrequent attenders, or those with otherwise low investment in the event who want to minimize the financial risk or potential disappointment of their night out (Harland and Kinder, 1999). However, qualitative research with audiences on their expectations and experiences of concert-going soon reveals a more complex picture, where the practicalities of attendance are weighed up against the musical, social and personal rewards of audience membership (Pitts and Spencer, 2008). Despite these rewards, audience members might still be annoyed by the coughing of their neighbours in a symphony hall (O'Sullivan, 2009), or by jazz listeners who talk or get up to buy a drink at the wrong time (Burland and Pitts, 2012) – their irritation in itself being a manifestation of their commitment to the event, and their consequent frustration with others who seem not to abide by the unwritten, genre-specific rules of live listening. Being an audience member is an emotional risk, as well as a financial one: a performance may be disappointing in relation to a well-loved recording, the acoustics of the hall may be poor, and the seats may be uncomfortable or the view blocked by a tall or wriggling fellow listener. Given that these risks can all be averted by listening instead to a critically acclaimed recording, the appeal of live listening must provide additional benefits that are sought out by audiences across a range of venues and genres.

In studies with jazz audiences, Karen Burland and I found that one clear benefit attributed to live listening was the visual immediacy of seeing performers interacting, with the exchange of gestures and movements helping to draw listeners' attention to the structure of the music, and the close proximity of players and listeners giving a sense of shared participation in a musical event (Pitts and Burland, 2013; Burland and Pitts, 2010, 2012). For improvised jazz, where listeners are being exposed to new musical material, the acknowledgement of a solo or indication of a return to the 'head' helps to provide a sense of cohesion, bringing the audience together within the music, in the same way as a pop chorus or the return of a theme in a classical symphony. Experienced listeners have their knowledge affirmed through this moment of recognition, while those whose attention has wandered are drawn back on track; through the visual clues of performer gesture the temporal uncertainty – 'how long is a piece of music?' – of live performance is reduced, and the performers acknowledge (intentionally or otherwise) the listeners' place in the live event.

Seeing performers was also important to City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO) and Music in the Round (MitR) listeners in creating a sense of musicians' engagement in the event: audience members at these classical events looked for evidence that players were enjoying the performance and appreciating one another's playing, citing instances of smiles between players, apparent warmth towards the conductor, and lively, exuberant playing (Pitts et al., 2013). Attending frequently and becoming familiar with the performers was also helpful, particularly in the 'in the round' Studio Theatre venue of MitR, where audience members reported looking over the shoulders of players at the music on the stand and experiencing a 'feeling of togetherness with the performers' (Pitts, 2005a, p. 104). Introductory talks by players and conductors also created a sense

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of connection, giving insight into their experiences of the music and offering audience members a chance to assess their personalities and humour, and so generate an assumed familiarity, often likened to friendship or family ethos by frequent attenders. Many arts organizations capitalize on this desire for personal connections with performers through their marketing strategies and publicity: at the time of our research with CBSO, the programmes for concerts included profiles of individual players, which were welcomed by some audience members as helping them 'get to know' the players, while others were more dismissive, feeling that the music should be paramount and such personal trivia left aside. This comparatively new aspect of live classical music is yet another factor to interact with audience members' diverse personalities, preferences and prior musical experience – as well as bringing new demands for performers, some of whom have reported the pressure to talk to audiences to be a distraction from their main task of making music (Tomes, 2012). While seeing performers in live performance certainly distinguishes the experience from recorded music listening, it seems that it brings with it a new set of challenges for concert promoters, performers and audience members to negotiate.

Another distinctive aspect of live music listening is the opportunity to interact with other audience members, though here the research evidence suggests a greater ambivalence in whether the benefits of conversation with like-minded people (Pitts, 2005b) outweigh the frustrations of distracting behaviour from others in the auditorium (O'Sullivan, 2009). While listening in silent appreciation is a relatively recent concert hall convention (Gunn, 1997), there is now a strong implicit expectation that audience members will give their full attention to the music – a demand that can be intimidating for first-time attenders (Dobson and Pitts, 2011), and some way from the truth of how listeners' minds are occupied during a long or unfamiliar piece of music. Eric Clarke (2005) describes how audience listening can encompass shifts in focus from noting the furniture, fashions and surroundings of the concert hall, to being 'aware of nothing at all beyond a visceral engagement with musical events of absorbing immediacy and compulsion' (p. 188): the rhetoric of classical music listening affords cultural prestige to the latter state of mind, and yet this 'is nonetheless just one among many ways of listening' (p. 188).

The challenge for each listener sitting among hundreds (or dozens) of others in the concert hall is to accommodate the listening behaviours of others, both in the minimal interactions of the music's duration, and in the conversation that might be expected in the interval or the queue to leave the hall at the end. One listener in the Music in the Round audience provided a vivid instance of when such conversation might be an intrusion, writing in his diary of a fellow listener 'who apologized for not speaking to me after last night's performance. Said she was so choked up she could not speak. I agreed I didn't want to talk to anyone either' (Pitts, 2005a, p. 100). Here conversation risked disrupting an intense musical experience; at other times it might expose an episode of distracted listening, as for the first-time attenders who described getting 'annoyed with myself, because […] every time I properly listened to [the music] it was really good, but my mind just kept going

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off anyway' (Dobson and Pitts, 2011: 365). New listeners also struggled to find a vocabulary for talking about music, so limiting their potential for integration with more experienced listeners and illustrating Christopher Small's assertion that 'the interval is not a break in the event at all but an essential part of it, providing opportunity for social intercourse with members of one's own reference group, to crystallize one's response to the event by discussion (intervals seem interminable to those with no one to talk to)' (Small, 1987, p. 12). Interaction with other audience members is therefore an essential part of live listening, but by no means a straightforward one, or one that is universally helpful to audience members.

Keeping Music (A)Live – Musical and Moral Responsibilities

While personal, social and musical motivations were uppermost in audience members' reports of their concert-going choices, another strong theme emerged, particularly among older, experienced listeners – that of the moral or cultural responsibility to attend live arts and so contribute to sustaining their existence. This notion of patronage has a long history in classical music, perhaps highlighting one of the clearest distinctions between pop 'fans' and classical 'aficionados' (Jenson, 1992): the former are broadly driven by the pursuit of individual and group preferences for pleasure and allegiance, while the latter might also articulate a sense of social worthiness or cultural good, largely absent from discourse on popular music. When the Music in the Round audience was faced a few years ago with the retirement of their resident string quartet and the appointment of a new, younger ensemble, some audience members confessed to feeling freed of their responsibilities to the organization, while others expressed a loyalty to the newly arrived players, concerned that 'if [we] don't support them, they will go elsewhere and we will lose the whole thing' (Pitts and Spencer, 2008, p. 234). Audience members, in this case and others, are conscious of providing not just financial support through their ticket purchases, but emotional and cultural support, through their endorsement of the event and their enthusiastic applause.

Audience loyalty is actively fostered by many arts organizations through their 'Friends' schemes, which usually include some element of priority booking, as well as increased access to 'behind the scenes' information through newsletters or opportunities to meet the performers. Typically, the financial incentive to join the scheme will not be its strongest feature, and membership will be promoted as a way of helping the organization and feeling more connected with it – gaining information and engagement rather than substantial discounts on tickets. At CBSO, we found that even people who found the 'Friends' social events rather cliquey or inconveniently-timed, would renew their membership in order to support the education programme or the high standards of the orchestra (Pitts et al., 2013). In this respect, Friends' membership is closer to charitable giving than to canny purchasing, with arts organizations imitating charities in their use of narrative and inclusion to encourage feelings of belonging and continued support (Merchant et

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al., 2010). For others in the CBSO audience who did enjoy the opportunities to socialize with like-minded Friends and gain additional insight on the performers' lives and experiences, membership enhanced the sense of contributing to the musical event, creating an audience community which existed between events. By fostering memories and connections beyond the transitory sharing of an evening's musical experience, the cycle of engagement continues, and audience membership becomes more embedded in people's lives and musical identities.

In recent years, some writers have expressed concern that live classical music is in decline, and risks becoming a cultural irrelevance that will lapse as older audience members die out, and younger listeners become increasingly sophisticated consumers of recorded music (Johnson, 2002). Other genres, notably folk music and jazz, have gone through similar cycles of ageing consumption in the past (MacKinnon, 1993; Hodgkins, 2009), and subsequently regained a following, though often taking a different form for a new generation of listeners. Niall MacKinnon's survey of folk club audiences in the early 1990s, for example, found that while the 'folk revival' of the 1960s had attracted a following of new, young listeners, this had resulted in an 'age bulge' in folk club membership, as the 1960s cohort were not followed by a second wave of similarly interested younger listeners (MacKinnon, 1993, p. 43). While MacKinnon made gloomy predictions for the future of the folk scene as a result, later commentators have profiled a new resurgence, in this case featuring higher profile performances outside traditional folk club settings, as a new generation of performers headline at festivals, make occasional television appearances and gain nominations for awards more usually associated with popular music (Keegan-Phipps, 2009). Adapting the focus and appeal of a genre risks alienating a core audience, but the buoyant state of folk music is illustrative of the ways in which established practices can co-exist with new manifestations – and that audiences will emerge or diverge to accommodate arts events that seem most connected with their own lives and preferences.

Western classical music remains firmly embedded in contemporary society, not least through its use in films, advertising and public events, but the act of attending concerts and sitting quietly as a live performance unfolds is an increasingly incongruous activity in our data-rich, fast-paced world. For some audience members, this is precisely its appeal; for others – and for the many potential listeners not currently engaged with live arts – the gap between 'everyday life' and concert-going becomes ever wider. The anxiety around this change is not confined to classical music; jazz performers and promoters have also reported concerns about the need to appeal to the widest potential audience, and the consequent 'safety' in programming that can result from this need to create a reliable experience for occasional or unadventurous listeners (Kubacki and Croft, 2005). This discussion is mainly financially driven, as arts organizations struggle with reduced funding as well as the multiple pressures on their audiences' time and resources: the introduction of interactive websites, mobile apps, and informal concert formats might be presented as being about the quality of audience experience, but are often just as much about the survival of the regional theatre company or concert series – a

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threat which in itself can generate audience loyalty and a commitment to supporting a particular art form. Beyond the pragmatic level, such arguments can also take on a moral tone, expressing concern about the future of a genre and its live performance, with classical music, particularly, viewed as facing a 'legitimation crisis' in contemporary society (Johnson, 2002, p. 3). Empirical research with audiences has a role to play in understanding the extent to which musical, moral and social values are intertwined in audience motivations to invest their time, money and attention in the arts – and more challengingly, how these values appear from the 'outside', to those who do not regularly experience live music.

Conclusions and Future Challenges

This chapter has shown how the motivations of audience members occupy a continuum from the mundane and practical (ticket price, access, availability), through questions of musical choice (repertoire, familiarity, preference) and social listening habits (attending alone, joining the Friends scheme), through to a broader philosophical and moral sense of responsibility (loyalty to a venue/event, concern for the future of live arts). Broadly speaking, increasing experience of concert-going appears to move listeners further along this continuum, as their investment in the musical aspects of the event and their enjoyment of the social elements of attendance gradually outweigh the practical concerns that might present a more substantial barrier to first-time or infrequent attenders. This deepening relationship is a fragile one, however, which may result in an attachment to a specific group or venue, rather than openness to wider arts consumption, and can be withdrawn if satisfaction with the experience declines, perhaps as a result of changes made by the arts organization. For arts promoters, the balance between retaining their existing audience members and drawing in new ones is a constant challenge: understanding the motivations of regular listeners can contribute to the sensitive development of these strategies, but there is a clear need for further research with lapsed and infrequent attenders, who will have the clearest perspective on how arts attendance can lose its appeal or cease to be a priority.

Empirical research with audiences faces a further challenge in pursuing questions which are intellectually interesting, as well as those that are useful to arts organizations seeking to develop their practice. The two aims are by no means incompatible, but with the latter having a more obvious social benefit, and research in this area depending on the co-operation of arts organizations themselves, it can be easy to be drawn into the realm of market research, albeit with added qualitative depth. Taking audience motivation as an example, while the surface-level findings on inclination to attend, satisfaction with the concert experience, and attitudes to Friends' schemes are both intellectually and practically valuable, of greater academic interest is the way in which live concert-going occupies a place in contemporary society, how it relates to recorded music listening, how it is viewed as a culturally responsible activity, and how audience members develop

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a vocabulary for talking about their experiences. While sociology of music has a strong tradition of theorizing about concert life (with Adorno, Weber and Hennion prominent in that tradition), attempts to match these theoretical positions with the growing body of empirical evidence from psychology of music are as yet relatively undeveloped.

With these two challenges in mind – research at the fringes of audiences, and the need for intellectual rigour in drawing together empirical evidence – I would assert that audience research is well-placed to investigate some of the central intellectual puzzles in musicology and cultural studies: namely the place of music in contemporary society, and the intellectual and emotional reception of musical works in a live listening context. The growth of research endeavours in this area – many of them represented in this book – suggest that the time is right for these enquiries to be robustly undertaken from multiple, inter-disciplinary perspectives, for the benefit of listeners, performers and researchers in a wide range of musical settings.

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