Audiences' engagement with Twitter and Facebook Live during classical music performances: community and connectivity through live listening experiences

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AUDIENCES’ ENGAGEMENT WITH TWITTER AND FACEBOOK LIVE DURING CLASSICAL MUSIC PERFORMANCES: COMMUNITY AND CONNECTIVITY THROUGH LIVE LISTENING EXPERIENCES

by

Hang Thi Tuyet Nguyen

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Thesis Supervisor: Professor Marian Wilson Kimber
To my parents for their hard work as immigrants from Vietnam, for they are an inspiration to me. Their help and support have allowed me to follow my dreams and the opportunity to be the first-generation Ph.D. in my family’s history.
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ABSTRACT

Music ensembles have made a concerted attempt to reach out through social media platforms to the communities surrounding their concert venues in order to attract young adults to replace aging audiences. By observing opera and symphony orchestra audience members’ social media engagement through Twitter and Facebook Live, this dissertation endeavors to better understand how technology has changed the culture of classical music concert attendance. The music organizations utilizing social media considered for this study include the Los Angeles Opera, San Francisco Opera, and Boston Lyric Opera for Tweet Seats, and the Detroit Symphony Orchestra on Facebook Live. Consideration of live-tweets, Facebook Live concerts and comments, and personal interviews with social media users and music ensemble personnel provides insight to the changing experience of concert attendance.

Interviews with online users who are actively participating in Tweet Seats on Twitter and chatrooms on Facebook Live during live-streamed concerts reveal that integrating social media during live performances enhances their sense of community, and their musical and social experiences. Participants indicate that prior classical music experience affects their motivation to participate and engage with other users. For many interviewees, affordability and VIP perks were initial incentives for their online involvement, but the overall experience for these users is complex. Interacting online allowed classical music fans to connect and/or reconnect to the ensembles and their music, and to an existing wired community, while negotiating with changes to the long-standing conventions of classical music culture. These alternative concert-going experiences made possible by social media reconstruct liveness within a digital world,
cultivate classical music fandom, and enrich the live listening experience through collective engagement.
PUBLIC ABSTRACT

Music ensembles have made a concerted attempt to reach out through social media platforms to the communities surrounding their concert venues in order to attract young adults to replace aging audiences. By observing how opera and symphony orchestra audience members’ social media engagement through Twitter and Facebook Live, this dissertation examines how technology has changed the culture of classical music concert attendance. Relying on live-tweets, Facebook Live concerts and comments, and personal interviews of social media users and music ensemble personnel provides insight to the changing experience of concert attendance.

Interviews with online users who are actively participating in Tweet Seats on Twitter for opera dress rehearsals and chatrooms on Facebook Live during live-streamed symphony orchestra concerts reveal that integrating social media during live performances enhances their sense of community, and their musical and social experiences. Participants indicate that prior classical music experience affects their motivation to try these online opportunities. For many interviewees, free tickets and VIP perks were initial reasons for their online involvement, but classical music fans were also able to connect to the music ensembles and their music, and to an existing wired community. Interacting on social media with other listeners helped break down traditional concert etiquette usually expected at concert venues. These alternative concert-going experiences made possible by social media reconstruct liveness within a digital world, cultivate classical music fandom, and enrich the live listening experience through collective engagement.
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CHAPTER 1: THE “CRISIS” OF CLASSICAL MUSIC AND THE RISE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

“Tweet Seats? Really?!”¹ and “Is it possible to allow Tweeting without offending the non-Tweeters?”² are some of the initial reactions of critics as music ensembles have adopted smartphone use in the concert halls for live-tweeting since 2009. Opposition to and uncertainty about the value of audience engagement through social media remains, as is demonstrated by the way in which mobile phone use at opera performances has been restricted to dress rehearsals. While another recent practice, livestreaming symphony orchestra concerts on Facebook Live, might reach wider audiences, there is a fear of losing current and prospective viewers to a free online concert. The alternative concert-going experiences made possible by social media reconstruct liveness within a digital world, cultivate classical music fandom, and provide various incentives for the concert-going experience through collective engagement. With these changing opportunities inside and outside the concert hall, it is still unclear what occurs through the point of view of the listener. Rather than inquiring how music organizations connect with audiences through social media, how are these strategies working for the listeners engaged in them? By conducting studies of the audience’s experience of their social media engagement on Twitter and Facebook Live, this dissertation provides insights into

the changing values and experiences of classical music concert attendance in a technologically connected world.

Music organizations are broadening their marketing scope beyond traditional methods of audience recruitment and engagement by integrating social media in their publicity efforts. Tweet Seats are programs with a pre-selected number of audience members who, active on the social media platform Twitter, tweet their experience during a complimentary live performance in order to spark conversations with other followers, to engage the interest of prospective audiences, or to convince them to attend a performance. Hashtags, such as #LAODonGiovanni for Don Giovanni as performed by the Los Angeles Opera, are designated to be used at a performance to get the organization trending online through their multiple iterations, thus, creating additional opportunities to reach more individuals for potential future audiences. Facebook Live is another platform that music organizations use for audience engagement through livestream concerts, particularly at symphony orchestra halls. Facebook’s livestreaming application has been available since 2016. It allows anyone to watch from the comfort of their own home and provides users the option to interact with other online audience members through the live-chat section.

Although organizations such as the Lyric Opera of Chicago and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra have reportedly said that electronics will never be allowed at their venues mid-performance, many other opera companies and symphony orchestras are

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embracing the use of smartphones and iPads, even if only during final dress rehearsals, to help boost awareness of upcoming concerts, especially to future attendees. “Roll Over, Beethoven,” joked Jeanne Allen from Nonprofit Quarterly, as more music organizations increasingly offer as many as one hundred seats for free to audience members interested in tweeting at the final dress rehearsal of select performances. Complimentary tickets for a designated section in the rear of the venue are reserved in exchange for public marketing from audience members who can inspire other followers to attend.

Outsourcing marketing strategies through social media engagement is one response to the supposed “death of classical music” that has long been an issue in the American music world. The crisis surrounding classical music institutions is primarily due to financial deficits as a result of a loss of attendees and has been partially attributed to aging audiences and to a lowered sense of the relevance of classical music for contemporary listeners, but also stems from the introduction of classical music as imported European culture in America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The difficult history of classical music in America is the larger context for this project’s emphasis on the phenomena of music organizations using Facebook and Twitter, the changing values surrounding concert participation and attendance, and the question of whether social media affects the social and musical experiences of audience members. The recurring issues that classical music has faced since its introduction in America in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are the background for its current problematic status.

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The “Crisis” in Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century America

As early as the nineteenth century opera companies and symphony orchestras struggled to maintain the American public’s interest because of the non-American roots of their music and the way in which Classical music has historically been considered “elitist culture” for the upper classes. In *American Orchestras in the Nineteenth Century*, John Spitzer discusses how the earliest American orchestras already had difficulties with “Anglo-American music lovers who attended these events…feeling out of place amid so much German language and German culture.”\(^5\) Early orchestras consisted of German musicians and immigrants in the 1840s, but by the 1880s American orchestras expanded to incorporating performers and musicians from France, Italy, and other parts of Europe.\(^6\) Michael Broyles notes that this shift in the makeup of nineteenth-century American orchestras was a result of a “transatlantic musical culture,” in which musicians and conductors from America and European countries traveled back and forth to learn from and perform with each other.\(^7\) Very few American works, if any, were played, since most of the repertoire was music that the performers from Germany, Italy, and France knew and brought with them from their home countries, or, what American musicians and conductors studied when they traveled to Europe.\(^8\) American orchestras were privately subsidized by ticket sales and by wealthy patrons, who became more prevalent towards

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\(^{5}\) Ibid.
\(^{7}\) Ibid., 314. For more on the transatlantic culture of music, see Jon Ceander Mitchell’s *The Trans-Atlantic Passages: Philip Hale on the Boston Symphony Orchestra (1889-1933)* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).
\(^{8}\) Ibid., 315.
the end of the century. Thus, American orchestras in the late nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries also suffered from the financial and outreach issues that still persist today. Not only was financial hardship an ongoing issue, but reaching an audience less musically literate and that was not raised in a European music culture was always an obstacle when it was necessary to expand from knowledgeable concertgoers to sustain American concert venues and opera houses.

Like the introduction of the orchestra, the transmission of opera to America was influenced by conductors and singers traveling abroad, returning home, and inviting popular European performers to American venues. The genre relied on European traditions imported to America in the eighteenth century. Research by musicologist Katherine Preston in the past decade has illuminated how much European and English-language opera was available to a wide-range of listeners throughout nineteenth-century America. The main opera houses in America were in New Orleans, founded in 1790, and the Metropolitan Opera in New York, founded in 1883, but the popular method of consuming opera at the time was through the “touring troupes,” often managed by

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9 Ibid., 316.
11 For more specific symphony orchestra accounts of composers and conductors in the early twentieth century, see Hugo Leichtentritt’s Serge Koussevitsky: The Boston Symphony Orchestra and the New American Music (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1946) and Mary H. Wagner’s Gustav Mahler and the New York Philharmonic Orchestra Tour America (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2006).
women. These traveling troupes were not financially stable, most of them lasting no more than two years, while only a handful existed beyond that time frame, such as those run by Clara Kellogg and Emma Abbott. American historian Lawrence Levine adds that many listeners would have had the opportunity to know popular arias from English parlor songs sung in the style of bel canto at home, as well as through singers using “popular airs of the day” in the vernacular as suitcase arias at American opera venues. Although the troupes primarily performed well-known Italian, French, and some German operas, they occasionally featured English operas as well as English adaptations of stock operas. As a result, Preston observes that “The repertory of the various companies (English, French, Italian and German) further reveals that American operatic tastes closely mirrored those on the Continent and in England.”

The integration of classical music in America also bred elitism as listening preferences emerged among American audiences. The growth toward similar European tastes also showed a disparity among the social classes who listened to opera; the elite were more interested in music as “cultural uplift” while the “middle- and professional-class Americans” leaned towards music for entertainment. According to Preston, English operas and English-language adaptations of “standards” were in higher demand

13 Ibid.
15 Levine, 90.
16 Preston, “The USA,” in “Travelling troupes” on Grove Music Online.
17 Ibid.
by the non-elite population because they were “performed in the vernacular and without the pretensions and high prices of the fashionable foreign-language troupes.”19 Understandably, American audiences were frustrated by not being able to understand an Italian opera lasting several hours.20 As Preston has astutely observed, music critics advocated that American opera companies and troupes feature foreign-language works; “their principal responsibility was to educate Americans about good (European) music in general and about this higher form of opera in particular…[instilling] in their readers the idea that opera was culturally uplifting.”21

The shift in shaping American audiences’ music tastes to define opera and concert music as high art also affected the accepted concert etiquette at opera houses and concert halls. In the nineteenth century, music critics, aristocrats, directors, and board members of concert venues would often comment or report on what displeased them during dress rehearsals and live performances. While it was once acceptable to express “pleasure and disapproval in the form of cheers, yells, gesticulations, hisses, boos, stamping of feet, whistling, crying for encores, and applause,” the shift towards serious classical music listening also changed the expectations of audience behavior at music halls.22 In 1855, directors at the Metropolitan Opera House “complained of the ‘disgraceful habit of talking aloud at the rehearsals while the performance [was] going on,’ and rebuked those who ‘would seem to be more attracted and charmed by the sounds of their own voices, than by the inspiring, solemn, majestic tones of Beethoven or Mendelssohn.”23 Levine

19 Ibid.
20 Levine, 94.
21 Preston, Opera for the People, 3.
22 Levine, 192.
23 Ibid., 182.
states that negative reactions against any distraction in the hall caused the Board of Directors to post the following note “in every box” in 1891:

Many complaints having been made to the directors of the Opera House of the annoyance produced by the talking in the boxes during the performance, the Board requests that it be discontinued.24

As the Metropolitan increasingly hired professional European musicians, Levine argues the audience became more “passive” and had less of a connection with the performers due to their lack of “roots in the community,” further causing listeners “difficulty either empathizing or communicating.”25 with them. More concert rules were integrated nearing the turn of the century in which “lights were dimmed [to focus more] on the performers,” audiences were required to be on time or forced to wait “until the first number on the program was complete,” and “to refrain from leaving” the hall mid-performance.26 The historical context of traditional concert etiquette established in nineteenth-century America and lasting throughout the twentieth century is the background for more recent changes in the expectations for audience behavior during live performances due to the addition of technology in the concert hall.

**The “Crisis” in Classical Music**

Recent editorials that criticize classical music show that the perceived crisis remains a relevant, ongoing issue. Kurt Andersen, Greg Sandow, Alex Ross, William Robin, and Anne Midgette are some of the more prominent critics who have explored the problems surrounding classical music in today’s society. In an interview with Diane Rehm, Ross stated that a lack of funds rather than aging audiences is the main reason for

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24 Ibid.
25 Ibid., 189-190.
26 Ibid., 190.
the low participation in classical music in recent decades. Ross’s blog post, “The Orchestra Crisis at 110,” shows that American orchestras have faced financial hardships since at least 1926. Cellist and composer Jon Silpayamanant added that ensembles may even have faced funding pressures as early as 1903. Recent instances of financial hardship occurred in September 2016 when the Philadelphia Orchestra went on strike over contract negotiations ten minutes before its opening season gala concert. The Orchestra’s renegotiations were concluded four days later. An even longer dispute occurred with Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra’s strike on September 8, 2016, over contract negotiations that started in late July of 2015. The dispute lasted over a year with prolonged discussions, contract extensions, and several tentative agreements over

the musicians’ new contract, ending with a strike that was three months long.\footnote{Andrea Ahles and Stephanie Allmon Merry, “FWSO Musicians on Strike, Weekend Concerts Canceled,” Star-Telegram, posted September 8, 2016, http://www.star-telegram.com/entertainment/arts-culture/article100625872.html, accessed January 26, 2017.} As is evident, the strikes have been a result of financial hardship.

our actual connectivity,” an outdated repertoire, and growing costs.\textsuperscript{37} Top opera houses are also in trouble. In June 2014, the general director of the Metropolitan Opera, Peter Gelb, also announced that cuts were necessary to avoid bankruptcy in the next two to three years.\textsuperscript{38} Music ensembles are combating attendance barriers by integrating social media efforts that might attract newer and younger audiences. By maintaining an active presence online, ensembles can find ways to reconnect with previous listeners who stopped attending as well as with prospective audience members.

**Incorporating Social Media into Classical Music**

Social media use by music organizations has been growing in popularity in the past decade. “Massive outsourcing” or “voluntary outsourcing”\textsuperscript{39} of marketing outreach to Internet users via online engagement on social media platforms has been a prevalent strategy used by music organizations seeking real-time reactions by users who could also potentially bring in future audiences. Rather than hire marketing professionals, music organizations can rely on a “community or the general public over the Internet” because they have access to a “crowd [that] outperforms industry faster and cheaper.”\textsuperscript{40}

According to Yanning Roth, et al., “Crowdsourcing blends the efficiency and control of

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 4-5.
traditional, top-down managed process with the benefits of bottom-up open innovation and creativity. “

Case studies suggest organizations can embrace digital media as a means for audience building and engagement; thus, music groups have benefitted from trending in popular media to increase visibility both online and offline. According to senior writer Matt Kapko of CIO magazine, Twitter studies have shown that cast members live-tweeting events on a TV premiere night have increased followership, especially at live-tweet parties. The opportunity to create interactions between audience members with a cast member during a show in real-time creates a shared experience, allowing “a way to connect with audiences like never before, thanks to this technology.” Twitter’s research into live-tweeting during shows in blue bars demonstrated that cast member handles had an increase in 64 percent activity, and TV show handles only had a 7 percent increase in live-tweets by comparison (see Figure 1. The gray bars represent shows that did not incorporate live-tweeting).

43 Ibid.
Figure 1. Cast live-tweeting is more effective than show handles.\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
Similar to how TV shows allow cast members to live-tweet along with audience members, performers and crew members for both operas and symphony orchestras also engage with audience members on social media during performances.

If getting the organization to trend is one of the main goals, Tweet Seats has been able to see positive results during their events. Depending on the number of participants, an organization can range between five to fifty users live-tweeting twenty or so tweets per hour, equaling in the thousands at the end of a dress rehearsal. On June 7, 2017 San Francisco Opera’s La Bohème performances were trending third behind The Warriors in the National Basketball Association Finals (see Figure 2).
Tweet Seats programs are a top-down approach in which the organization purposefully solicits specific audience contributors, and some music organizations have seen an increase in audience attendance numbers as a result. According to the Sacramento Philharmonic and Opera, which used Tweet Seats efforts in their 2015-2016 season, the groups hoped for an average of 1,600 attendees per concert, and instead averaged 1,850

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to 2,000 attendees after comedians live-tweeted at a Rachmaninoff concert.\textsuperscript{46} Michael Cooper’s articles from \textit{The New York Times} regarding orchestra strikes and the necessity to rely on the community’s own fortune\textsuperscript{47} are a reminder that relying on local figures such as artists can be a useful tool for outreach. Opera houses have invited popular artists, not only comedians, but also graphic artists and contemporary singers from the surrounding region to live-tweet as well as draw on an iPad in reaction to the performance. Reaching out to other performers, artists, and writers in the surrounding community who already have a substantial following can also help spread the word over social media. Recent instances include the Los Angeles Opera company recruiting arts professionals within the Los Angeles area to live-tweet; for the November 3, 2016, performance of Philip Glass’s \textit{Akhnaten}, writer and journalist Hallie Bateman (@hallithbates) drew pictures throughout the performance on a handheld device to be sent out as live-tweets, and performer and lullabyist\textsuperscript{48} Ariana Lenarsky (@aardvarsk) also contributed live-tweet messages (see Figure 3).

\textsuperscript{48} Ariana Lenarsky professionally sings people to sleep in Los Angeles through her serialized radio show, “Dream City.”
Music organizations compete to have the most engaging, savvy social media to reach the specific populations of 18 to 35-year-olds, or “young professionals,” in order to create future attendees.\textsuperscript{50} Music organizations have been investing in recruiting young adults through social media by actively posting and interacting with online users on some of the available platforms which include Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, Tumblr, Periscope,\textsuperscript{51} Vimeo, Pinterest, and blog websites such as Storify and WordPress. In addition to Facebook Live, livestreaming platforms such as Vimeo, Periscope, and Snapchat offer free and accessible ways to “attend” a classical music performance.


\textsuperscript{50} Arriana, Boston Lyric Opera, conducted September 23, 2017.

\textsuperscript{51} Periscope is a live video streaming application, made by the Twitter company, which allows users to record videos at any length to be broadcasted live. The video is only available for twenty-four hours online or less and is permanently deleted thereafter. The application also allows heart emoji buttons to be pressed and live commenting like Facebook Live.
performance. Organizations have experimented with many of these, but the most popular platforms have been Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.\textsuperscript{52}

Most organizations have a main website with direct links to the social media platforms on which they are active. Music organizations most often select Facebook and Twitter due to their widespread use. A Pew Research Center study on the “Demographics of Social Media Users in 2016” demonstrated that eight in ten U.S. adults (18 years old and over) are on Facebook, making it the most popular social media platform, while Twitter is the fifth most popular platform that American adults log on to every day.\textsuperscript{53} Because most of the targeted audience members are already on Facebook, information about upcoming events is also posted on other social networks with which the organization engages to reach as many potential users. For example, a user on Facebook might be a frequent visitor of YouTube, so that individual could see announcements for future concerts advertised on the two social networks or learn about an online event on a different platform, such as Twitter.

The appeal of adding Twitter and Facebook Live to the concert attendance experience lies in the ways the platforms are used. Twitter’s purpose is to allow real-time reactions to be sent to followers within seconds but may cause some distractions for listeners trying to negotiate with the original 140-characters, now 280 characters;\textsuperscript{54} however, typing disconnects them from what is happening on stage and with the music.

\textsuperscript{52} At the time of conducting interviews, I was not able to secure enough livestreaming and live-tweeting at concerts on platforms outside of Twitter and Facebook Live to be considered part of the study.
\textsuperscript{53} Greenwood, et. al, “Demographics of Social Media Users in 2016: Social Media Update 2016.”
\textsuperscript{54} Since early November 2017, Tweets now have a 280-character limit.
Because the platform can be used anywhere through a mobile device, it is easy for moderators to recruit a group of participants located in one room at one time to live-tweet simultaneously. Users can express their reactions at the concert among other audience members with the addition of an enhanced social aspect: live-tweeting with others who share an interest in classical music. In addition, audience members break traditional concert etiquette by interacting with others through tweets, while not disturbing other listeners outside of the Tweet Seats group. Generally, a Tweet Seats event will only occur during a pre-selected dress rehearsal. A moderator who organizes the event may be present to describe what kind of tweets are appropriate, but usually emphasizes that the live-tweeter can comment at any time on anything that interests them; he or she also makes sure a designated hashtag is included for other users to follow the stream of conversations. Some organizations provide the Twitter handles of the performers and opera crew to encourage personal engagement with people involved with the production. Throughout the dress rehearsal a string of live-tweets will occur from the Tweet Seaters as they sit in their designated section of the concert hall. Other users have the option to “like” the comment and can “reply” below the comment or re-tweet (share) any comment they liked to other followers.

Facebook Live allows more freedom for participants because the livestreaming application can be hosted on any internet-enabling device outside of the concert hall, whether at home or elsewhere. In contrast to Tweet Seats participants who are expected to contribute to the online conversation, Facebook Live users have the option of interacting with others through the live-chat section or not. The live interactions between users are similar to that of Tweet Seats in that Facebook Live participants have several
ways to engage with other users: tagging names, direct replying with others, and using emojis to express their immediate emotion. Both platforms provide a sense of immediacy through users’ reactions in the moment.

**Purpose of the Study**

This study borrows ethnographic practices to provide the context for online users’ experience of live classical music performances through case studies of Tweet Seats and Facebook Live participants. It explores the role of social media use in relation to classical music and concert attendance in people’s lives to explain what experiences a technologically connected audience member undergoes. Previous theses have focused on the effect of social media use from the point of view of personnel involved with monitoring an organization’s active platforms and providing quantitative data for the organization. This study focuses on the audience members’ online concert experience using qualitative data. I have both observed users who are actively posting their immediate reactions with messages as the performance is occurring in real-time and interviewed them afterwards in order to understand their musical and social experiences while online.

I hope to understand the motivations and musical and social experiences of social media users interacting with others at classical music concerts. What kind of listeners are ensembles attracting through the addition of social media during live performances? What are the users’ motivations behind their use of each social media platform? How does a live music event draw in listeners and affect audience interaction on Twitter and Facebook Live? How does online engagement shape the listeners’ experiences? How does social media affect barriers to physical attendance and traditional concert etiquette?
And ultimately, how does social media engagement further inform us of the changing values of classical music attendance?

The general layout for the two case studies will be as follows: Chapter 2 focuses on how the Los Angeles Opera, San Francisco Opera, and Boston Lyric Opera use Tweet Seats as a program to engage prospective audiences through live-tweeting. It includes a general description of the application process and what typically occurs at a Tweet Seats event although details at any given organization may vary. An outline of the major themes from personal interviews is followed by specific examples of the Tweet Seaters’ experiences. Chapter 3 explores how the Detroit Symphony Orchestra has used Facebook Live during select live performances with a general description of an event and of how online users locate DSO livestreamed events online. Because the DSO has a long history with its audience and community, an overview of the ensemble’s history is provided for context. Major themes resulting from the study are illuminated by specific examples from online audience members as well as personal interviews of DSO personnel involved with its Facebook Live events. Both chapters conclude with how these pre-selected users’ engagement with social media changes their musical and social experience at a live performance.

**Literature Review**

**Arts Statistics and Attendance Barriers for Target Audiences**

According to the NEA’s report on “A Decade of Arts Engagement,” between 2002 and 2012 the age of audiences increased.\(^\text{55}\) In 2002, middle-aged Americans

between 45 to 64 years old “were more likely to attend a classical music performance than any other age group,” and by 2012, the age increased such that “older Americans—those in the 65 to 74 age group” were more likely to attend.\textsuperscript{56} The NEA saw a mixture of increased attendance in both middle-aged and older American age groups for opera: while the age groups of 35 to 44 and those over 75 were the main attendees, there was an “increase in their rate of attendance” for both age groups by 2012.\textsuperscript{57} There are statistics supporting the idea that audiences for both orchestral and opera ensembles have aged during the past decade, so administrators for both types of groups recognize that they need to reach out to young adults to recruit a future audience. The Pew Research Center study on the demographics of social media users in 2016 reported that although Facebook and Twitter user age ranges are expanding to older adults, most of the users fall into the 18 to 29 age range.\textsuperscript{58} Due to concerns about audience attrition, music organizations have been actively reaching out to younger people through the social media they frequent.

Studies have reported a range of factors that keep current audiences from attending live performances: competition with leisure time, high prices, lack of a companion with whom to attend, waning arts education, changing demographics, and the technology boom. The 2015 report released by the NEA with authors Sara R. Leonard, Margaret E. Blume-Kohout, and Jennifer L. Novak-Leonard, \textit{When Going Gets Tough: Barriers and Motivations Affecting Arts Attendance}, supported the fact that there is

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.
competition for entertainment. Leonard, et al., have reported that the major reason why the public has decreased its involvement with live arts performances is because various other opportunities available for their leisure time.\(^{59}\) In the same year, another report by the NEA, “Why Don’t They Come? Characteristics of Interested Non-Attendees of the Arts,” revealed reasons why people do not attend although expressing an interest to do so.\(^{60}\) The goal of the study was to understand “motivations and barriers in arts attendance.”\(^{61}\) Responses were collected in 2008, 2010, and 2012, to create a data profile based on English- and Spanish-speaking respondents who were eighteen years or older in the United States. Respondents were randomly selected through census-block groups in the largest metropolitan areas.\(^{62}\) The three major barriers identified were lack of access, social reasons, and lack of time. The largest percentage of potential attendees is the age range above sixty years old, but this group reported difficulty getting to the venue due to disabilities or health reasons, or because they lived in rural areas resulting in limited or no transportation to the venue.\(^{63}\) Another major reason for interested non-attendees to pass


\(^{61}\) Ibid.


up a performance is social factors: not having anyone with whom to go, a barrier identified by people of non-Caucasian origin (about 38 percent). For many, “the most common major motivation U.S. adults cite for attending the arts is to socialize with their family members or friends.” Finally, the largest group, 59 percent in the 18 to 29-year age range, reported that they did not have enough time to attend a performance because of work commitments.

The social media platforms used during music ensemble activity that I considered studying include Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, Tumblr, Periscope, Vimeo, Pinterest, and blog websites such as Storify and WordPress. In general, live-streaming platforms such as Vimeo, Periscope, and Snapchat offer free and accessible ways to “attend” a classical music performance. Other live-streaming platforms like the digital concert hall of Berliner Philharmoniker allow viewing through online subscriptions, and the Metropolitan Opera offers both the Met Live in HD and Met On Demand via affordable tickets at cinemas or online viewing subscriptions for a fraction of the cost of a live performance at the venue. However, only the platforms Periscope, Facebook Live, and Twitter allow for live commenting and interactions with other users in real-time. The top two platforms on which the opera houses and orchestras rely and on which I based my study are Facebook Live and Twitter. A Pew Research Center study on the “Demographics of Social Media Users in 2016” demonstrated that eight in ten U.S.

64 Ibid.
adults (18 years old and over) are on Facebook, making it the most popular social media platform. Overall, Facebook cultivates closer online relationships, building a sense of trust among users because most friends are people whom the user has met offline. A majority of Facebook users fall within the 18 to 29 age range. Twitter similarly consists of 18 to 29-year-old users; however, users tend to be female, and in general, “disproportionately more educated” with advanced degrees. Although Twitter may consist of a larger and more diverse overall network with which participants connect, Facebook is still the leader in producing “more close social ties” than any other networking site; a majority of “Facebook friends” are people users have met more than once.

Relevant Case Studies

While scholars have studied regional symphony orchestras and their overall social media use, recent theses focus on the point of view of an arts administrator. Heather Marie Martin’s 2014 “Social Media Usage in Symphony Orchestras: A Comparative Case of the San Antonio Symphony and the Houston Symphony” demonstrates how regional symphony orchestras increased patron engagement and attendance with the addition of social media (YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter), an effective strategy when using personnel from within the company to market rather than hiring someone outside.

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69 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
the company. Renelle Bedell’s 2012 master’s project, “Audience Development: Texas Symphony Orchestras,” demonstrates how the Austin Symphony Orchestras (ASO) and the San Antonio Symphony (SAS) dealt with the decline in audience attendance in a comparative study of audience development strategies. Bedell showed that the SAS’s integration of social media into more traditional means of communicating with patrons, along with opportunities for discounted tickets, retained and increased audience numbers. Overall, orchestras that re-evaluate their marketing and development strategies to challenge “symphony stereotypes” by adapting contemporary social networking have seen improvements in attendance. Although these case studies focus on music organizations using social media, they lack the perspective of the audience members’ experiences using the social media platforms.

Scholarship on opera companies and social media use is somewhat scarce. One relevant thesis, “Social Media, Marketing, and the Opera Singer,” by Jennifer Jones, offers the means by which an individual opera singer can attract future audiences by self-branding as a “digital persona,” but does not consider use of social media by an entire company. Martin, Bedell, and Jones demonstrate that social media is an effective tool for increasing attendance numbers and provide the business perspectives of arts

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73 Ibid., 67-68.
75 Ibid., i.
administrators. NEA, NEH, and other arts and humanities foundation studies regarding the attendance gap paint a picture of what attendance barriers music institutions must face in the coming years of audience building as they integrate social media platforms into their marketing strategies. However, these case studies do not provide ethnographies of the social media users who are affected by this engagement strategy.

**Borrowing Ethnographic Practices for an Online Study**

The consideration of applications that allow live interactions is not new in social media studies, but as social media use is still recent and growing in popularity in the classical music world, it has not been the focus of much musicological research. Online ethnography allows scholars to consider the increased use of live-streaming and live-tweeting in concert halls. Ethnographies, in general, are a method of research that helps provide context for the topic by providing insights that might not be easily attainable with current physical data, for example, through using interviews, and observation and participation. This dissertation draws on ethnographic practices to help understand the context of an audience member’s musical and social experience at a live concert. Because of the limitations of my study, I considered what is publicly available online, which includes the live-tweets of current and past Tweet Seats events, the Facebook livestreams of the DSO and the accompanying comments in the chatroom, as well as undertaking personal interviews with social media personnel and moderators involved with the events and the audience members using social media. I was only able to conduct part of the contextual aspect of an ethnography of participation and observation for the two platforms. For Facebook Live, it was possible to act as an online audience member at

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76 Martin, 8.
home through the livestream and commenting in the chatroom among other viewers. With Tweets Seats, however, I was only able to observe a string of live-tweeting from my personal phone at home during an event. More in-depth participation and observation of Tweets Seats would have included my physical presence at an actual event with other Tweet Seaters at the LAO, SFO, and or BLO, which was not possible due to time limits and financial constraints.

For online studies that borrow the practices of ethnography, the difficulty lies in incorporating established ethnographic methods, such as the “three R’s of note-taking” (recording, reviewing, and reflecting) along with managing a constantly growing virtual data, facing new ethical questions surrounding online fieldwork, and determining the meaning of “liveness” because of the vastly different platforms observed: Twitter and Facebook Live. Depending on the platform, the researcher should be aware of time sensitive data, situations in which once an event occurs, the distributor removes the recording and any other accompanying information within a day. Interviews present ethical issues characteristic of working with human subjects; the researcher must ask for the interviewee’s consent and destroy any identifiers in recordings or written data that directly link to the subject. Researching both offline and online paints a better picture of the virtual context and social media phenomena through consideration of both an observer’s (the ethnographer) and the online user’s point of view. According to Mieke

Schrooten, it is the “balance between offline and online ethnography…[that will lead to a] more comprehensive account of the increasingly transnational and mediated phenomena we seek to understand.”⁷⁹ Distinguishing the type of “liveness” involved with the platform also clarifies what kind of musical and social experience an audience member will undergo. Because Twitter and Facebook Live are two very different platforms they provide a different sense of “liveness” for participating audience members. Twitter’s liveness occurs from the live-tweeting by Tweet Seaters who are in the concert hall for the dress rehearsal. As a result, those who are not in the concert hall will not have the same experience or sense of liveness as a Tweet Seater: outsiders cannot see the opera as it is not broadcast and are only able to experience live-tweets along with the audience members online, most likely slightly after Tweeters’ observations have occurred. In contrast, Facebook Live users can be both an audience member and commentator at home (or anywhere with internet access). Like Tweet Seaters, audiences viewing the DSO on Facebook Live can also write their observations and reaction mid-performance. In contrast to Twitter users, the Facebook Live viewer has access to the entire livestreamed concert along with other viewers worldwide, but only audiences who watch at the time of the live performance may experience it. Thus, the online concert attendance on Facebook Live remains an entirely live experience since the video and comments are removed after the concert.

The recent phenomena of social media use in classical music also calls for a more flexible approach to ethnography practices. As ethnomusicologist Bruno Nettl emphasized, the field allows for “elasticity” and “flexibility” in construction of
ethnographic approaches that are appropriate for new topics in the coming centuries and that might not fit in a preconceived mold. Thus, the data for this project consists in part of publicly available posts and videos on the Internet, as is. In order to explore the virtual context, I engaged in online interactions that were appropriate to the specific platform, as well as conducted interviews with users about their experience. In addition to observing the conversations occurring on Facebook Live, I personally interacted with the other online users in an event to understand what an online audience member might experience. Interviews with Facebook users provided further context for the online viewing experience and users’ motivations to comment. Because Tweet Seats does not provide livestreaming of the performance, the experience is created as a list of hash-tagged tweets during a final dress rehearsal of an opera. Personal interviews provided the context for what a pre-selected Tweet Seater goes through during the application process and understanding of who these users are, what motivates them to tweet, and their overall experience as a Tweet Seater. Previous online studies have similarly relied on virtual fieldwork to demonstrate the contexts of the topic areas that scholars have explored.

**Relevant Online and Social Media and Music Ethnographies**

Previous online and social media ethnographies reveal how music organizations create online interactions with audiences that can help build trust and create relationships in the opera house and concert hall. Sociologists Barry Wellman and Caroline Haythornthwaite have demonstrated that increased daily internet access enables social

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media networks to form and thus continues to foster relationships offline as well.\(^8^1\)

Ethnographies of young adult users by danah boyd and Carmel L. Vaisman further Wellman’s and Haythornthwaite’s observations that social media gives teens the power to create their own online identities;\(^8^2\) boyd and Vaisman’s case studies show that social media and blogs are powerful tools for overlooked groups of young adults to feel safe and comfortable expressing themselves in their own online communities.\(^8^3\)

Mizuko Ito and Melissa Avdeeff have observed the ways in which young adults use social media daily and how that social media affects the way they interact with people and music, respectively. As a cultural anthropologist, Ito led a collaboration to examine changes in media by young adults in *Hanging Out, Messing Around, And Geeking Out: Kids Living and Learning with New Media*.\(^8^4\) The authors recognized the gap in both young adult and media literature; studies either focus on technological trends or “specific young adult populations and practices,” rather than a combination of the


\(^{8^3}\) I have mentioned the use of comedians and other artists from within the community who were hired or recruited from the musical organization to contribute with real-time commenting, but I will not examine these users in any detail. My focus is to observe how audience members, who volunteer or are passing by online, interact, react, and experience music through social media.

two.\(^85\) Ito’s commentary has allowed me to similarly observe that there is a lack of literature on how music organizations use social media (the technological trend) to engage with young adult audiences and their online interactions (a specific population and their online behaviors). Melissa Avdeeff’s article, “Young People’s Musical Engagement and Technologies of Taste,” reports on an empirical study of how young adults use social media applications “to [redefine] their musical tastes” through everyday use.\(^86\) The music portion of the study only generally discusses how young adults use mobile technologies (iPods and smartphones) to relate to others and share their interests in a social situation, but does not consider the online interactions of young adult users for classical music. Nonetheless this work can inform scholars about the ways in which mobile media can engage young adults.

There are several ethnographies that focus on the issue of the “liveness” of media performances and online platforms that support live-streamed events. In *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*, Philip Auslander, a researcher of performance who focuses on music, media, and technology, questions the role of live performance in a culture that is changing the meaning of authenticity due to the impact of mass media.\(^87\) According to Auslander, “theatre and the mass media are rivals, not partners.”\(^88\) Information is transmitted to viewers through various mediums (television, computers, mobile phones, CDs, etc.), and due to the high amount of mediatization, companies that

\(^{85}\) Ibid., 4.


\(^{88}\) Ibid., 1.
thrive on live performances are competing to replicate mediatized forms. Auslander’s case study of rock music observes how it has circulated through multiple means of technological reproduction (i.e. television and recordings), further shaping the experience for rock listeners as a “reproduction of the real.” An ethnography that serves as a closer model for examining liveness in an online live-streamed concert is Trevor Harvey’s consideration of Second Life, “Virtual Worlds: An Ethnomusicological Perspective.” Harvey provides an ethnography of the social and musical experiences of online users through observation, interviews, and interacting in the virtual world. The sense of immediacy and presence for participants there also play a role in creating a perception of liveness. In Second Life, users in the guise of an online avatar can experience live concerts instantly from a computer. The immediacy of live music from a distant place that is mediated through online access can still reconstruct the experience of a live performance. Like users in Tweet Seats and Facebook Live, the avatars on Second Life participate in real-time by “[dancing, singing, and conversing,] mirroring ‘real-world’ music-oriented sociality” through human or animal-like virtual personas. Although Second Life has the advantage of translating the online presence of the user through a virtual avatar, Twitter and Facebook messages, hashtags, and emojis can be similarly expressive of the musical and social experience of a live performance. In the context of

89 Ibid., 7.
90 Ibid., 3, 5.
91 Second Life is a free online site that was launched in 2003 and features self-made avatars in a virtual world.
93 Ibid., 378.
94 Ibid., 379.
my project, the act of “presence,” or online visibility, not only translates through online experiences, but in real life, during or after a performance as well. An online user’s online visibility is usually created through the act of actively interacting with other online users (via tweets or comments) as well as their number of followers. Some notable live-tweeters, for example, may be recognizable in person by other online users because of their large following on Twitter.\textsuperscript{95} Observation of audiences’ online and offline presences can inform how both situations mediate the way the viewer experiences interactions, both as a listener to music and a reader of comments post-performance. The issue of space is another factor to consider: how public music space transforms into public media space. According to Chris Berry et al., the public space of a concert hall turns into a private, domesticated space when media is introduced at home.\textsuperscript{96}

A closer look at online users’ engagement with music in a digital world can further illuminate the context of their everyday listening experiences. Raphaël Nowak observed how digital technology provided insights into the role of music shaping people’s narrative of their everyday lives. Nowak conducted several year-long interviews in 2010-2011 with twenty-three people to determine how they interacted with music and had follow-up interviews in 2014. Their use of music occurred in various contexts, such

\textsuperscript{95} Stephanie, Boston Lyric Opera, conducted November 12, 2017. This live-tweeter had followers who wanted to meet her in person during intermission or after Tweet Seats.

as at work, at a bar, and at home. Nowak’s study demonstrated that technology does not replace, but rather, “diversified the way individuals consume music.”

Drawing on sociology of music studies, Nowak discusses the positive standpoint of music as primarily a “form of leisure in everyday life,” and that what music people consume plays a part in how they “construct their self-identities.” Nowak’s interviews also reveal that music practices in everyday life are more complex than solely for leisure or representing someone’s self-identity. Rather than using the terms ‘self-identity’ and ‘meaning’, he shifts the syntax of the words to “narrative” and “role,” respectively, because music can be part of a structured life (i.e., at work, while studying, doing chores) and can also cause negative effects. The narrative of someone’s musical experience provides a “snapshot of their musical taste” and how music accompanies their daily lives within a certain window of time. Nowak’s findings also showed that as people mature, what they listen to and why they listen to it, also changes, which helps “[shape] their stories.”

A small section of his study that benefits my research is about the collective listening of audience members at a concert, demonstrating that a shared experience can lead to bonding between listeners. By “[drawing] on their commonality to share their cultural tastes,” this act also “[enriches] their repertoire of music preferences;” it can bring two strangers together “to share their experiences, stories, and interpretations of the band’s music.”

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98 Ibid., 131.
99 Ibid., 68.
100 Ibid., 127.
101 Ibid., 134.
102 Ibid., 92-93.
From the follow-up interviews, Nowak noticed that over time, people’s tastes changed and varied, so they may tend to associate specific music with that period of time in their lives, or “transitions.” Additionally, there is music that “mediates memories” such as when an office worker has a playlist that they played while working at a particular job. When that person revisits the playlist, it is a re-creation of their past memories associated with that music and time period in their life. Nowak provides insight into how to examine and qualify interviews, especially as a narrative, the role of music in people’s lives, and music representing a transition in life.

The integration of technology in concert halls has also changed the way people experience concert attendance, musically and socially. Studies of social media at live performances explore how they have become an extension of the concertgoing experience, an activity which involves collective communities and music fandom; the studies ultimately provide “fresh insight into what it means to be an audience member.” Lucy Bennett’s ethnography of Tori Amos fans live-tweeting at a concert provides a prime example of what music fandom and mobile technology can demonstrate to researchers wanting to understand the “audience’s engagement within the live listening process.” Through surveys and interviews, Bennett’s case study shows that texting and tweeting during live concerts promote inclusivity to non-physical attendees by allowing

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103 Ibid., 135-136.
104 Ibid., 145.
them to live vicariously through attending audience members. Audience members tweet what is happening at the concert, the setlist, and portions of the concert through recorded video so that fans at home can relive the concert at home; in this way, both “physically and non-physically present fans [are] together ‘in the moment’.”\textsuperscript{107} Although live-tweeting during a concert can enhance the social experience, there is also tension surrounding “‘flow’ with regard to the audience’s musical engagement, especially concerning the use of technological devices.”\textsuperscript{108} In contributing to the fan community, some respondents felt a conflict between whether to provide content for the non-physical attending fans or to enjoy an “undisrupted engagement” of the concert themselves.\textsuperscript{109} Fans helping other fans by providing information about the live performance is especially important to the Amos fan community because no two concerts have the same setlist, so other studies with events with fixed setlists may reveal different reactions.

Stephanie Pitts responds to Bennett’s study by providing an overview of how an ethnography of live-tweeting would be beneficial at classical music concerts.\textsuperscript{110} Pitts observed that classical music venues should borrow the model of “fostering a communal and inclusive spirit within the community” and recognize “that informal communication between audience members is a potentially valuable and under-utilized practice in concert hall settings.”\textsuperscript{111} According to Pitts, it would be valuable to better understand how “the ways in which new modes of interaction are exposing the challenges and

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{107} Ibid., 98.
\bibitem{108} Ibid., 90.
\bibitem{109} Ibid., 92.
\bibitem{110} Pitts, “Social and Online Experiences: Shaping Live Listening Expectations in Classical Music,” 60.
\bibitem{111} Ibid., 66.
\end{thebibliography}
pleasures of live classical music listening.” Like Bennett and Pitts’ approaches and taking into account their suggestions for further research on classical music and social media use, my study examines the audience experience, the role of music fandom, and what tensions there are while live-tweeting on Twitter and real-time commenting on Facebook Live. By considering the idea of “liveness,” which encompasses mediation, immediacy, presence (online and offline), and space, my case studies of how audiences engage with social media during live performances reveals qualitative facets of the users’ motivations, interactions, and musical and social experiences during a classical music concert on social media.

**Significance of the Project**

The case studies of users of Twitter and Facebook Live I have conducted allow us to better understand how audiences experience concert attendance through social media engagement during live performances. The music organizations using Twitter include the Los Angeles Opera and San Francisco Opera, which have been using a Tweet Seats program since 2012, and the Boston Lyric Opera, which recently adopted the program in 2016. The Detroit Symphony Orchestra has been using Facebook Live since 2015 and has continuously chosen particular concerts, publicized on its performance calendar, to be livestreamed.

I modeled my methodology on that of Bennett’s study, which was also based on interviews conducted with concertgoers using Twitter to connect with fans present at an event; for my addition of Facebook Live users, I included fans at home during a live performance. Bennett’s methodology of providing what happened before, during, and

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112 Ibid., 67.
after the concert helps paint the picture of the audience’s experience via social media. My sample number was reduced to a smaller scale, however, because I focused on only four music ensembles. I relied on four livestreamed concerts on Facebook Live and three Tweet Seats programs to contact potential interviewees. The twenty-two interviews that resulted provide discussion of what audience engagement and concert-going experience with social media is like.

While attending livestreamed concerts on Facebook Live and observing live-tweets, I collected comments and reactions from the users from Twitter and Facebook, looking for potential returning users and/or those who stood out from others through their online social interactions to interview for a better understanding of their experiences. The interview questions (see Appendices G and H) served as a guiding overall structure for me, while still allowing for the user to have the freedom to go in other interesting directions during our conversation. Through multiple interviews via Skype, Gchat phone calls, and online chatting, I have asked questions about how social media affects an audience member’s experience of classical music. I spoke with repeat users about how they became involved in the Tweet Seats program or Facebook livestreams, their reasons for returning, and about their overall musical and social experience. I also had a brief interview with two personnel from the Detroit Symphony Orchestra in charge of Facebook Live to understand how integrating the platform into their offerings has affected audience recruitment and retention from the administrative side (see Appendix H).

This dissertation examines changing attitudes toward concert attendance and the values surrounding the concert experience during a time in which social media and
liveness are a major cultural phenomenon. Through observation of online interactions of audience members’ opera and symphony orchestra social media engagement, this study endeavors to better understand how technology has changed the culture of classical music concert attendance. There has been a concerted attempt to reach out to the surrounding communities of the respective concert venues in which classical ensembles perform through social media platforms in order to attract young adults to replace the aging audience. My interviews with online users who are actively participating in Tweet Seats and Facebook Live illuminate their motivations for participating and demonstrate how the online interactions of social media shape their musical and social experiences. My study has revealed that the social experience, whether within an existing community or one created through social media, is a major theme for participants of both platforms. Overall, the integration of social media in the concert hall can change the experience of classical music attendance for these users, thus, affecting the role of music within a personal narrative.
CHAPTER 2: TWITTER AND TWEET SEATS

The presumed goal of the Tweet Seats program is to promote the opera, its venue, and musicians, and most importantly, to get younger audiences through the doors. Yet, many participants admit that they are unsure of the true expected outcome of the program because they do not have access to its results. Beyond the surface level of tweets available in the Twitterverse, what my interviews reveal is that live-tweeting is a new and interesting experience that generates real-time reactions and conversations that create a collective experience. In Pitts and Burland’s *Coughing and Clapping: Investigating Audience Experience*, the acts of coughing and clapping are observed as an “attractive way to comment on the music, to participate in the performance, to show your existence in the concert and to break…concert etiquette.”¹¹³ Live-tweeting adds another level to coughing and clapping in the concert hall by making individual audience members’ presence known not only there, but also among other users through online engagement. Through conversations with concert-goers of various ages and with different career paths, Tweet Seaters from the Bay Area to the East Coast have similarly experienced a classical music fandom culture, become engaged and benefitted through various means of incentives, and multi-tasked in a live environment of real-time reactions.

Establishing Tweet Seats

A Tweet Seats program is established by designating a few hashtags to have followers see Tweet Seaters’ reactions and have the moderator indicate, mostly for followers who are not in attendance, when the final dress rehearsal starts, when

¹¹³ Pitts and Burland, 2.
intermission begins and ends, and when the final curtain call occurs. Although one purpose of a formal Twitter program may be to recruit young professionals as audience members, my research suggests that Tweet Seaters are at various stages in their lives. The Pew Research Center’s 2018 study on the demographics of social media use states that Twitter users are still young; 45 per cent of users are between 18 and 24 years old.\textsuperscript{114} However, this young demographic is increasingly migrating to Instagram and Snapchat, which focus more on photos and short videos that occur in the moment, while older users in the 25-29, 30-49, and 50 and above age brackets make up the reminder of the percentage of Twitter users.\textsuperscript{115} Thus, in my pool the age of interviewees vary from early twenties to fifties, and some users have met others in their sixties.

Depending on the opera company, the moderator may set up a core group of Tweet Seaters, numbering as few as five to ten or as many as thirty to forty per event. The number of Tweet Seaters can be an advantage or disadvantage. A smaller core group can be easier to manage and can allow the moderator to determine who is allowed to return in order to maintain high quality content through repeat users. However, a limited number of tweeters creates fewer personalities per group in the program, in comparison to a bigger pool at other organizations, making them easier to locate and follow. A larger number of Tweet Seaters increases the likelihood of having both return users and new ones simultaneously. Moderators can invite returning Tweeters to bring a “plus-one” tweeter or to recommend other users at no cost, generating more tweets per user.

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid.
exponentially. Both sizes of pools considered in this study typically contained a variety of users, including both those for which it was the first time they were viewing opera and those who were veterans of classical music.

**Methodology**

The three opera companies considered have all hosted Tweet Seats during the past five years: Boston Lyric Opera (BLO), Los Angeles Opera (LAO), and San Francisco Opera (SFO). These organizations were chosen for their continuing use of the program and available online tweets. Many of the core users were returning Tweet Seaters, making it easier to determine who the repeat users were and invite them for an interview. I tracked the core users by taking full-page screen captures of the tweets associated with a featured opera and noting the reappearance of usernames associated with two to four operas per season. During recruitment, invitations to prospective participants were sent to all Tweet Seaters to yield as many possible interviews as possible, as there was no guarantee that anyone would voluntarily agree to an hour-long conversation. I quickly found out that simply copying and pasting the recruitment script from the IRB template was not successful in catching the attention of tweeters. I had to revise my recruitment strategy from a standardized template to a more 140-character tweet-friendly greeting and query to speak about the participant’s listening and viewing experience as a Tweet Seater. Although I was able to set-up a few interviews via the email method, I saw a marked difference in responses to the tweeted conversational approach. After getting the person’s attention, we would add each other on Twitter in order to further discuss the details of the study through direct message, private messaging, or email: the exchange of the official recruitment materials, providing the exemption form outlining the expectations and
duration of the study, and answering any other questions or concerns before agreeing on a date and time to video chat for around an hour. The interviews were held between late September through mid-December of 2017. Forty people were invited: nine agreed to participate through video chat (Skype or Gchat) and two emailed their responses due to time constraints. Most interviews lasted between forty-five minutes to an hour, while some were shorter, about twenty minutes, and others have gone on as long as an hour and a half, depending on how detailed the participant’s comments were or how many specific examples of their experiences they were willing to share.

The Boston Lyric Opera is one of the newer organizations to integrate Tweet Seats into their marketing; the program began in the fall of 2016. Both the Los Angeles Opera and San Francisco Operas have had longer histories; tweets associated with their programs reach as far back as 2012. In addition to location, what differentiates the organizations from one another is closely linked to their demographics. The BLO is the only major opera house in Massachusetts and the extended region, while the Metropolitan Opera is the only other major opera house nearby over four hours away. Although California has two major opera houses within the state, LAO and SFO are still some six-and-a-half hours away from each other. The city of Boston features a younger population; the median age is 31.6 years and about 85 percent of residents within the area have at least a high school diploma or higher.\(^\text{116}\) With an older age range, the cities of Los

Angeles and San Francisco have median ages of 35.9 years$^{117}$ and 38.5 years,$^{118}$ respectively.$^{119}$ Thus, recruiting young professionals between 20 to 40 years of age is a logical approach to reaching the regions’ demographics, as they are an age group opera companies aim to engage.

In comparing the organizations’ programming, the BLO has performed a larger range of opera productions and is more likely to produce newer American works. Whenever there is an American premiere, however, Tweet Seats are usually not offered, mostly due to a desire to not spoil the novelty by revealing in advance the specifics of what the opera is about. Recently, the number of applicants and plus-one guests increased to about forty live-tweeters at four final dress rehearsals per season.

The LAO and SFO have remained more conservative in their programming, offering canonic works by well-known composers, such as Mozart, Bizet, and Verdi. Both California opera houses limit the Tweet Seats program number to a core group of five to ten Twitter users, and only two final dress rehearsals are open each season for the program. Previous Tweet Seats productions consisted of four dress rehearsals per season. One aspect that is consistent among all three operatic organizations is that moderators tend to choose two to four operas per season for Tweets Seats that are considered “crowd

$^{119}$ The California Community Surveys for Los Angeles and San Francisco did not provide information about the highest education degree achieved like Boston did.
pleasers,” operas about which many audience members would have previous knowledge and which have historically been the most popular, such as Mozart’s *The Marriage of Figaro*, Bizet’s *Carmen*, and Puccini’s *Tosca*. As some of the productions are repeated each season, Tweet Seaters admit that they get tired of seeing the same works, but modern stagings, or new, featured soloists help maintain their interest in repeated operas.

**Encountering Tweet Seats**

For the program’s administrators, a significant characteristic of the Tweet Seats program is to outsource publicity to live-tweeters who are interested in the arts. Advertisements are used to recruit Twitter users and those who would like to tweet during a final dress rehearsal in exchange for a free ticket are chosen through an application process (see Figure 4).
San Francisco Opera is looking for Tweeters to attend the final dress rehearsal of La Bohème on Wednesday, June 7 at 6pm and tweet through the entire performance.

We want your authentic opinions and thoughts, and perhaps even a scene-by-scene recap of the onstage action. In other words, we’ll give you an opera ticket in exchange for your stellar social media skills!

Figure 4. San Francisco Opera: La Bohème Tweet Seats online application.¹²⁰

Posted about a month before the deadline, the advertisement calls for “socially savvy tweeters” with an interest in the arts. Keeping the potential pool of applicants somewhat broad by inviting tweeters with “stellar social media skills,” the advertisement also offers applicants to invite friends as a free plus-one. What potential applicants might not know is that once the questionnaire is submitted, the moderators have to email an official invitation to allow them admittance to the Tweet Seats event. Although one would assume that applicants would need a large following on Twitter to be considered, the apparent goal is to get 20 to mid-30-year-olds to try opera through this free program.121

Many interviewees expressed that the “success” of the program was due to how the moderator set the tone for the live-tweeting experience. Both the original moderators for the LAO and BLO have backgrounds in marketing and communication and are described as friendly and approachable. Their passionate personalities influenced their management of the Tweet Seats program. LAO’s moderator was lauded for her contagious enthusiasm; because she was relatable and helpful during the live-tweeting process, she seemed to diffuse some of the elitism that is often associated with opera, sharing her excitement through interesting facts about the production that the general audience would never hear. As Ariel stated,

121 Arriana, Boston Lyric Opera, conducted September 23, 2017; Evelyn, Boston Lyric Opera, conducted October 27, 2017; Ariel, Los Angeles Opera, conducted September 21, 2017.
...I think [she] was a big part of it because she was so enthusiastic, you know, so she made it seem like it...[wasn’t] like this stodgy old thing, she was super cool with it [leading the program]...she was very encouraging, gave us some quick tips, and was there the whole time, she’d be able to point out things in the production like, “we only just got this in this morning, they almost didn’t get it in time,” you know, like all these little tidbits from behind the scenes. Or generally, it’s like cool things, right? You know, “this costume took ten million hours to make!” So that was really, I think, important.122

Through this example, one can observe that there was some “planting” of information that the moderator may have wanted the Tweet Seater to tweet about, but the extra “insider” information added to this user’s overall experience. Other ways that both LAO and BLO moderators prepared their participants was by producing informational sheets of the Twitter handles of the other users, cast members, and production crew for them upon arrival. Having this information prior to the dress rehearsal gave Tweet Seaters time to add the cast and crew, enabling a smoother tweeting experience if someone wanted to make comments about the set design, lighting, or the performers.

Analysis

Six major themes arose from my conversations with Tweet Seaters that highlighted an existing community of classical music listeners. Interviews revealed their ideas about the qualities of attending a live performance, or its “liveness,” which include the social experience and a sense of live-tweeting among a community who share similar listening interests. Their sense of their own place in classical music fandom is another major theme that was expressed in some way by all interviewees, who have varying degrees of interest in classical music according to their prior knowledge and experience of it. In addition, due to the integration of Tweet Seats programs at several opera

122 Ariel, Los Angeles Opera, conducted September 21, 2017.
companies, participants have noted the change in traditional concert etiquette, affecting their overall opera experience. Not only is a free ticket the main incentive for interviewees at various life stages to go to the opera, but live-tweeting is another way to challenge the elitism that is often associated with opera attendance, to open the doors for users to engage among themselves. Overall, Tweet Seats change the entire operatic experience for these pre-selected interviewees. As will be evident, these themes are not specific to every Tweet Seater’s experience, but the eleven participants, ranging from 24 to 50 years old and with different music backgrounds and occupations, present a general snapshot of what they experienced.

“Liveness”

The attractions of attending a live performance are both musical and social. Drawing on several scholars’ studies conducted between 2003 and 2010 in order to understand what motivated audiences to attend classical and jazz concerts, Pitts categorized the attendees as “like-minded” listeners due to their similar audience behaviors.

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.123

According to Pitts, regardless of the genre, the act of going to a concert alone or with someone opens an audience member to an even larger social group, allowing for

socializing among like-minded people, an important factor in the generation of concert attendance.

[There] 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 social interactions surrounding live music listening…

Through attending a live classical music performance, audience members encounter many real-time qualities that someone listening at home cannot. For traditional concertgoers, listening restrains attendees to conform to concert etiquette, which does not allow them to talk or clap between movements. However, live-tweeting allows selected attendees to tweet throughout a live performance and makes tweeting a permissible activity in the concert hall. The ability to witness real-time reactions and take part in the conversation made live-tweeting fun and exciting for the participants. Much like recordings and broadcasts being “reproductions” yet still related to “the real” for rock listeners in Auslander’s study, live-tweeting not only documents what happens during a live performance, but also reconstruct the feeling of “being there” with a flow of tweets that happen within the moment. This real-time engagement can create the excitement at the time, which is only possible if one is physically present. Generally, Carla believed that the act of live-tweeting was one way to capture her experiences. Although a connoisseur of classical music, Carla got caught up with the multi-tasking of live-tweeting and got some voice types confused the first time. Rather than worry about getting the facts correct, as a Tweet Seater it was more important to attract new audiences.

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124 Ibid., 21.
125 Auslander, 5.
126 Carla, San Francisco Opera, conducted October 20, 2017.
through being engaged at the dress rehearsal: “because you’re trying to reach a new audience, and as long as you got the excitement of what’s going on, you’ve gotten the general gist of what’s happening.”  

Even though Auslander states that the mass media is able to transmit the authenticity of a performance via television and recordings, especially in regard to reconstructing a live performance, Tweet Seats allows followers to understand how the experience is distinct for that user. As users have stated in their interviews, their followers instantaneously receive their reactions and get personal opinions and recommendations to go to the opera or to hear a specific performer.

A major benefit to live-tweeting for many participants was that they considered their involvement to be a learning experience about opera and about how other people interpret opera differently from themselves. In Nowak’s study about the role of music transmitted through digital technology in people’s everyday lives, he observed that collective listening at a live concert has the “potential to make people ‘flourish together’” which is linked to the social and communal aspects that many Tweet Seaters experienced. The sense of “flourishing together,” is when audiences react to and with each other at live concerts; for example, at popular music events attendees are singing along with the performer/s, mosh pitting, waving their hands or phones lit up in the air. One way the live-tweeters for opera “flourished together” through collective listening was interacting with knowledgeable participants and engaging with and learning from each other’s tweets. Ariel from LAO admitted that she had limited knowledge of the

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127 Ibid.  
128 Auslander, 7.  
129 Carla, San Francisco Opera, conducted October 20, 2017; Stephanie, Boston Lyric Opera, conducted November 12, 2017.  
130 Nowak, 91-92.
music terms and was unable to describe what she was experiencing in as detailed a fashion as her cohort. She compared live-tweeting classical music to sharing with connoisseurs who would be able to describe more of its subtleties. Rather than feeling intimidated, Ariel took this opportunity to educate herself about the aspects of the opera she could not fully express on her own, and then jumped in to reply to other Tweet Seaters.

I would learn a lot from them and be able to pay attention to the nuances that they would bring up that I would have missed. It was almost like doing a wine tasting: this wine is red, yes, this one is a tannin, right? That’s all I’m gonna get from it, this was red, and it tastes like red. Or, with a fancy wine person, they’ll be, “oh, yeah, it’s like, blackberries,” and I’ll be like, “you’re right!” It was like giving me another angle to look at it… I loved that because I was learning about it and I was able to appreciate it.131

Bonding with the other Tweet Seaters also occurred outside of the program. Invitations were sent to available users to pre- or post-opera social events allowing them to mingle with their cohort. Arriana particularly enjoyed the opportunity to put faces to Twitter handles and meet local opera fans at these receptions in order to take classical music conversations a little further.

So, it’s cool to kind of make these connections with people in the Boston area and in the New England area, in general, and just find people who are like-minded. And the fact that they like classical music, they appreciate opera, and they’re not just, I don’t know—I mean I’m not saying like popular music is not great, but it’s—it’s nice to kind of find people who still appreciate classical music at the same level that I’ve always appreciated it, instead of being, like, “oh yeah, that’s fun to listen to sometimes.” And that kind of be the end of the conversation, and you’re like, “ok.”132

Since many of the core Tweet Seaters were return users, a group of regulars would naturally form and provide camaraderie; thus, it was easy to ask for help or clarification

131 Ariel, Los Angeles Opera, conducted September 21, 2017.
132 Arriana, Boston Lyric Opera, conducted September 23, 2017.
as to what was happening. Brie relied on the more knowledgeable LAO Tweet Seaters in her group to guide her through some essential opera knowledge. At the end of the day, she felt that everyone left the program knowing more about opera than when they came into it.

…and then also leaning on some of the people that actually did know more, right? So, like [Connor] knows a lot. [He would say,] “well here’s what this means or here’s what that means or here’s why this is important.” So, it was good to have a couple of people in our group that actually knew what was going on and kinda understand that.¹³³

The act of being in the live-tweeting program helped Brie act on her limited knowledge and be active in learning more about opera. Undoubtedly, having friendly, approachable groups and moderators certainly aids in establishing an environment for users to flourish among others.

As part of their continuing learning experience, participants like to rely on repeat attendance as preparation for their “layered learning” of the opera. After understanding the opera through a dress rehearsal, Tweet Seaters like Carla go to a full production of the same opera with a full-priced ticket to fully engage in the entire spectacle. Carla will invest time in studying the opera beforehand, seeing multiple iterations of the same production to the point where she can enjoy the performance without becoming confused by the plot.

¹³³ Brie, Los Angeles Opera, conducted October 2, 2017.
I would say, though, obviously, if I’ve seen a production once and I go back and see it again then I have another layer of how I experience that performance than when I experience it as an audience member, and I’m somebody who will see more than one show in a run if it’s a show I like, and for me, that’s a layered progression of understanding the work, being connected to the work, you know, getting past the point where I’m reading every subtitle, I’m trying to you know understand what’s on stage, to getting to the point where I already know what’s happening, I don’t need the subtitles, I can just let the music come through, I can pay attention to the performers. So, there’s that [deepened understanding] each time I see the show. If I’m doing a Tweet Seats first, then that process starts earlier.  

Depending on what opera is produced, fans like Brie plan ahead to save money to go to a full-production long before a Tweet Seats event is announced, if at all. Like Carla, who embraced a multi-faceted experience, Brie would not turn down a multiple view of the same performance.

So, I bought tickets [for Grant’s *Mr. Burke & Mr. Hare*], but now they are doing Tweet Seats for it, so I think I’m gonna do it for Tweet Seats, which is really cool! I do remember writing in the application saying like, “hey, I do have tickets for the original production.” So, if they want to give it to someone else, just give it to someone else, but I wouldn’t mind seeing it twice!  

** Outsourcing Live-tweeters and for Personal Commentary **

Opera companies have outsourced their promotional strategies by recruiting live-tweeters for their marketing through the trade-off of a free ticket in exchange for social media publicity with the ultimate goal of helping the hosting company with economic gains. According to Stephen Preece and Jennifer Johnson, the arts are a “difficult brand” to market because of “constrained availability” or the “gaps in time between performance

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134 Carla, San Francisco Opera, conducted October 20, 2017.  
135 Brie, Boston Lyric Opera, conducted October 2, 2017.
offerings,” and the risk of no guarantee of a good time, or “uncertain outcomes.”

Outsourcing live-tweeters shortens the waiting between performances, filling the night before the opening performance and allowing interested participants to invest in a future ticket, as well as showing Twitter followers whether the production is worth seeing.

According to H. Cecilia Suhr, by seeking out online users willing to provide “free” labor, this type of marketing through audience participation can “[help] to increase the renown and popularity of many musicians,” or, in this case, music ensembles. From their personal narratives transmitted on social media, other live-tweeters and future audiences can get a glimpse of what the operatic experience is like.

The creation of personal experiences shared between live-tweeters and described via online engagement cannot arise from nothing. Moderators, at least initially, have sought out online users with some classical music knowledge during the application process. However, a few members of the interview pool admitted that they were solicited for the program by the moderator for a variety of reasons and did not go through the formal application process. Emily said that she was already going as a plus-one with a friend who was part of the program, and Ariel had already been live-tweeting for a year while her friend was rehearsing in the Young Artist’s program before getting interested in Tweet Seats by responding to a tweet from the moderator.

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138 Emily, Boston Lyric Opera, conducted October 25, 2017.
139 Ariel, Los Angeles Opera, conducted September 21, 2017.
The director of social media at LA Opera posted a thing on the LA Opera Twitter feed, “Hey, we’re looking for applications to Tweet Seats,” and I was, like, “Me! Me! Me! Choose me!” and she [said], “I see you, oh my god, chill. Okay, you’re in!”

Some evidence of the success of the program is that the majority of the Tweet Seaters who had a history of attending classical music performances on their own became return users. Connor had been a Tweet Seater for three years, Ariel for two years, Brie for around four years, and Carla for the past three years. Many interviewees said that they would attend the program alone, because “there’s nothing more uncomfortable than dragging a bored or sleepy spouse or boyfriend along to a concert,” and they just enjoyed watching the performance on their own. Those living about an hour away from the venue, like Arriana, invite the friend/s she stayed with overnight to join as her plus-one. The more extroverted attendees, such as Stephanie, already had a core group of Twitter friends to meet at the venue and tweet with; Stephanie even had Twitter followers contact her in order to meet during intermission. Others were like Connor, who brought a family member or friend interested in trying out opera, or friends who were professional musicians.

One outsourcing strategy opera groups have utilized to initiate engagement outside dress rehearsals is through public events. As organizations have “[recognized] the importance of the social context,” music ensembles have been offering pre- and post-concert events in conjunction with social media “to offer a more cost-effective means of

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140 Ibid.
142 Arriana, Boston Lyric Opera, conducted September 23, 2017.
143 Stephanie, Boston Lyric Opera, conducted November 12, 2017.
144 Connor, Los Angeles Opera, conducted September 14, 2017.
cultivating and enhancing small world interaction.” Brie and the rest of the LAO group were also invited to extra events to live-tweet. The first live-tweeting event outside of the dress rehearsal occurred at a press event in tandem with her first Tweet Seats for Simón Boccanegra, before which Plácido Domingo gave a pre-show lecture. This excited Brie about the program right from the beginning:

…we even went to a press event where we got to see [Plácido Domingo] talking about it, it was really cool. So that first performance was cool because that was, despite the choice of the opera itself, it was really traditional, right? Like traditional costumes, very ornate you know, [it] had someone obviously very famous in it, and then so that was kind of a cool thing to start with.\(^{146}\)

The ability to live-tweet at multiple events outside of the program not only has helped to engage in the opera with additional activities prior to the performance, but also expands and enriches their opera attending experience with the opportunity to enjoy different facets.

**A Classical Music Community**

At least for these interviewees, the Tweet Seats experience also provides shared experiences among users with previous classical music exposure, further strengthening an existing community. According to Preece and Johnson, in marketing terms,

> When consumers perceive intense affinity not only with the brand but also with other consumers of the brand, the shared consumption experiences either reinforce existing relationships—maintaining “strong ties” within personal networks—or become the foundation for the formation of new interpersonal relationships, friendships and social communities.\(^{147}\)

Many of the return users are classical music fans who engaged with each other based on their common listening background, which helped shape the community atmosphere

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145 Preece and Johnson, 23.
146 Brie, Los Angeles Opera, conducted October 2, 2017.
147 Preece and Johnson, 22.
created through Tweet Seats. According to Bennett’s study, “Within music fandom, live concerts have been determined as constituting a ‘powerful meeting place’ where individuals come together to ‘enact the meaning of fandom’.” Social media use at concerts has made it easier for audience members to “find and connect with each other,” and share what is going on with immediate fans and “non-attendees around the world” enabling them “to feel part of the event.” Through live-tweeting, participants construct the community of classical music fandom by promoting a “group experience of the concert” and commitment to each other as fans of classical music. For example, without live-tweeting at SFO, Carla would never have made so many personal and professional connections at once. Taking her live-tweeting experiences further, she also established a broader relationship with the opera audience community at large by engaging with the other Tweet Seaters from the BLO. With two cities on opposite coasts that incorporated live-tweeting opera, Tweet Seats was also an opportunity to link the two organizations on a macro level. Carla states,

…I think it helps make the broader opera community to feel more connected. I know when Boston is doing their Tweet Seats and I’ll sometimes go through and I’ll respond to some of their tweets, to also kind of expand that conversation, so there’s a broader network that’s happened because of Tweet Seats. And in some ways opera isn’t just about what’s happening in your city, opera is about what’s happening in another house that also does Tweet Seats, because it’s created that sense of connection.  

Because of the program, several participants have remained in touch or have gone beyond interacting with each other only during Tweet Seats. The participants from

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148 Bennett, 90.
149 Ibid.
150 Ibid., 97.
151 Carla, San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, conducted October 20, 2017.
LAO have kept in contact with each other after the breakdown of the first core group that live-tweeted five years ago. I was able to interview several original group members of the LAO Tweet Seaters through Connor’s connections because he was still friends with them. For Connor, the original community was a major component of his experience, and it just made the whole experience more fun.\textsuperscript{152} Nowak examined that shared experiences can lead to bonding between listeners at a concert: by “[drawing] on their commonality to share their cultural tastes” this act also “[enriches] their repertoire of music preferences,” and can bring two strangers together “to share their experience, stories, and interpretations of the [music].”\textsuperscript{153} Evelyn had experiences similar to those of Connor. She reflected that it was enjoyable to read the inside jokes based on the opera that formed between the live-tweeters as the drama unfolded.\textsuperscript{154} Due to the variable personalities and different interests in the group, Connor felt he was able to relate with to and converse on a technical level about the music as well as joke around with others.

People started cracking jokes online, people started, like, saying the stuff that was funny, and then there was, like, then we started riffing off of each other…and that made it a lot of fun because, as it turned out, the personalities—there was a core group of us, so out of the ten that started there were maybe six or seven of us that ended up coming back…So if the people who wanted to be much more technical, I can engage with my fellow Tweet Seaters about technical stuff. If people were just being kind of tongue-in-cheek and, you know, or crass, or whatever else, or crude, whichever way it went, I could do that too, and I was happy to go both ways, and it was great!\textsuperscript{155}

Live-tweeting with a core group naturally created a sense of community because the participants physically did so together and for the same purpose: free tickets and their

\textsuperscript{152} Connor, Los Angeles Opera, conducted September 14, 2017.
\textsuperscript{153} Nowak, 92.
\textsuperscript{154} Evelyn, Boston Lyric Opera, conducted October 27, 2017.
\textsuperscript{155} Connor, Los Angeles Opera, conducted September 14, 2017.
shared interest in opera. In Mizuko Ito’s study on the online fansubbing culture of Anime,\(^{156}\) she observed that online users with similar hobbies of voluntarily contributing as a fansubber gravitate towards each other because they are “motivated by social belonging and reputation.”\(^{157}\) Even though the fansubbers work on subtitles to get a preview of the Anime and be able to give back to the community, they engage with other contributors and fans, making the process more fun.\(^{158}\) Likewise, the returning Tweet Seaters were also drawn to each other and continued to engage as classical music fans with those who were more knowledgeable. The interaction helped them feel as if they belonged in the concert hall, thus, contributing to the community aspect of the live-tweeting experience.

Classical music fans also live vicariously through each other as live-tweeters. Stephanie’s fandom goes beyond that of any other interviewee in that she plans performance attendance nationwide and abroad a full year in advance. Stephanie gets even more out of the BLO by being as involved as possible behind the scenes as a volunteer usher. Her Tweet Seating experience is both for pleasure and for socializing with other opera fans and she uses the dress rehearsal as her personal preview in deciding whether to see the production again at ticket price. Stephanie lives vicariously through

\(^{156}\) Fansubbing is the activity of providing English subtitles for Japanese anime shows (Japanese cartoons). Fansubbers subtitle for free to gain experience with the language and as a service to the anime community. The subtitled shows are posted online for the public to download and or view for free.  
\(^{158}\) Ibid., 196.
her friends’ opera experiences when she is busy ushering at a dress rehearsal and cannot make time for attending a full production.

So one of my friends, she’s away right now and other people weren’t planning on seeing the show, and I was volunteering for like the second night of the run, so I didn’t feel like going and doing live-tweets. I only wanted to spend one night at the opera. Although I would have liked to see it again now that I saw the opera and it’s over now! But it was nice that a couple of, two of the people they went, and they did the live-tweets on Monday, so the rest of the group could follow along.159

This experience is much like the fans at Tori Amos’ concerts described by Bennett, who states that the music fandom culture of posting updates about the concert help “keep non-physically present members informed and granting them the ability to follow developments of the concert as it happens, ‘live’, in front of their computers,”160 and in the case of Tweet Seats, mobile devices.

The Twitter connection between the users and the cast and crew also allowed for more in-house interactions, extending the sense of community of the audience to those involved with the production. Like television cast members live-tweeting with audiences who are watching at home,161 Tweet Seaters can have a shared experience with the opera cast who are active on Twitter. Arriana live-tweeted with a BLO singer with whom she was familiar during the dress rehearsal and felt it was another great way to become deeply involved in the moment, ultimately increasing her investment in the opera.

159 Stephanie, Boston Lyric Opera, conducted November 12, 2017.
160 Bennett, 90.
161 Kapko, “How Live Tweeting is Changing Broadcast Media.”
The thing I remember most was one of the singers I know...he was out back, backstage, tweeting back to all of us while we were tweeting, and like the show is going on on-stage, and he’s like reacting to us, and it was just such a fun way to kind of immerse yourself in the show, because he was kind of reacting in real-time to what we were saying, to what was happening on-stage, and I just found myself getting much more invested in the storyline.\textsuperscript{162}

In addition to attending a live performance and sharing her reactions, Evelyn was able to interact with the production crew, such as the set designer.

…I was just gushing over the set design, and it was just really awesome, and then that person was engaging with me, and so I got to ask her questions, and they’re really approachable, and you can tell that they really like Twitter as a platform for engagement, because I would have never interacted with them, I didn’t even call her out you know, it was just, “the set is so gorgeous!” And she was like, “oh, thanks so much!” And I looked at her bio, I was like, “oh, this person is the set designer!” So that was kind of fun, so those are ways that I’ve kind of connected with people, so I will follow them on Twitter, and then hear about other things that they’re participating in, and think about going, or trying to support those things.\textsuperscript{163}

In Evelyn’s live-tweeting experience she enjoyed the ability to both interact with and provide direct feedback to someone she would not normally get to speak with. Not only does the addition of in-house personnel help with increasing the possibility of trending, but cast members engaging with their audiences through live-tweeting during a premiere can help raise followership the same as cast members live-tweeting during TV premieres.\textsuperscript{164}

For many of the participants, the program was a way to meet new people and make professional connections that would have been nearly impossible outside of the group. As explained in Wellman and Haythornthwaite’s \textit{The Internet in Everyday Life},

\textsuperscript{162} Arriana, Boston Lyric Opera, conducted September 23, 2017.
\textsuperscript{163} Evelyn, Boston Lyric Opera, conducted October 27, 2017.
\textsuperscript{164} Kapko, “How Live Tweeting is Changing Broadcast Media.”
social networks foster online and offline relationships due to increased use.\textsuperscript{165} Performance moderators immediately implement Twitter to connect the users and cast and crew before the dress rehearsal starts, connecting both an online and offline community from the beginning of the program. Carla expressed that for those arriving to the opera hall for Tweet Seats, a “wired community” was already set-up to meet and with whom to relate. In attending \textit{Tosca} through Tweet Seats, she found that a community of opera fans was at the tip of her fingers outside of the program.

…it’s a fun social moment to have other people in the room and have a chat about opera as it’s going by, in addition to being a person responding to what’s happening on stage, but I don’t think that the real social connection happens from Tweet Seating itself, it’s more being aware of other people tweeting at the opera who are interested in the opera, and then maybe connecting with them outside the opera house, or knowing we’re all going to be at the opera house at a certain point and saying hello during intermission. It’s a broader change than just the Tweet Seats, it’s Twitter itself. It’s made it more like I’m going to the opera and I have a wired community that I’m engaging with and talking about the opera afterwards, rather than just, I’m going and seeing it, and that was nice.\textsuperscript{166}

The social component has enhanced Carla’s opportunity to connect her with other audience members.

Various live-tweeters have been influential promoters of opera to their friends and followers. Users have admitted that their friends who follow them rely on their opinions and trust that they will recommend any production that is truly worth seeing. Participants whose opinions have weight with their friends and followers tend to have a large following and were already classical music or opera fans before engaging in Tweet Seats. More importantly, individuals who try out classical music for the first time are sometimes

\textsuperscript{166} Carla, San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, conducted October 20, 2017.
influenced by the listener who already has deep a love for it. According to Pitts, one of the major reasons why prospective audience members do not go to classical music concerts is the risk of having “an unsatisfactory experience” without knowing too much about the genre.\textsuperscript{167} To reduce “risk aversion,” she suggests buying a ticket with a friend who is more familiar with the genre and venue, look for “online discussions of arts event, and organizations…to broaden that circle of virtual friends and increase booking confidence.”\textsuperscript{168} Connor, a classical music critic, is an example of this. Originally, he was not too active on Twitter, but did have an active blog and was known for his writing. He usually brought in a guest during attendance to write concert reviews when he was active in Tweet Seats. Ninety percent of the time the guest was someone who had some classical music background, was a musician, or a family member, while the rest of the time guests were someone interested in trying a classical music concert for the first time alleviated anxiety of trying something new.\textsuperscript{169} Similarly, Carla from SFO has had several friends attend a concert with her, simply because of her interest in and love for classical music: “I’ve had maybe one or two friends who have become more interested in my interest in classical music, and in that sense, they come with me to performances because of that.”\textsuperscript{170}

\textbf{Lessening Elitism through an Incentive Economy}

A major reason why many people consider participating in the Tweet Seats program is the incentive of a free ticket; not everyone can afford to pay fifty dollars or higher to attend a performance, and most performance times conflict with people’s work

\textsuperscript{167} Pitts, “Social and Online Experiences: Shaping Live Listening Expectations in Classical Music,” 68.
\textsuperscript{168} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{169} Connor, Los Angeles Opera, conducted September 14, 2017.
\textsuperscript{170} Carla, San Francisco Opera, conducted October 10, 2017.
and life schedules. The high cost that restricts access to opera only to the wealthy is one of the reasons that factor into attendance barriers. According to the census data, the median ages for Boston, Los Angeles, and San Francisco are in their thirties,\(^{171}\) which is a developmental time for those establishing themselves in their career or who are in the middle of having families, situations which reflect the lives of many of the interviewees. The program is always on a weekday in the afternoon or earlier in the evening, which may not coordinate well with school and work schedules. In addition to cost is the general presumption that classical music is only for the “elite”: those who are educated, well dressed, and well behaved. These sentiments were echoed by *American Record Guide* editor and writer Donald Vroon in 2002, who stated that “the music must be enjoyed for itself, on its own terms” and that any mass marketing of the genre “cheapens the whole experience and insults the music.”\(^{172}\) In contrast, Alex Ross, music critic for *The New Yorker*, has “advocated for [classical] music’s accessibility to a general readership.”\(^{173}\) Despite these dichotomies, today some audiences are finding their way, regardless of their musical experience, toward affordable and informal means to experience opera. For many of the participants, the incentives to live-tweet for a free opera experience and sometimes also beyond the dress rehearsal, helped lessen the cultural elitism that affects concert attendance for the targeted future audience.


demographic. Incentives that live-tweeters get to enjoy include behind-the-scenes tours, meeting the music director, and attending special events prior to opening night.

For some, Tweet Seating in order to see a well-known opera singer was more than enough to satisfy the trade-off of having to promote the opera. Being able to see Plácido Domingo perform made the decision to apply and accept the invitation to live-tweet very appealing to the LAO users; the core users either were familiar with him or knew that he was a famous opera singer whose performance they should not miss.

…because it was Plácido Domingo, I really wanted to do that one so I went in not knowing any of the songs or pieces, but [it] was also cool because Plácido Domingo doesn’t always appear in these operas for LA opera, because he’s the director so, I don’t know, it was cool being able to see him on stage because I had heard about him and everything.

Placement of the live-tweeters at dress rehearsals was also an advantage for them, because LAO participants sat closer to the director, orchestra, and tech crew.

The director and his team were, again, it was final dress, so they’re dealing with technical issues, or production issues, or music, or whatever it is. And so, we got to be kind of in the, for lack of a better description, VIP section, where, you know, they weren’t having other people just sit there, but they let us sit there so we could do Tweet Seats.

During Carla’s first experience at SFO the moderator arranged for first timers to experience a dress rehearsal from the more expensive box seat to further incentivize Tweet Seaters: “the first one, if you were a new person tweeting, they had reserved one of the box seats for their tweeters and so you had this perk of getting to sit in a box seat and tweet.” Unfortunately, according to Carla, the organization has since “dialed back” on that opportunity.

174 Brie, Los Angeles Opera, conducted October 2, 2017.
175 Connor, Los Angeles Opera, conducted September 14, 2017.
176 Carla, San Francisco Opera, conducted October 20, 2017.
Of the more experienced Tweet Seaters, a select few have been invited to do backstage live-tweets for special opening nights, have been invited by other opera groups to live-tweet, or have been offered other work opportunities. This was especially the case for seasoned classical music reviewer, Connor. Because LAO was familiar with Connor’s work, the moderator and PR director personally reached out to him with an invitation to live-tweet the opening night of Simón Boccanegra. They provided Connor with a backstage VIP pass to meet and tweet about the celebrities and activities behind-the-scenes, as well as an opportunity to meet Plácido Domingo. After Simón Boccanegra, Connor was again invited to live-tweet while shadowing LAO’s music director, James Conlon, to promote its hundredth birthday celebration for Benjamin Britten through a full day of visiting and conducting at nearby music schools, in addition to the Britten celebration’s opening night events.

The PR Director of LA Opera calls me, “Hi, I need someone to live-tweet alongside James Conlon and follow him around for the day on Britten’s Hundredth Birthday. You want to do it?” Like, abso-freakin’-lutely I want to do it! So, literally, I woke up at 6 o’clock in the morning, I asked a friend of mine to join me, and the two of us shadowed James Conlon from, like, 6:00 in the morning—7:00 in the morning until 11:00 at night, and he was a machine,…doing various performances of Britten’s works, from Elementary School, Junior High school, High school. And then later on, there was a performance of Serenade for Tenor, Horns, and Strings, and then a couple other pieces in a semi-pro setting…in a church in Los Angeles…that was kind of the pinnacle of the craziest live-tweet Tweet Seating kind of experience one could have.\footnote{177}

From those experiences, Connor was able to secure a plethora of invitations not only to live-tweet, but also to submit classical music reviews for pay in the Los Angeles region and in other metropolitan areas, such as in Chicago and New York.\footnote{178} It should be noted

\footnote{177}{Connor, Los Angeles Opera, conducted September 14, 2017.}
\footnote{178}{Ibid.}
that Connor’s experiences are not typical of other participants whose recruitment was part of audience recruitment; as a professional, his free live-tweeting for Tweet Seats led to other subcontracting marketing.

Another incentive that resonated with several Tweet Seaters was the program’s exclusivity. Although the opportunity to live-tweet is a way to open opera to a wider audience, participants had to be officially invited by the moderator. Some participants expressed that Tweet Seats is a special experience because the program consists of a limited number of people, an attitude that upholds some traits of elitism. Nonetheless, the design of the program still highlights the fact that those who cannot usually afford to go or those who are not as knowledgeable can enjoy the opportunity to experience the “perks” of an elitist culture: a select few can go to press events, meet the music director, be among celebrities at promotional and invite-only galas prior to opening night, and other behind-the-scenes events. Arriana describes,

You kind of feel like you’re a member of a secret club, because you’re over up in this corner, just on your phone, and everyone’s like, “why are they on their phones?”

An exclusive live-tweeting group also provided shared experiences for returning members. In the course of participants attending many performances together, there are bound to be tweets that are only interesting to them, thus incorporating that sense of exclusivity and improving the quality of the experience for them alone. According to Pitts and Burland’s study of audience experience, “it is the audience, through the quantity of their attendance and the quality of their response, who make each performance

179 Arriana, Boston Lyric Opera, conducted September 23, 2017.
distinctive;"\(^{180}\) however, in this case the distinctive quality is largely for only one segment of the audience. As Brie recalled, the LAO members often compared performances to previous ones for which they had tweeted, further cultivating their own community’s experience.

Because we all did a lot of performances together, you know, we could be like “oh this one’s way better than you know blank,” or, “oh man, I wish the students were more blank,” so we had a lot of common context to discuss the operas in which I think was actually good because, you know, in real life, no one really cares, like when you’re trying to talk about these things, so it kind of gave us a built-in [common experience] to talk about something, and that it was interesting, but interesting only to this specific group of people. It was very friendly, it’s not like competitive or anything.\(^{181}\)

Exclusivity also meant a VIP experience for Allie, who is a writer, blogger, and PR/social media specialist.\(^{182}\) Allie’s personal and professional purpose in Los Angeles is to experience events that are unique, since one of her main freelance writing positions is for a Los Angeles arts, culture, and lifestyle blog. Tweet Seats was something new and different for her, so she felt she had to try out the experience and share it with her followers on Twitter, Instagram, and her blog.

If it’s like everybody is doing this or everybody can pay to do this, it takes away—it’s almost like Cirque du Soleil, before you would pay for a behind the scenes thing…you had to know someone [to get in] and now anybody can buy it, so it’s no longer a VIP thing. It’s like if you can buy it and anybody can do this, what’s the point?\(^{183}\)

There was also some tension about whether some of the invited participants deserved the free ticket because their tweets did not offer more than descriptions of what was happening on stage. Both Arriana and Evelyn expressed that there was a fine line

\(^{180}\) Pitts and Burland, “Prelude,” in *Coughing and Clapping: Investigating Audience Experience*, 2.

\(^{181}\) Brie, Los Angeles Opera, conducted October 2, 2017.

\(^{182}\) Allie, Los Angeles Opera, conducted December 19, 2017.

\(^{183}\) Ibid.
between live-tweeting simply for the advantage of the free ticket and wanting to contribute to the Twitter interactions on behalf of the opera. Arriana states,

It’s hard to kind of straddle the line between, like, are you just doing it for the free ticket? Or are you doing it because you’re actually gonna contribute to the conversation? And that’s where…it’s awesome that they are making it an opportunity for someone like me who really, really wants to see these things and has something to contribute to the conversation but doesn’t always have the money for it. And then people who like maybe could afford it and don’t really have a whole lot to say, but they just kinda want a free ticket just cuz, so like, it’s a toss-up. So yes, it’s really good for those of us who actually care to say something important or say something interesting about what’s happening. But it’s a little, like, iffy for the other people who take advantage.\footnote{Arriana, Boston Lyric Opera, conducted September 23, 2017.}

Some users might protest the less content-filled tweets; however, one of the ideas attached to Tweet Seating is to get the most original reactions of someone who has never seen opera before for the first time and especially to make the opera-going experience more accessible.

Not only is quality a concern for participants but also how their tweets might be received by current and new audiences. As Pitts has noted, there has long been a struggle among “classical music organizations…balancing the desires of their loyal audience members with the need to attract new ticket sales in order to survive.”\footnote{Pitts, “Social and Online Experiences: Shaping Live Listening Expectations in Classical Music,” 68.} Wanting more both from the group and herself as a live-tweeter, Stephanie thoughtfully observed that it is challenging, especially for well-known operas such as Mozart’s \textit{Marriage of Figaro}, to post a tweet that can satisfy a variety of audiences.

So, for the \textit{Marriage of Figaro}, if you haven’t seen the show, how do you want your tweets [to be] relevant to new audiences, but then also say how is this production different from others? Because other people may have seen it.\footnote{Stephanie, Boston Lyric Opera, November 12, 2017.}
While live-tweeting, Tweet Seaters may run into the challenge of providing a high quality and well-informed tweet, while simultaneously showing their excitement in the moment.

**Anxiety and Breaking Traditional Concert Etiquette**

Live-tweeting, especially for online users unaccustomed to the practice, can cause a level of anxiety. When a Tweet Seats program has been established for the first time, there has typically been a lack of clear guidelines about what or how to tweet in order to get as many real-time reactions. There is usually a “no photo or video” policy and an overall understanding to avoid negative comments, since the purpose is to support and promote the opera company and its performers. In general, live-tweeting often caused anxiety and uncertainty, especially for first-timers. The vagueness of the expectations produced confusion about what to tweet and whether users’ online commentary was “good enough,” as many knew that other participants in their cohort were more knowledgeable about classical music. Their anxiety was heightened by having to multi-task viewing, listening, and tweeting, as well as reading and responding to others’ tweets. However, some interviewees stated that because they are Millennials, they were already used to tweeting while engaged in another tasks.\(^{187}\) After the first live-tweeting event, they “got the rhythm of things.”\(^{188}\)

Although Arriana is a classically trained vocalist and is currently a voice teacher, she still felt that there were moments of “intense” music conversations with one of her friends during BLO Tweet Seats. She explained how one of her friends who completed a

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\(^{187}\) Ariel, Los Angeles Opera, conducted September 21, 2017; Arriana, Boston Lyric Opera, conducted September 23, 2017.

\(^{188}\) Arriana, Boston Lyric Opera, conducted September 23, 2017.
degree in opera studies provide too detailed information about one of her favorite operas,

*Marrige of Figaro.*

So, he was trying to talk to me about the *Marriage of Figaro,* and I was like, “yeah, I really like this opera, and it’s one of my favorites, and I love this song!” And then he just took that and ran with it, and then he kind of lost me…[I thought,] I’m gonna just let you keep talking about this and I’m just gonna nod and pretend like I’m still with you. There’s a certain point, where I’m like, “wait, what are we talking about?” So it is nice to find people who appreciate it, but it sometimes can get a little intense conversation-wise.\(^{189}\)

Such attention to detail might be off-putting to friends or family outside of classical music circles. However, for all the participants who experienced insecurities about what they did not know, limited knowledge ultimately did not inhibit their social and musical experience. Rather, participants who felt they did not know enough were proactive about finding other ideas to contribute to the conversation. Most importantly, Arriana did not want to seem “inauthentic” or “fake it” by expanding on tweets that did not mean anything to her. In his case study on user text actions on Facebook, Volker Eisenlauer noted that there is a “dialectical relationship and discursive practice of positioning oneself and being positioned.”\(^{190}\) Eisenlauer observed that Facebook users often write in a way that demonstrates the way they want to be perceived by others by sharing “individual attributes,” which in turn, also affect the way the user sees themselves.\(^{191}\) Arriana’s tweets demonstrated to other live-tweeters that she can contribute to the conversation regarding voice types because she personally views herself as a professional vocalist.

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\(^{189}\) Ibid.


\(^{191}\) Ibid.
I tweeted about what I know, so I did talk a lot about people’s voices, it’s something I have a lot of knowledge on as a voice teacher…whereas other people were talking about the orchestra, and that’s something I don’t have as much knowledge on, because, aside from a couple years of band in high school, I really never did anything with instruments. So, I don’t have as much knowledge on that, so I think people talk about what they know, so I talked about what I know.\textsuperscript{192}

Freely sharing personal reactions online among fans and sharing content with those in separate locations is a way to “solidify and foster further a communal and inclusive spirit within the community.”\textsuperscript{193}

LAO participant Ariel also felt insecure about not having as much music knowledge as the others in her group. This caused her to think creatively about tweets that would appeal to a general audience, so she contributed reactions and information that was more general, such as the plot, aspects of production, setting, etc., and most importantly, tweets that were free of musical jargon. Having a range of music knowledge among Tweet Seaters can also lead to a mixture of live-tweeting topics that attract diverse populations.

And they [the others with more music literacy] would be like, “oh, the overture is really moving, blah, blah, blah.” And so, it made for a really interesting package, and I think as much as I felt kind of insecure about not knowing [enough music terms, etc.] a lot of the stuff and not being an expert, I think that that might have made my tweets a little bit more accessible to people. Like, everybody can understand the story, not necessarily like the specific riff in the song.\textsuperscript{194}

As Brie observed, there is a fear of not knowing what opera is all about.

According to Preece and Johnson, the attitude regarding the “uncertain outcomes” to attending a live arts performance\textsuperscript{195} can cause apprehension towards the genre. More

\textsuperscript{192} Arriana, Boston Lyric Opera, conducted September 23, 2017.
\textsuperscript{193} Bennett, 98.
\textsuperscript{194} Ariel, Los Angeles Opera, conducted September 21, 2017.
\textsuperscript{195} Preece and Johnson, 19.
often, audiences will find that they are more familiar than they realize with major repertoire because of previous cultural influences. According to Brie, she certainly knew more than she thought because of past experiences with classical music on television.

…all of the good operas have indeed been covered in popular culture extensively so you’re gonna go into it knowing a little bit, probably a little bit more than you think…it’s the stuff that everyone thinks [that’s] really cool, the stuff that you see in like the Bugs Bunny cartoon or the songs that you’ve heard before, like those are really what you’ve come for, you know? Like you just like anticipate it and when it happens you’re like, “yes!” You know? So it’s kind of like when you see it, when you look into an album, like that was good, but like you know you came because you really like that one song.\(^{196}\)

As previously mentioned, elitism is still an attendance barrier for opera. Brie grew up in a neighborhood where it was very difficult to have access to opera, primarily because it was not produced locally and secondarily because the cost of attendance was too high. But she was lucky to have access to a program during childhood that provided opera for free, and this was where her love of the genre was first cultivated. Now living in Boston, she has been able to find events like Tweet Seats that make it more accessible financially.

I was in a program in elementary school that took me to the opera once or twice a year, you know, it’s like an enrichment program for low-income kids, and it was something I found that I enjoyed. But in general, it seemed a little inaccessible [at home], and so when I moved to Boston, maybe like eight years ago…[I saw that] it’s expensive. There’s like a lot of things that were kind of preventing me from trying opera here.\(^{197}\)

In addition to overcoming a prior attendance barrier, Brie also faced classism in the concert hall. Pitts remarks that there is still sentiment among people who usually do not attend concerts and who may be “put off by an expectation of feeling out of place.

\(^{196}\) Brie, Boston Lyric Opera, conducted October 2, 2017.

\(^{197}\) Ibid.
among the ‘expensively dressed…executives’ that they…assume will form the majority of the audience.’”\textsuperscript{198} Brie remarked how seeing only an older white population at opera and Broadway shows caused her to feel excluded as she did not relate to the current demographic because she was young and non-white. However, an integrated group of Tweet Seaters has made the demographic of classical music attendees more diverse and feel more welcoming in that attendees from all walks of life live-tweet with her.

I think it’s reignited my interest in opera, so I’ll listen to things at home and that kind of stuff, like it’s a beautiful genre. Every time I go to the opera, or like I see people at the opera, even at Broadway, the demographic is just not—it’s just all like older white people, that just, like, I don’t know, I’m Mexican and so it’s just like, I really don’t identify with this population so it doesn’t really feel terribly inclusive, but I feel like the Tweet Seats base has allowed it to be a little more inclusive, because it’s on a dress rehearsal day, there’s like school groups that are there. So, it feels like a more inclusive vibe than other productions I’ve seen like on a typical night.\textsuperscript{199}

Brie’s experience demonstrates that live-tweeting at a dress rehearsal among those with similar listening interests cultivated a reassuring atmosphere and mood. Live-tweeting helps diminish the anxiety of opera attendance, especially for new audience members or for those who do not attend as frequently.

\textbf{Changing the Opera Experience}

My respondents who served as participants in the Tweet Seats program ranged from those with limited knowledge to highly knowledgeable fans of classical music. Their opinions on the value of Tweet Seats varied based on their understandings of classical music. Many participants with little to some knowledge of classical music

\textsuperscript{198} Pitts, “Musical, Social and Moral Dilemmas: Investigating Audience Motivations to Attend Concerts,” 22.
\textsuperscript{199} Brie, Boston Lyric Opera, conducted October 2, 2017.
expressed that opera is still considered “stuffy,” but as many seasoned live-tweeters have witnessed, it can become relevant for anyone who is open to giving it a chance. As a literature teacher, Ariel has taken her class to observe opera at LAO at the rehearsals that are free and open to students. She realized that through her live-tweeting experience there was not necessarily the need for a prior interest in opera, but merely a willingness to try it, to enable the cultivation of interest in the genre.

Actually, I don’t think you need to love opera, I think you would need to be open to opera because I take my students to the opera and they’re, like, “Opera? Are you realness? What?” But they’re open to it. And when they go, every single one of them comes back blown away! And, like, their written reflections on it, are just, like, “oh my god, I can’t wait to tell my mom! I can’t wait to bring a friend to this, I can’t wait until I can, you know, let this happen to my life again!” Like, so, I don’t think a love of opera is necessary, but I think it’s open-mindedness is totally necessary.200

Another educator, the voice teacher Arriana, expressed that some new opera audiences might be intimidated and discouraged by how distant the art form is to contemporary audiences. On the contrary, she believes opera is also for the young and hopes that new generations can fully embrace it.

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200 Ariel, Los Angeles Opera, conducted September 21, 2017.
And I think that that’s kind of what this Tweet Squad thing has done, is it’s shown that…all these messages in these shows that are very much so relevant to our lives now, and it’s not just something that was like just relevant way back when, but they still ring true to how we live our lives, and they still can have an effect, they can still resonate with us even now, because…I’m a Millennial, I use that term in a positive sense, like I think a lot of people see Millennials and it’s like these kind of like ditzy people who don’t have a good idea on the world sometimes, and I think what BLO is trying to do is say like, Millennials could have this interest in opera without it feeling like they’re intruding on another generation’s form of music, ‘cuz I definitely used to think opera was just for old people. That was definitely how I kind of originally used to think, but now I know it’s for everyone, because I’ve experienced it, and I’ve seen other people experience it, and I think what BLO is doing with kind of inviting the Tweet Squad to do this is: they’re showing that they are ready for the next wave of people to be interested in opera, because otherwise, we’re gonna be screwed and then there’s not gonna be a classical music scene anymore. It’s gonna die off with the generation who is holding on to it.  

Although Arriana may be the only participant to explicitly state that opera will survive, all the other participants have implicitly described ways in which newer audiences can still find something to enjoy, regardless of their amount of exposure to classical music. With increased use of mobile and online technology in everyday life, the integration of social media in concert venues can somewhat alleviate the barriers of not knowing enough to attend a live performance. The addition of Tweet Seats can be a strategy to work against the two reasons that make arts organizations difficult to promote: that of unexpected outcomes and the lack of being able to go to a concert in between performances by groups that do not offer a Tweet Seats program.

The participants who indicated having a longer history with classical music and have been engaging with it longer, either career-wise or as amateur musicians, had mixed reactions to Tweet Seats. Veterans and contemporary tweeters noticed that the program is

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201 Arriana, Boston Lyric Opera, conducted September 23, 2017.
already almost a decade old could benefit from some improvements, as the idea of solely live-tweeting is already aging or not interesting enough for them to continue. As Luke stated, “no one wants to see twenty-five tweets in a row about something they don’t know or care about.” He decided not to return, and one idea he thought would be more useful for live-tweeting would be a *sitzprobe* in which the organization would allow live-tweeting during the first tech rehearsals to provide more behind-the-scenes experience. Stephanie does not consider herself a member of the target audience, as she is already a long-time concertgoer and classical music fan. Although seeing others’ reactions is fun, she has been live-tweeting less at recent Tweet Seats events she has attended; she would rather spend the two to three hours enjoying the opera and will most likely discontinue attending the program. Connor noted a turnover in the social media personnel at the LAO and expressed it was not fun anymore because of some live-tweeting rule changes, causing him to discontinue as a Tweet Seater. Although still live-tweeters, Allie and Arriana have concerns about providing quality content tweets.

Regardless of the user’s level of music literacy and classical music background, many of the users acknowledge that Tweet Seats is a new and different way to encounter opera. The more knowledgeable live-tweeters all agreed that the experience is more interesting when there is a variety of people in the group, especially first-time opera attendees, since they might concentrate on different aspects. Like the fandom of subtitling anime, where the act of being able to give back to the anime industry, to learn from others, and to be recognized for quality work is a motivator can also be applied to the

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203 Ito, “Contributors versus Leechers,” 199.
returning Tweet Seaters. A number of interviewees, particularly the more knowledgeable ones, consistently comment that the program allows them to give to the classical music community. Connor, like many other classical music fans, devoted much of his free time to supporting the opera, all the while learning from the live-tweeters around him. His LAO experience demonstrated that live-tweeting can still be a fun social activity and can enhance an audience member’s overall experience through reading tweets by other people that reflect on different points of view.

…from a Tweet Seating standpoint, you know, it made a difference when the people I was tweeting with haven’t seen it before—because they’re reacting to certain things. Just, I think, to experience opera. You are experiencing an opera in a very different way, right? So, it’s more of a community experience…it’s more fun, it’s fun in a very different way [and] a different way to experience an opera.204

Everyone in the program had an overwhelming desire to support the opera as much as possible. Tweet Seating was a great way to give back to the opera community, and participants felt that this was one way they could transmit its legacy to new audience members.

**Conclusion**

Pre-selected Tweet Seaters for opera dress rehearsals reveal that opera attendance, at least for these live-tweeters, has changed. Tweet Seating changes the social experience for participants at any level of understanding of classical music. For many, continued education about opera, either through multiple iterations or from the online social interactions with more knowledgeable live-tweeters, is what they gain from the online engagement. In order to have a variety of users, the moderator makes sure to invite

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204 Connor, Los Angeles Opera, conducted September 14, 2017.
interested Twitter users and to officially engage a range of participants with varying experience in classical music. Implementing live-tweeters allows for a spectrum of classical music fans, from veterans to new attendees and everyone in between, to engage in online conversations that promote proactive learning from each other. The experience in itself is an incentive to become an active and returning Tweet Seater. In order to experience even more interactions among audience members of a wired community: live-tweeting opportunities outside of dress rehearsals and fostering those relationships outside of the program. Although there has been some initial anxiety about live-tweeting for the first time, the organization is tapping into an existing classical music community who are active online, and the act of contributing to the virtual discussion with others lessens some of the attendance barriers, including elitism, financial barriers, and expectations of traditional concert etiquette. Although some users like the exclusivity of the program, changing the opera experience as a whole, even at a dress rehearsal, can alleviate some of the “stuffy” connotations that come with attending a full production for future audiences. By demonstrating that there is something to which newer audiences can gravitate, whether it be the story, hearing a familiar tune, the costumes and staging, or the soloists, these pre-selected participants have all shown curiosity and taken a proactive stance to educate themselves, both through live-tweeting and engaging with others online.
CHAPTER 3: THE DETROIT SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA AND FACEBOOK LIVE

The Facebook Live Experience

Much like Tweet Seats, Facebook Live allows an audience member to enjoy a live performance for free, this time through the comfort of watching at home. Including the intermission, the concerts last between two to three hours, and the post, along with the comments, is immediately deleted by the streaming company, insuring that the event forever remains a live event with no lasting internet presence. In order to view a livestream concert on Facebook Live, an online user merely has to log on to their Facebook account and click on the link provided by the organization. A livestream video will appear on the left side of the screen, with several standard emoji icon buttons below the video that will fly across the screen if clicked on (a heart, smiley face, “like” thumbs-up, a sad face with one tear-drop, and a red angry face); a public chatroom is located on the right-side of the video. The users have the option to mute the emoji icons that move across the livestream video, as well as to minimize the chatroom in order to solely view the video. The chatroom also notifies the user if any of their Facebook friends have just joined to watch the same livestream.

Facebook livestreaming is one of the ways that the Detroit Symphony Orchestra has interacted with its audiences since 2015.205 This chapter explores how former and current Detroit community listeners have demonstrated a new wave of support in the

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205 Other groups have been taking advantage of online livestream, such as the Liverpool Football Club. Formed in 1892, Liverpool F.C. is an example of how one of the leading teams in England has been extending their reach to fans worldwide by livestreaming their matches since 2012. “Liverpool FC Live Stream,” last updated 2018, http://www.sportp2p.com/football/england/liverpool/, accessed November 19, 2018.
migrating the word-of-mouth process that promotes the orchestra and engages
audiences online via Facebook Live. The DSO Facebook Live shows how an orchestra
tells its own story of survival after nearly closing down three times. By appealing to
the Detroit residents, the narrative of an underdog orchestra’s struggle and perseverance
through continued local efforts remains an important source of the Michigan
community’s support. Many Detroit interviewees have noticed an increase in the sort of
outreach programming of which they were once a target in their youths, thus witnessing
the cultivation of future audiences. Livestreaming has allowed audience members to
not only to experience live classical music concerts at home, but also to foster parent-
child relationships, to (re)connect with the DSO fan community, and to demonstrate civic
pride.

Although the livestreaming video may require a moderator to oversee the online
activity among users, management of a Facebook Live event is relatively low
maintenance for the ensemble that offers it. Depending on the number of viewers that log
on and the traffic of comments, personnel may designate one to two moderators to
oversee the online activity or to have some minimal involvement with the ongoing
conversation. For the Detroit Symphony Orchestra (DSO), the average number of online
viewers ranges from 120 to 530 depending on the program; thus, only one DSO
personnel member moderates a given livestreamed concert. Personnel start the
conversation by asking viewers to greet everyone online and indicate where they are

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206 Laurie Harris and Paul Ganson, *The Detroit Symphony Orchestra: Grace, Grit, and Glory* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 2016), 1.
207 Jessica, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, conducted November 11, 2017; Laura, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, conducted November 7, 2017.
watching and announce upcoming pieces with program notes. By maintaining their own social involvement at a minimal level, the DSO personnel hope to prompt online users to converse among themselves or to ask questions of them.  

There are various methods to receive notifications about the livestreamed events of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. One can subscribe to its Facebook page or follow its Twitter handle, which will send a phone notification in real-time of the event about to occur. The most helpful way of finding out when future DSO Facebook Live events occur, however, is through their website calendar. A countdown timer is one of the first things visitors see at the top of the DSO’s main page, notifying them when the next live concert is (see Figure 5). Scrolling down on the main page, they can see a countdown timer with two advertisements further describing the upcoming concert to be livestreamed (left) and how to watch the DSO online in upcoming and previous concerts (right).

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That DSO Live performances are the most prominent events on the main website page might suggest that they are the most popular attraction for any audience member and are designated to entice new prospective viewers to classical music. The DSO personnel have admitted that they especially hope to attract Michigan residents in the surrounding downtown areas and those who may not have had any previous classical music exposure by providing these live webcasts. The event calendar also conveniently designates DSO Live logos beside performance dates on which the organization will offer free livestreaming. However, there is not the incentive of a free ticket in exchange for free publicity for audience members who comment in the chatroom, as with Tweet Seats. Rather, DSO uses the chatroom to allow audiences to freely communicate with the personnel and viewers to share their immediate reactions to what is occurring mid-

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210 DSO personnel, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, conducted October 31, 2017.
performance. Interviews with Facebook Live users revealed that the orchestra’s history was often as important as its music and the accessibility it provided by being online.

**A History of the Underdog Orchestra**

On October 4, 2010, the DSO began a thirteen-week strike over thirty-three percent salary pay cuts for orchestra personnel.\(^{211}\) In response to the potential shut-down, the community of Detroit raised money to help the symphony orchestra keep going. Fifteen million dollars was donated to the DSO by the William Davidson Foundation on October 30, 2017, to secure future programs.\(^{212}\) However, this story of how an orchestra faced its financial crisis and made a drastic turnaround through both community efforts and a number of grant-giving institutions beyond the strike is an unusual one in comparison to other orchestras, many of which have completely shut down, such as the San José Symphony in 2001, the Tulsa Philharmonic in 2002, and the Florida Philharmonic and Savannah Symphony Orchestra in 2003, to name a few.\(^{213}\) Trey Devey, the executive director of the Florida Philharmonic at the time of closure, even pleaded for help, “If you have the potential to help us and be a hero, then call us. We need a hero.”\(^{214}\) Rising from such financial straits, the DSO has been able to continue its programming, but it is still deeply aware of the need to cultivate a future audience.

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\(^{214}\) Ibid.
The DSO’s 2010 strike was not its only crisis; the organization has gone through several rounds of financial difficulties since their opening in 1887. Laurie Lanzen Harris, local Detroit author, editor, and publisher, along with Paul Ganson, former bassoonist and current historian for the DSO, illuminate the history, multiple rises and falls, and results of the organization’s recent negotiations in *The Detroit Symphony Orchestra: Grace, Grit, and Glory*. Harris and Ganson open the first chapter with an underdog narrative of how much more the DSO has struggled than most American orchestras, while still persevering in the face of setbacks.

In many ways, the rise and fall of the Detroit Symphony parallels the financial and social fortunes of the city itself. This book was written shortly after the city of Detroit filed for bankruptcy in 2013. It was the largest municipal bankruptcy in the nation’s history. The DSO has also failed financially, and gone out of business, more often than any other major ensemble in the country. But it has also come back more times than any other symphonic organization.

Since its opening in 1887, the DSO “has gone out of business” three times, faced several instances of financial disputes between management and the musicians, rising from financial overturn due to the Depression, two World Wars, and several recessions.

What is most notable from DSO’s history is the amount of community support and pride that has been instilled from its public education efforts. Rather than relying on a few wealthy patrons or business corporations, several music directors and conductors proactively cultivated connections with the people of Detroit through outreach programs and local funding resources, leading to a diverse financial support system.

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215 Harris and Ganson, *The Detroit Symphony Orchestra: Grace, Grit, and Glory*, 1.
216 Ibid.
217 Ibid., 252.
During the organization’s first “rebirth” between 1914 and 1936, conductor Ossip Gabrilowitsch expanded the DSO’s engagement with the community. He hired Edith Rhetts “who became the Educational Director of the DSO, and the first person named to that role for an American Orchestra.”218 With her assistance, more than 20,000 children attended youth education programs in the 1920s and 30s which included “Educational Concerts, Young People’s Concerts, and Children’s Concerts at Orchestra Hall,”219 in addition to pre-lecture concerts, and free concerts on Belle Isle every summer, reaching over 250,000 people.220 These events were so successful that public schools incorporated programs as part of the curriculum in Michigan, reaching “urban and rural communities.”221

Between 1943 and 1949, “The Reichhold Era,” businessman Henry Reichhold revived the DSO and hired conductor Karl Kreuger, who proactively sought out the audience’s opinions of the music in each program222 and taught the audience concert etiquette.223 Reichhold’s mission was to make the DSO the largest self-sustaining orchestra by increasing the number of musicians from 92 to 100 and establishing fifteen sponsors by 1944.224 To further a self-sustaining DSO, Reichhold “[divided] the orchestra

218 Ibid., 57.
220 DSO program, October 16, 1927, in Harris and Ganson, The Detroit Symphony Orchestra: Grace, Grit, and Glory, 59.
221 Ibid., 58.
222 Programs, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, 1943-44; Detroit Public Library, Music, Art, and Literature Department, Detroit, Michigan; call number: R789 D48, in Harris and Ganson, The Detroit Symphony Orchestra: Grace, Grit, and Glory, 94.
223 Ibid.
224 Detroit News, August 13, 1944, in Harris and Ganson, The Detroit Symphony Orchestra: Grace, Grit, and Glory, 94.
into even more ensembles” to be able to play different music and appeal to new audiences and sponsors.225

A more collaborative financial plan was implemented during the second rebirth of the DSO under Paul Paray’s music direction between 1952 and 1961 with John B. Ford Jr.’s “Detroit Plan.” Because of the lack of wealthy patrons after World War II and the enforced income taxes on the richest population, Ford, Jr. combined multiple avenues of financing the DSO outside the top one percent in Detroit by forming “a coalition of corporations, foundations, and the community at large, and labor.”226 The “Detroit Plan” required each sponsor to equally contribute $10,000 to the DSO for three years, thus, entitling sponsors a seat on “the Board of Directors and the Policy and Finance Committee.”227 Within twelve days, Ford, Jr. was able to secure $250,000 from leaders of the City of Detroit, the Detroit Federation of Musicians, leaders of major corporations, and an additional $115,000 from the citizens of Detroit from a fundraiser by the Women’s Association.228 A clear sense of civic pride and community support was expressed through editorials with Detroiter’s stating, “‘our new symphony is a possession of the people of the city,’ a source of civic support and pride, which, perhaps most importantly, is shared at every level of its citizens.”229 When Paray retired in 1961, there was another labor dispute that was not resolved until the end of the 1963 season,230 but

225 Ibid., 95.
228 Ibid.
229 Harris and Ganson, The Detroit Symphony Orchestra: Grace, Grit, and Glory, 109.
230 Ibid., 141.
when the city went through additional economic setbacks another labor dispute took place in 1975, resulting in a new three-year contract.\textsuperscript{231} Once again, $3 million in funding in the form of grants saved the DSO in 1976.\textsuperscript{232}

Another notable period for the DSO was their second “Golden Age” between 1990 and 2005 because of its work on diversity within the orchestra and leadership from conductor Neeme Järvi. The conductor led initiatives to “[develop an] audience for classical music among Detroit’s largely African American population” by featuring new music by rising African American composers in the area.\textsuperscript{233} Even after emergency funds helped the DSO through the 1990 season, another financial crisis occurred in 1991 during Järvi’s second year as conductor, causing large budget cuts.\textsuperscript{234} After further pay cuts to management, the recital series and tours were canceled, but Järvi was still able to continue radio broadcasting the DSO to the United States and Canada.\textsuperscript{235} Throughout the ensemble’s struggles, the conductor commented how much more he preferred working with the DSO “than some of the highly touted national and international groups” with which he had previously worked, because “The Detroit musicians have suffered…So they make better music. They play from their hearts.”\textsuperscript{236} Funding began to stabilize by 2000,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{231} \textit{New York Times}, December 21, 1975, in Harris and Ganson, \textit{The Detroit Symphony Orchestra: Grace, Grit, and Glory}, 157.
\item \textsuperscript{232} \textit{New York Times}, April 14, 1985, in Harris and Ganson, \textit{The Detroit Symphony Orchestra: Grace, Grit, and Glory}, 160.
\item \textsuperscript{233} \textit{New York Times}, December 16, 1982, in Harris and Ganson, \textit{The Detroit Symphony Orchestra: Grace, Grit, and Glory}, 205-206.
\item \textsuperscript{234} \textit{New York Times}, October 27, 1991, in Harris and Ganson, \textit{The Detroit Symphony Orchestra: Grace, Grit, and Glory}, 197.
\item \textsuperscript{235} Ibid., 199.
\item \textsuperscript{236} \textit{American Record Guide}, January—February 1993, in Harris and Ganson, \textit{The Detroit Symphony Orchestra: Grace, Grit, and Glory}, 199.
\end{itemize}
with permanent touring finances from the William Davidson and Guardian Industries\textsuperscript{237} and by 2003, a new hall, the Max M. Fisher Music Center, a $80 million project, the cost of which would negatively affect the organization by 2008.\textsuperscript{238} By 2005, Järvi had left, and no successor or clear artistic vision was established until 2008 with Leonard Slatkin.

Current music director Slatkin was highly sought due to his previous work with another struggling orchestra, the St. Louis Symphony, and his positions with the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington, D.C.,\textsuperscript{239} the Philharmonia Orchestra in London, and the BBC Orchestra,\textsuperscript{240} and in general, his advocacy for new music, American music, and new composers and conductors.

The success of the online webcasts led to a new arrangement in the 2014 contract negotiations: “an ‘integrated media agreement’ that allowed for the live broadcasts of DSO performances, presented online free of charge.”\textsuperscript{241} Online webcasts were also part of the organization’s educational initiatives, and it offered the resource as a “classroom edition…in November 2014 to 30,000 students in Detroit and more than 50,000 across the country.”\textsuperscript{242} By the end of 2014, the DSO had survived its real estate debt, and the city of Detroit also resolved its $18 billion bankruptcy. From this history of struggle, both DSO and Detroit “have endured such profound changes to its ‘economic, demographic,

\textsuperscript{237} Harris and Ganson, \textit{The Detroit Symphony Orchestra: Grace, Grit, and Glory}, 217.
\textsuperscript{238} Ibid., 225.
\textsuperscript{239} Ibid., 227.
\textsuperscript{240} Ibid., 229.
\textsuperscript{241} \textit{Crain’s Detroit Business}, January 15, 2014, in Harris and Ganson, \textit{The Detroit Symphony Orchestra: Grace, Grit, and Glory}, 249.
\textsuperscript{242} Harris and Ganson, \textit{The Detroit Symphony Orchestra: Grace, Grit, and Glory}, 250.
and cultural landscape,’” showing that it is “determined to survive to adapt, to change, to hope, to ‘rise from the ashes’ and be renewed.”

Recently, the *New Yorker’s* music critic, Alex Ross, observed that there was a lack of recognition of the DSO’s work because of its lack of a regular music reviewer. Ross believes that its “work deserves to be chronicled” because of its dedication to integrating more new music, increasing the number of featured non-white and women composers, as well as the use of the Webcasts, allowing the DSO to call itself “the most accessible orchestra on the planet.” According to president and C.E.O. of the DSO, Anne Parsons, online viewership has ranged between 3,000 to 7,500, to as many as 35,000 on one instance; “It’s brought great young musicians to us—they can see what we’re doing. I was sure that, by now, everyone else would be doing it. I’ve stopped wondering and haven’t looked back.”

Because of the DSO’s long history of financial crises, there is an underdog narrative about the DSO that is understood by its residents. This narrative is not unlike those, explained by sports studies, in which people always cheer on a person or a team who is considered a longshot. A 1991 study conducted by Jimmy Frazier and Eldon Snyder on “The Underdog Concept in Sport” demonstrated that sports fans who rooted for the underdog find this “more rewarding in the emotional marketplace than an investment in a favorite.” Because the chances of an underdog winning is highly

243 Ibid., 253.
245 Ibid.
unlikely, a more dramatic and exciting victory occur for the unexpected winner (resulting in a high emotional investment), versus an expected victory from the favored team (creating poor emotional investment). Frazier and Snyder believe that “rooting for the underdog may be an expression in sport of the western ideal of equality.” On some level, almost everyone has experienced being an underdog in society, and so we can relate to the stories of David and Goliath, Cinderella, and the tortoise and the hare which have “dramatic credence” and give us hope to rise through a struggle.

This is not to say that DSO residents were attracted to any specific drama, but the fear of a local organization closing down again has prompted them to respond with support more so than ever. Residents with strong personal connections to the DSO were more likely to be moved to do something. According to Daniel Engber, writer for Slate magazine, an emotional investment in the team is just as strong for underdog teams due to an unexplained or not so obvious reason to the public; “Maybe it was the team’s unbreakable heart or its selfless coach.” What is evident from all of the interviews with DSO livestream audience members is both their emotional investment as local residents and the influence of their experience having grown up with the DSO’s outreach programs; the DSO represents an extension of the community that always perseveres and so Facebook Live can help continue their connection to their orchestra.

247 Ibid., 381.
248 Ibid., 382.
249 Ibid.
Methodology

Facebook Live is a way for many audience members at home or on-the-go to view livestreamed events at their leisure. Since 2011, the Detroit Symphony Orchestra has hosted DSO Live, an online viewing option on their website, available for a subscription fee, but it integrated the use of Facebook Live in December 2015. Although other music organizations such as the New York Philharmonic and the New Music Box Company using Facebook Live were part of my initial research process, the DSO had pre-selected concert dates that were easier to follow. I was able to watch three DSO Facebook Live events in October and November of 2017 and send private messages through the platform to all the participants who were commenting in the chatroom. I hoped to contact a pool of both music literate and first-time classical music viewers. Of seventy-seven invitations, seven Facebook users responded and agreed to the study, and two social media personnel in charge of Facebook Live agreed to a conference call. Two other Facebook users from another live event in early November were also interviewed. These users had viewed a new American opera, *Vireo*, that was pre-recorded between 2015 and 2017. The opera was livestreamed on Facebook Live by the New Music Box Company on their Facebook page on November 2017. The interviews from this opera help provide additional context for the musical and social experience on Facebook Live.

The Facebook users contacted through private messages were among those commenting during three DSO livestreamed concerts and two livestreams of the *Vireo*

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251 DSO personnel, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, conducted October 31, 2017.
opera. Due to the limited time frame of my study, it was difficult to track return users, partly because the orchestra immediately removes the videos along with the comments as soon as the livestream is complete. By inviting everyone who commented in the chatroom, I was able to reach a spectrum of viewers, from amateur musicians to long-time fans of classical music, to viewers trying out the DSO for the first time. Based on my previous experience inviting live-tweeters, I sent a generic short greeting was sent after noticing that the user was posting in the chatroom. I inquired if they would be interested in discussing their experiences while watching that particular event. Most participants were more than willing to share their experience over Skype and Facebook Live videochat. However, some users were apprehensive about connecting to Skype or video-chatting in general due to a previous bad experience using the platform, which compromised their online privacy or personal information.

The changes to Facebook’s demographic to an increase in older users, resulting in the original college-age demographic migrating to other social media platforms, is indicated by Pew Research reports describing the increase in online participants on Facebook between their 30s to their mid-60s.\textsuperscript{253} Recent social media use studies show that Americans ages 18 to 24 are using Snapchat and Instagram more than Facebook.\textsuperscript{254} Generally, in both my study and these statistics, the majority in the older age range, who tend to use Facebook to stay in touch with family and friends, also match the general classical music concertgoers’ age range of 40s to 60s.\textsuperscript{255} The only anomaly in this study

\textsuperscript{253} Greenwood, et. al, “Demographics of Social Media Users in 2016: Social Media Update 2016.”
\textsuperscript{254} Smith and Anderson, “Social Media Use in 2018.”
\textsuperscript{255} “A Decade of Arts Engagement: Findings from the Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, 2002-2012.”
was that the two interviewees who commented on the new American opera livestreamed on New Music Box’s Facebook page were in their early 30s and early 40s. It is difficult to say why the age range skewed a little younger for this event. The interviewee in his 30s just happened to see the event advertised on Facebook, and the interviewee in his early 40s already knew about the piece and happened to see a notification of the opera mid-livestream. Both certainly provide varied remarks about the livestreaming experience on Facebook that are rooted in their differences in music backgrounds and experience.

Nonetheless, the comments of the two interviewees for the video opera experience were not a substantial enough pool from which to draw conclusions, so the DSO watchers were my main focus.

Users’ comments were usually informal, as the chatroom was open to all kinds of initial reactions from viewers, ranging from saying hello from their location (“Hello, from Chicago!”), cheering on a soloist or instrument section (“More brass!!!”), commenting on the brilliance of the section that just occurred (“Bravo!” “Breathtaking cello lines!”), or giving a “shout out” in the chatroom to someone they know, a performer or even DSO personnel. These sorts of comments affirm the informal social context created via social media engagement which opens the doors for online audience members to freely express their “personal experience of listening…or otherwise affirm the ‘brilliant’ or ‘fabulous’ quality of the performance they have heard.”

Similar to the live-tweeting described in Bennett’s Tori Amos study, the nature of the online comments typically have limited “technical language or musical knowledge beyond some naming of

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instruments or performers,” which helps remove some of the audience members’ anxiety about speaking on the music, especially for “new concertgoers.”257 As previously evident with opera Tweet Seaters, live-tweeting with other new audience members also removed some of the uneasiness for participants attending opera for the first time.

The vast majority of the DSO interviewees were currently residing in the Michigan area, were aware of the ensemble’s prior financial struggles, and expressed support for the organization. As a result, this case study presents a specific view of how community viewers who currently or previously enjoyed concerts at the DSO still support and maintain a relationship with the organization from their hometown, some even from states away. However, the DSO not only has been able to connect and reconnect with current and past audience members, but also reach countries outside of America, such as Peru, Bolivia, Canada, China, Japan, and Mexico, to name a few, through Facebook Live.

**Analysis**

Seven recurring themes emerge from the analysis of the Facebook Live interviewees’ comments: the streamed concerts’ liveness, their accessibility, changes to traditional concert etiquette, personal knowledge of someone in the orchestra, parenthood and education, the influence of the DSO’s outreach on life narratives, and city pride. The sense of “being there,” or liveness, is maintained remotely through the chatroom on the right-side of the livestreamed concert screen. Even though audience members are at home, they are still able to experience the same immediacy of the concert experience through the screen. The online chatroom, unlike traditional concert attendance, permits socializing with other audience members in real-time and a chance to communicate with

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257 Ibid.
the DSO through the moderator throughout the concert. The accessibility of the concerts heard and seen via the livestream helps alleviate attendance barriers, especially for distant audience members or for those who cannot afford to go. Increased access also influences the breakdown of traditional concert etiquette by allowing interviewees to engage only as much as they want while watching at home.

A majority of the online users interviewed have some association with the DSO, so personal fan communities and established connections with the orchestra are the main reasons why many viewers gravitate to their Facebook Live events. Parenthood and education are major factors in many interviewees’ engagement with the DSO online because they are involved with and adding to their children’s musical experience as they grow up. Many viewers express that their interest has been a result of previous outreach efforts from the DSO to them as children. Thus, interviewees demonstrate how DSO outreach has been part of their life narrative; as the viewer ages, the role of the ensemble and classical music remains in their lives.

City pride for the underdog orchestra is expressed by many listeners who support the DSO because so many are from the surrounding Detroit area. As a result, many of the viewers feel close to the DSO because of their direct connections with the ensemble from having grown up with its outreach programs, already having had a long history with the group, and sometimes maintaining a firmly instilled personal sense of classical music fandom.

**Liveness on Facebook Live**

A livestreamed concert can still produce an experience that is “live” for online audiences at home. The streamed concert provides immediacy through similar audio and
visual aspects to what audiences experience in the concert hall. For many of the online viewers, the immediacy of the video was a crucial factor in creating a sense of liveness. The Facebook livestream helped create a real-time connection to the concert that was occurring in the concert hall at that moment, rather than a recording posted online after the fact. Pitts states that many classical music audiences have a “[desire] for high quality and emotional engagement in their listening.”  

Many interviewees express that the Facebook Live experience surpasses their expectations: the ability to see an excellent orchestra with high quality livestreaming capabilities in real-time for free adds to the audience’s engagement. Rita described the fact that a concert livestream in real-time was appealing, especially for her daughter, who was watching the concert with her.

I think the biggest benefit is that it provided a real, live connection for [my daughter]...Because just trying to get her to watch videos of a concert, orchestra, or performer, solo performer, she didn’t seem to be interested [before], but there was something about it playing right now, of a live performance, was something that caught her [attention]. She’s like, “are they playing now?” I was like, “yeah, they’re playing now in Detroit!” So, I think that that was the connection for her, it wasn’t something from a long time ago, or something that’s happened in the past; it’s here and now.

Laura also reflected that it might be fun to connect with her sister next time, who listens from Washington, as they both watch a DSO livestreamed concert in the future.

I don’t think it’s distracting, it’s just a different experience than sitting in the seat in the orchestra hall itself...and it’s still enjoyable. I can interact with someone, if I want to just check in real quick [in the chatroom,] you can get your little comment in, but when you’re sitting in the hall you can’t do that there. I never tried to tune in when my sister who lives out in the state of Washington watches at the same time...I might try that.

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259 Rita, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, conducted November 1, 2017.
260 Laura, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, conducted November 7, 2017.
As many participants have noted, seeing the DSO on Facebook Live is the next best thing to attending in person. Living in New York, Jessica can still enjoy the DSO states away, as it is already difficult for her to attend a concert in person: “…it’s just hard for me to get to a concert. I can sit at home, drink my coffee, play with my cats.”

Ron has been able to enjoy the best of both worlds; in addition to already going to a DSO performance, he was also an internet viewer who has been affected by the online enticement opportunities. After seeing the DSO in person and through livestream for the first time, he describes being exposed to more classical music than before and, like many other users have stated, he can enjoy the quality camerawork that is now possible in the concert hall. According to media and cultural studies scholar Mark Duffett, “The net has created new opportunities for fans to feel closer to their stars...[and] the idea of intimacy at a distance more normal and acceptable.”

The ability to see one’s favorite orchestra live yet remotely on Facebook Live is one way to provide liveness for viewers at home. This is not to say that watching a livestream can completely replace attending in person, but as most interviewees say, it is the next best thing if they cannot afford or are physically unable to attend the DSO. Ron said,

I wanna see DSO every chance I can get. It’s been nice, there are so many other genres I have so much exposure to, and it’s a great way to see classical music. I thought the camerawork was excellent too, it was impressively produced, you know, close-ups they did, and [seeing] certain people playing…plus you’re seeing the conductor from other angles, not just his back, and all the movements the conductor was making was really, really cool.

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261 Jessica, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, conducted November 8, 2017.
262 Ron, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, conducted November 6, 2017.
264 Ron, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, conducted November 6, 2017.
Accessibility

Overwhelmingly, all the participants agree on one thing regardless of the degree of their classical music background: they like the free opportunity to see the DSO live. For the DSO, one might assume that allowing a free livestream of a concert might be too risky and not tap into online audiences as a source of potential concertgoers, but rather become a means of losing current and future audience members. According to Pitts, providing “an informal public discourse” about classical music and risk aversion strategies to new audiences can help “[exacerbate] arts organisations’ concerns about falling tickets sales.”

The DSO personnel has seen a rise in both ticket sales and worldwide online attendance with the “risk aversion” strategy of integrating a free livestream. By scheduling regular livestreamed concerts, the organization was able to work against an orchestra industry fear. Personnel commented,

…at the time [DSO Live] started, there definitely was concern that putting the concerts online would eat into people buying tickets downtown, and the argument was that there was a risk that the orchestra needed to take—we needed to do it and expand our concerts and our brand, for lack of a better word, wider than we had been doing, and this was one tool to try and do that. Since then, now in our seventh year of doing this, basically the exact opposite has happened, and we saw a greater volume of tickets now, our downtown audience has not decreased, [people are not] staying at home watching concerts online, and [they aren’t not coming] to hear the orchestra live. So, it is a reasonable fear that people could stay away if you’re giving it away for free, but it’s simply something that we haven’t experienced, which is great! I mean it’s one of those nice things to overturn some of the conventional wisdom in the orchestra industry that way.

The accessibility of the DSO on Facebook Live for free has reached many current fans of the DSO who are unable to attend due to distance and finances. With many participants,

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266 DSO personnel, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, conducted October 31, 2017.
the affordability of watching online for free is just more efficient, as for Julia who has a family of four.

That was one of the things that I really liked about DSO Live because I loved being able to…listen to it and still enjoy the music, but not having to pay the price of, you know, all of us being there.\textsuperscript{267}

According to Jessica’s experience as an arts administrator, it is common to sell about eighty percent of concert tickets and to figure out how to use the remaining twenty percent for audience members they are not currently reaching or who cannot otherwise afford to attend. Thus, the DSO’s use of Facebook Live is a way to try and entice those who are new to classical music or cannot attend for a variety of reasons, with the hope that they might eventually become purchasers of the remaining twenty percent of unsold tickets.

All these orchestras…[are] understanding that when their houses are basically sold out by about 80 percent, they’re trying to figure out a way to reach an audience that isn’t there, or maybe can’t afford the tickets…I think they’re figuring out that there is an audience beyond the ones that can actually afford the tickets in their concert hall, [a] way to monetize that, and I think the DSO has made an attempt to do this better than others.\textsuperscript{268}

Secondly, time is another major factor for interviewees: the accessibility of the DSO is ideal for people who are busy and are anxious about the time required in traveling to the concert hall. Due to the flexibility of the livestream, Laura could choose to tune in or out of the chatroom conversations and reactions as she wished.\textsuperscript{269} Another user, Chris, could easily log on and check out the DSO at home. It also opened up the opportunity to discuss his experience with his son and his son’s girlfriend.

\textsuperscript{267} Julia, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, conducted October 25, 2017.\textsuperscript{268} Jessica, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, conducted November 8, 2017.\textsuperscript{269} Laura, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, conducted November 7, 2017.
I liked that it was accessible from wherever I was at the moment. No tickets, no time, no traffic. I also liked that it started a conversation in my house about upcoming DSO events and my son and his girlfriend are planning to attend.\footnote{Chris, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, conducted October 25, 2017.}

For these pre-selected interviewees, the opportunity to see a live concert online can lead to their future attendance to the DSO in person.

**Increasing Communication and Breaking Traditional Concert Etiquette**

The ability to socialize on Facebook Live creates the opportunity to connect with others online and helps alleviate live classical music attendance barriers for newer audiences. Like Twitter for Tweet Seats, the chatroom provides a way for Facebook users to “break concert etiquette”\footnote{Pitts and Burland, “Prelude,” in *Coughing and Clapping: Investigating Audience Experience*, 2.} and allows online users, especially those new to classical music, to feel welcome around others interested in music and to also eliminate some of the fears of “feeling out of place;”\footnote{Pitts, “Musical, Social, and Moral Dilemmas: Investigating Audience motivations to Attend Concerts,” 22.} Facebook Live users watching from home can feel at ease with a low-commitment option. Although there are a range of chatroom experiences for online viewers, most of the interviewees have no difficulty contributing to the live chat among strangers. The informal set-up of socializing within a chatroom, with limited moderation from the organization’s personnel, helps provide a welcoming atmosphere to invite conversation among the online audience members. Rita observed that because other viewers were uninhibited yet concise in their comments, any concerns on how or what to contribute in the chatroom were removed.
I think I’ve gotten more comfortable being able to make comments and being encouraged that other people are free [to comment] and don’t seem to hesitate. And when you go to a concert in person, it’s all about the audience etiquette…[People] were just being free, they weren’t trying to compose it in a certain way, they’re just being natural with their comments, most of them were short.\footnote{Pitts, “Social and Online Experiences: Shaping Live Listening Expectations in Classical Music,” 67.}

Ron’s first online social experience with seeing others’ comments about what they were hearing confirmed what he was experiencing musically as well.\footnote{Ron, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, conducted November 6, 2017.} Pitts states that the informal online discussion may help “new audience members…to join discussions more readily…since they are able to see how their own experiences of the concert fits with those around them.”\footnote{Ron, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, conducted November 1, 2017.} This description certainly matched Ron’s listening experience; he was not sure how to express his reactions, but seeing the other comments also helped reinforce what he was hearing and seeing onstage.

[Socializing in the chatroom was] mostly enhancing…it was like being in the audience, you got people’s reactions, it confirmed my reactions to what I was seeing with what other people were typing in…it was just reiterating or confirming some of my impressions of what was going on—of how splendid the performance was and how other people were enjoying it just as much as I was. That was a nice feature.\footnote{Ron, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, conducted November 6, 2017.}

Unlike Tweet Seats, which has more participants tweeting about specific classical music topics, Facebook Live users rarely use music jargon and so are more likely to “move away from more knowledge-rich writing about music” which helps “circumvent some of the terminological barriers” which may cause new audience members concerned about having the “‘right’ language to talk about their listening experiences.”\footnote{Pitts, “Musical, Social, and Moral Dilemmas: Investigating Audience motivations to Attend Concerts,” 67.}
Maintaining a perhaps shallow discussion about the performance and focusing more on their personal experience can be more appealing to new concertgoers, as it invites discussion from listeners with a range of classical music backgrounds. Rita feels that the organization is sincerely seeking feedback from the audience: “to just [make the experience] kind of relaxing and not being uptight of, ‘Oh, I don’t wanna say the wrong thing.’ That’s a big part of it.”

The addition of technology in the concert hall changes the expectations involved in traditional concert etiquette among physical and non-physical audience members. As a viewer at home, Laura described that the overall livestream experience was different than going in person; she was never be able to make a quick comment during the performance unless it was during intermission, or before or after the concert. Distant viewers also experienced the added dimension of being in contact with the moderators, which was not possible if they were actually at the concert. Classical music fans like Julia feel open to verbally expressing investment in the performers and their talents; she is always looking for an opportunity to show gratitude to them in the chatroom. Although unsure if the performers will see her comments, she is still motivated to say something so that the DSO in general can see her appreciation.

I’m very moved to share a comment to like just congratulate them and say, “thank you so much for sharing this beautiful music with me,” you know. And I think it definitely just moves me to say, “thank you!”

The fact that someone at home can observe other viewers simultaneously reacting in the Facebook Live chatroom creates a shared online community experience.

278 Rita, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, conducted, November 1, 2017.
279 Laura, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, conducted November 7, 2017.
280 Julia, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, conducted October 25, 2017.
Participants saw others commenting at the same time and said that made them feel like they were not entirely alone. In contrast, Tweet Seaters encounter the physical presence of others while live-tweeting with a community at the opera hall; thus, the community experience is much more apparent and impacts their listening experience.

**Knowing Someone: Personal Fan Communities**

The integration of Facebook Live into DSO concerts has created the opportunity for the many local concert-goers and previous residents of Detroit who are fans of the organization to meet online. According to Pitts’ study on what motivates people to attend concerts, the “social interactions surrounding live music listening, and that feeling at home in the performance venue contributes to the pleasure of concert attendance.” For Facebook Live users, the DSO personnel have created an online space for anyone at any interest level to observe and commentate as they wish, with no expectations. An interview with DSO staff showed that the organization is concerned about creating and forming online relationships with new and current viewers, including online through featuring a Facebook Live moderator. In general, Facebook Live opens up the opportunity for audiences to communicate with the DSO like never before. The DSO personnel hope that using the chatroom will allow conversations between viewers and the organization that would not be possible at the concert hall. Mike, DSO personnel, comments,

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282 DSO personnel, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, conducted October 31, 2017.
Well, I think it just gives more opportunities for one-on-one contact, like Terry was saying, you know, in the course of the shows you’re talking to the Detroit Symphony, and the Detroit Symphony is writing right back to you, and there’s no other real way to do that…it makes us a little more relatable and a little less remote, than we might be otherwise.\textsuperscript{283}

Many interviewees found their online experiences enhanced through knowing someone associated with the orchestra. Through these connections, the DSO is able to work with the fan community that they are aware is already present, and their livestream is a way to reach them. Mike from the DSO stated,

I think we know that we have an audience there, we know that we have fans there. There’s a means of delivering video to them, so we’re going to be there. It’s a great way to reach people without forcing them to come to you…this is a way of just putting it directly in front of them through Facebook.\textsuperscript{284}

According to the DSO personnel, for the audience members who are active online in the chatroom, a prior relationship brings them either to the concert hall and/or the online performance, other than an interest in classical music. Mike states,

…from what I’ve seen from the comments from viewers…we get people watching family members of the orchestra watching, family members of the staff, and then also people watch it who went to a concert the night before was the same program[].\textsuperscript{285}

This was quite evident for Rita, who was watching the livestream at home with her daughter one night. During a previous Facebook livestream, Rita recalled that the other viewers in the chatroom wrote that they had personal connections to the orchestra.

I’ve noticed that some people must know each other or they’re familiar with the staff—like the last concert someone was saying that they knew the conductor and another person was saying that they knew one of the section leaders or the principal player. And they were saying hello [to each other].\textsuperscript{286}

\textsuperscript{283} Ibid.\textsuperscript{284} Ibid.\textsuperscript{285} Ibid.\textsuperscript{286} Rita, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, conducted November 1, 2017.
Like the Tweet Seaters, Facebook Live users also expressed that it was helpful to attend a live online concert that not only notifies them of family and friends watching the same performance, but also allows them to see members of the organization familiar to them through the livestreams and or from previous personal connections. For example, Rita was able to notice that her childhood orchestra teacher, who is currently her daughter’s instructor, joined in the livestream to watch the same performance as well.

I saw where my orchestra teacher from elementary school through junior high, her name popped up because she’s a Facebook friend, and my daughter was, “Oh, that’s Miss Hart! That was my orchestra teacher and violin teacher!”287

Like other viewers in the chatroom, Laura sees her close friend in the trumpet section; she writes, “There’s Bob on camera!”288 and posts a greeting to her friend. Jerry, watching from Kansas, is not from the Detroit area, nonetheless has a personal connection with the ensemble; one of his friends was a former bass player for the orchestra who told him of its entire history and about the camera set-up in the concert hall that makes the livestream happen.289 These examples also show that past social experiences help form viewers’ ongoing relationship with classical music, including that with the DSO.

**Parenthood and Education**

Many of the interviewees described themselves as a parent with children involved in classical music, and as parents, they would like to be a model or mentor for their children by reinforcing at home some of the musical ideas that their children learn in a classroom or private lesson. What is evident is that their proactive involvement with

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287 Ibid.
288 Laura, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, conducted November 7, 2017.
289 Jerry, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, conducted November 7, 2017.
classical music results from their seeing the value of the DSO and classical music in their lives due to prior experiences, and that they endeavor to foster a musical relationship with their children who are interested in or already involved with classical music. Among the interviewees, the ratio of women to men who agreed to speak about their online experience on Facebook Live was six to three. This may reflect the gender ratio on Facebook. According to a 2015 Pew Study on “The Demographics of Social Media Users,” it revealed that 77 percent of internet users who use Facebook are women, while 66 percent were men.\footnote{Maeve Duggan, “The Demographics of Social Media Users,” Pew Research Center, posted August 19, 2015, http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/08/19/the-demographics-of-social-media-users/, accessed April 11, 2018.} There was a further increase in online women users in an updated study in 2016 in which “83 percent of female internet users and 75 percent of male internet users are Facebook adopters.”\footnote{Greenwood, et al., “Demographics of Social Media Users in 2016: Social Media Update 2016.”} With more than half of the interviewees being women, the mothers appeared more likely to discuss educating themselves to help their children with their classical music studies or in hopes of getting them interested in learning an instrument, while at least one father wanted to educate himself about classical music to foster a relationship with his daughter.

Julia described herself as not having much of a classical music background, but she is invested in it primarily due to her experience of integrating classical music in the background during her work as a massage therapist and for her unborn children in utero. From her pregnancies on, Julia has tried to enhance her own understanding of her children’s music lessons through observation at concerts like DSO on Facebook Live, where she can educate herself about the violin.
I love watching how they’re holding the instrument, how they’re playing, only because I’m very fascinated by trying to help my own children, you know, to see how whether it’s their posture that they’re in...So, any chance I get, because my kids are learning about all this, and so I don’t want to be too far behind even though I’m not in their classroom, and I’m not learning, I still want to stay up on what I can stay up on as a person, as a mom.\textsuperscript{292}

Her investment in the DSO also extends to using her experiences to be able to provide additional classical music education as a mom.

An African-American mother, Rita, also hopes that watching the DSO livestreams will help inspire her daughter to learn the violin as she did as a child. Now leading a busy life as a social worker, Rita grew up learning violin, played in an orchestra, and then learned to play the viola and cello; she currently maintains her violin skills. For her, one factor that is special about the DSO is its proactive push for integration through increased numbers of African-American performers in the orchestra through fellowships that have been created in order to support underrepresented minorities in concert venues. Not only does DSO livestreaming act as a bonding experience for Rita and her daughter, but also demonstrates to Rita’s daughter that classical music is not only for middle-class Caucasians; there are African-Americans like Rita on stage and her daughter can also aspire to engage in classical music as well.

…so that was really neat for my daughter, seeing that, “Oh, there are people that look like me playing in the orchestra! It’s not just mommy who grew up playing a classical stringed instrument.” So, she was impressed by that.\textsuperscript{293}

Proactive self-education about classical music, especially generated through word-of-mouth recommendations, was a prevalent source of motivation to watch the DSO on Facebook Live. The music instructor of Julia’s children is a performer at the Ann

\textsuperscript{292} Julia, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, conducted October 25, 2017.  
\textsuperscript{293} Rita, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, conducted November 1, 2017.
Arbor Symphony Orchestra; when Julia asked about recommendations for where to hear classical music the teacher suggested the DSO. Although Julia relies on social media, it is this personal endorsement that most influences her decisions about where to take her children for classical music concerts.

I check into social media a lot, but really a lot of the times, believe it or not, I reached out to my kids’ teachers, and to my son’s violin instructor…in the Ann Arbor Orchestra, so I reached out to her and that’s how I found out about that, so I’m always asking…, “oh, could you tell me a good place to go?”

A non-resident of Detroit, Jerry is currently a conductor and music educator in Kansas and is mostly motivated to observe the DSO’s concerts as a model for integrating social media as an outreach strategy. Jerry heard about the DSO livestream from a friend who was a former performer of the ensemble. Overall, Jerry is impressed with the DSO’s accessibility, and he recommends the livestreamed performances to his bass students who might want to see live concerts and close ups of the musicians. Finally, from watching the DSO, Jerry hopes to learn to transfer what is special about himself and to be able to represent his organization through social media like the DSO has been able to do.

Some people are gifted in relationship skills, that’s why I kind of had to rethink about what makes me unique or different…That notion of “secret sauce” and what makes people different and how you market that and trying to transfer that to social media, that’s where I’m kind of at right now.

**DSO Outreach as Part of a Life Narrative**

Almost every interviewee from the DSO Facebook Live group has already had some exposure to classical music. Living within the Detroit metropolitan area has allowed them the opportunity to take advantage of the DSO’s outreach programs. Some

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294 Julia, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, conducted October 25, 2017.
295 Jerry, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, conducted November 7, 2017.
had become involved in music lessons at school or, as noted previously, have children who are currently involved in music. The comments and reflections of everyone that I interviewed and asked, “Why the DSO?” reveal that the orchestra fulfills a specific role in their lives. The Facebook Live attendees resemble the Tweet Seaters in that their earlier involvement led to their current participation; as Pitts and Burland have noted about general live listening and attendance practices, “decisions about attendance are informed by previous experiences.”

Exposure to classical music demonstrated classical music has been a consistent or part of their lives, suggesting the strong role the DSO has played in their sense of their life narrative. In Nowak’s empirical study, he observed that “music variously takes part in [all of her informants’] lives, and by accompanying them over time, it contributes in shaping their stories.” In the context of Facebook Live users, many of the interviewees have had the DSO accompany them at different life stages, and such a connection affects their life narrative; encountering the outreach programs as a youth to passing on the education and value of classical music to their children in adulthood (Rita, Laura, and Julia), and wanting to reconnect with the home orchestra online (Jessica). The fact that all these interviewees have a link to the DSO, either by growing up with it or knowing someone who was/is currently in the orchestra, speaks to the support and loyalty to their community orchestra. These connections also contribute to civic pride.

Although Facebook Live enhances the existing community of classical music listeners in Detroit for the DSO, it does not necessarily create it. Rather, Facebook Live

297 Nowak, 134.
has enabled these viewers to reconnect with their memories of previous experiences with the DSO. Some interviewees were either former residents of Detroit or current residents who cannot afford to go to a live concert. Nowak’s study on the roles of music in people’s consideration of their life narratives describes how music preference is temporal; it can reflect the listener’s specific moment in life.

This…notion [of ‘narrative’] establishes a sense of evolution that is in line with the various directions that individuals’ lives take. Music accompanies them in the context of everyday life, which means it is present at various degrees and it mediates their experiences of their social existence. The sum of individuals’ role-normative modes of listening at a given period provides a snapshot of their music taste, but also tells us about how music accompanies them throughout this very period of time.\footnote{Ibid., 127.}

DSO interviewees expressed how much they missed the organization due to their strong previous ties to it. The livestream allows people to reconnect with what they perceived to be their hometown orchestra. Two interviewees, Laura and Jessica, have had a strong DSO background, growing up with the orchestra, which is intertwined with the long history of classical music in their lives. Laura is now a retired teacher in the Detroit area and describes herself as an active semi-professional singer. As a child she attended the DSO concerts and she eventually pursued a vocal degree at the University of Michigan. Ten years ago, she was part of a choral group that often performed with the DSO. Her history with the DSO has influenced her to continue singing after retirement, to sing for paid events, and to perform in musicals in order to continue the love for classical music that dates from her childhood.
I was in a group associated with the University of Michigan, [a choral group,] and they frequently collaborate with the Detroit Symphony, so I had several concerts over the years with them and I’m not active in that group any longer, but I mean the DSO’s kind of been part of my life since I was a little girl, too. We used to go to the children’s concerts when I was young and so I’ve just always appreciated what we have here in Detroit.299

Although Facebook Live does not factor into these experiences for Laura, being able to watch and revisit past memories of classical music helps create a sense of reconnection to her home orchestra. Additionally, she cannot afford to go to a live concert and is also prevented from doing so due to a busy performing schedule. However, the livestreams help alleviate some of these barriers.

The DSO personnel associated with the webcast have noticed that viewers like Laura, a number of audience members viewing through Facebook Live are former residents.300

…we do have a lot of viewers who aren’t in Southeast Michigan and aren’t going to be coming to see the Detroit Symphony anytime soon, but they love classical music or they know the musicians or they know the conductor or the soloist, and it gives them a chance to keep in touch that way much like somebody in Detroit[.]301

Jessica is one such former Detroit resident; she now lives in New York, working as an entrepreneur. Her long relationship with classical music also reaches back to the outreach programs in Detroit by the DSO and eventually led her to pursue a double major in French Horn and arts administration. As an arts administrator, she worked with performers at well-known music institutions, such as the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Chicago Lyric Opera, and the New York Philharmonic. Jessica is now an entrepreneur

299 Laura, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, conducted November 7, 2017.
300 DSO personnel, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, conducted October 31, 2017.
301 Ibid.
and misses being able to surround herself with classical music. Because of her current busy life, the DSO on Facebook Live has fulfilled what she describes was a void in her life post-arts administration. She said,

The Metropolitan Opera and Avery Fisher Hall and the State Theatre were kind of like my living room, I have an industry past so if we had somebody singing and whatever opera, all I had to do was walk in the stage door and wander out to the house and find an empty seat someplace[.] And then when I got lured into Wall Street that changed, a lot of that went out of my life, and then it became, “Oh, now I gotta pay for my tickets!”  

The chance to view the DSO through livestream is a way for previous residents to revitalize their memories. One of Nowak’s informants, who is a medical doctor, had specific playlists for a given residency during her apprenticeship, and could ultimately use these playlists to “[relive] certain moments” of that time, or “mediate memories.”

This observation allowed Nowak to suggest that “Music contributes greatly in reliving certain moments. It mediates the memory of who they were and what they did at the time.” Similarly, Jessica’s experience with the DSO on Facebook Live was a way for her to relive both the time she was associated with the DSO and her time as an arts administrator, thus, allowing her to reconnect with her previous place of residence, even from her current location. Jessica stated,

I think people wanting to reconnect with their hometown is a big thing. That’s where my motivation lies…Connecting to orchestral music is just really close to my heart, and I don’t have any other way to do it right now. Right now, the opportunity is in my kitchen, and I’m gonna enjoy it.

302 Jessica, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, conducted November 8, 2017.
303 Nowak, 145.
304 Ibid.
305 Jessica, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, conducted November 8, 2017.
Civic Pride for the Underdog Orchestra

Personal connections with the orchestra and with the people surrounding the DSO are factors in creating civic pride. The economic struggle Detroit faces influences interviewees, who often expressed support, loyalty, and pride towards the DSO, claiming ownership of their orchestra. What is most prevalent among DSO interviewees is their emotional investment in the underdog narrative that surrounds the organization. In fact, about half of the interviewees do not venture beyond the orchestra or have any knowledge about other organizations using Facebook Live.\footnote{306} According to sports sociologists Jimmy Frazier and Eldon Snyder, an underdog team in sports usually has more supporters; “if a team or person is an underdog in a competitive situation, this position may promote an increased incentive to overcome the odds.”\footnote{307} Like the “emotional payoff”\footnote{308} that comes from rooting for the underdog in their study, DSO fans’ “emotional payoff” of investing in their underdog orchestra is shown in the form of claiming the orchestra as their own. Jessica was happy to be able to have access to see her home orchestra: “I’m still able to listen to my home orchestra. [Facebook Live] lets me see things that I wouldn’t be able to see otherwise…I think of it as my orchestra, so I’ll park myself to see it.”\footnote{309} From life-long experience, stemming from childhood outreach programs, Jessica described how residents would not allow their orchestra to close down without getting involved and that the DSO was creative about taking classical music

\footnote{306} Julia, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, conducted October 25, 2017; Rita, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, conducted November 1, 2017; Sue, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, conducted October 24, 2017; Ron, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, conducted November 7, 2017.
\footnote{307} Frazier and Snyder, 385.
\footnote{308} Ibid., 384.
\footnote{309} Jessica, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, conducted November 8, 2017.
outside of the concert hall. This may have cultivated the current audience members’ strong pride in and love for their DSO.

The DSO went through so much economic turmoil and got really creative about taking it to the streets. Detroit is one of its towns that LOVES its orchestra, I mean they decided there was no way we were going down, everyone and every audience member that they have known and cultivated over the years, and they spent so much time as an orchestra doing outreach. They take the orchestra all around the state and they managed to survive…they work hard to cultivate the people that are still gonna come into the door. It’s real prevalent right now because they’ve gone back to doing their children’s outreach into elementary school, and again they’re doing what they did when I was a kid, they’re cultivating young people at the junior high, high school level to start playing an instrument.310

Jessica’s account is one of many examples that reiterate the DSO viewer’s love of and loyalty to their hometown ensemble.

With the recent financial support of the DSO from multiple foundations and the recovery from their 2010 strike, many community members reflect that they have the power to make a difference. According to Frazier and Snyder, supporting the underdog can help a struggling team prevail despite the improbability.311 Laura described that Detroit has had a long cultural history of struggle due to multiple past colonizers. The city’s pride could be linked to the fact that the Detroit people can have some control over things that they believe in and support.

I think we Detroit people…are very fiercely loyal to do anything for Detroit. I think our city’s history goes way back to when this country was first settled…First it was French then it was British, then it was an American city. So, [it’s] the deep history, rich culture [in Detroit.].312

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310 Ibid.
311 Frazier and Snyder, 387.
312 Laura, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, conducted November 7, 2017.
Laura expressed that due to the city’s history of economic struggle, describing that Detroit residents will support their city and its orchestra: “I’ve got to tell you, we have one of the finest orchestras in the world and people kind of know that.”\textsuperscript{313} Her unfltering advocacy of the orchestra reflects the “ideology that anyone can make it to the top if they try hard enough.”\textsuperscript{314} For a long time, Laura has seen how the city’s people have always managed to provide for the arts.

For a while the Detroit Symphony…was in real dire financial straight, and the tri-county area came together and gave them the financing they need to keep going for another 1,500 years, I mean, we’re talking a lot of money. But that’s the kind of fierce loyalty that symphony lovers here have for that institution; we will open up our pocketbooks and help the orchestra maintain that…We enjoy our cultural roots here.\textsuperscript{315}

Pride and support for the DSO can be seen in other fans who want to see their orchestra succeed. As a newer audience member, Ron attended the DSO with his daughter who is involved in music lessons and got free tickets the night before a livestream of the same concert. Aware of the DSO’s efforts to increase audience engagement, in addition to attending in person, Ron hopes to highlight the DSO’s concerts to his friends and family on Facebook by sharing and engaging with the event.

Just to help! To support the DSO. They need all the help and support they can get. Those people are so talented, you just wanna help them as much as you can to get them more visibility, more exposure for their beautiful music.\textsuperscript{316}

Ron’s investment in the DSO is demonstrated through his time, his online engagement, and his hope to see the DSO do well. Wertheim and Sommers state that fans of the underdog are attracted to a strong work ethic and players who never give up, and thus

\textsuperscript{313} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{314} Frazier and Snyder, 387.
\textsuperscript{315} Laura, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, conducted November 7, 2017.
\textsuperscript{316} Ron, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, conducted November 6, 2017.
fans positively review the performance of the underdog; “Not only do people root for you, but they also frame your performance favourably. Success becomes the legacy of hard work, industriousness, and hustle.”³¹⁷ Ron’s newfound loyalty to the DSO represents a “potential return on the emotional investment in an underdog.”³¹⁸

**Conclusion**

Facebook Livestream has certainly provided a greater sense of convenience for the modern classical music listener in the twenty-first century. For the DSO, Facebook Live demonstrates the community that already surrounds the orchestra. Going beyond making the organization more visible through social media, the platform has made the fans more visible to personnel. Social media has highlighted the existing DSO fan community: fans that are new, current, and returning combine to be the full representation of what it means to support “their orchestra.” What makes the DSO distinctive is a long history that intersects with many listeners’ life narratives even now; listeners who grew up with the DSO can still experience a live concert today in the suburbs or states away through online access.

Overall, the DSO viewers believe that Facebook Live makes concerts accessible and breaks down attendance barriers by reaching audiences both in Detroit and outside of the area, because they can watch at home when they cannot afford it or live too far away. What seems to be the most appealing to the viewers is that they have the option to attend pre-chosen DSO livestreamed full concerts, as well as to tune in or tune out as much as they want (while multi-tasking if they choose to do so). Because the viewers have more

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³¹⁷ Wertheim and Sommers, 49.
³¹⁸ Ibid., 54.
control over when and how much they want to engage, the DSO is able to overcome any stigma or barriers to concert attendance (i.e., time, money, etc.) for its audience members.

Viewers logging on for the first time to view the DSO by chance, out of curiosity, or due to a friend’s recommendation have the option to tune in for as long or as little as they want with little time commitment. Similar to users of Tweet Seats, the more musically knowledgeable viewers tend to have mixed feelings about the role of Facebook Live. Although they understand that social media is a tool to reach audiences outside of the concert hall, those having a strong background in classical music tend to feel unsure about the long-term role of the platform. However, others with as much history with classical music and with the DSO expressed no qualms about the livestream, fully absorbing the opportunity to support the orchestra from a distance.

People’s life narratives demonstrate the changing role of the DSO and classical music across their lives\(^\text{319}\) whether it be a developing interest in classical music as an adult or taking part in their children’s’ music education. Thus, an investment in classical music, at least for these pre-selected interviewees, increases as they get older. According to Nowak,

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\ldots \text{the ways in which music is listened to as individuals age may change, but for some of them, the passion remains. Thus, the maturation of individuals’ relationship with music enables them to associate music with certain periods of their lives and look back upon them.}\] \(^\text{320}\)

Current DSO participants demonstrating their status as fans of the orchestra have also shown a growth in their investment and interest in classical music at later stages in their lives. As is evident from its history, the DSO is always adapting to the needs and

\[^{319}\text{Nowak, 127.}\]
\[^{320}\text{Ibid., 135-136.}\]
changing demographics of the city’s people. These technological additions to the concert hall have enhanced the way current and new audience members experience live classical music listening especially through the emphasis of an existing community.
CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS

Beyond understanding how music ensembles are trying to reach a younger demographic, this study endeavors to examine how the integration of social media into live classical music concerts has changed the experience of concert attendance for some attendees. Scholarship that directly relates to classical music and social media are limited, such as focusing on an opera singer on Twitter and arts administration theses and dissertations that examine Facebook, YouTube, and other platforms use from the point of view of personnel from regional orchestras. Other than the studies on the music experience in relation to media scholarship conducted by Lucy Bennett, Raphaël Nowak, and Trevor Harvey, there has been little research on audience engagement on digital technology at classical music performances.

Through studying the two most popular social media platforms of the past decade, Twitter and Facebook Live, as used by four classical music groups, my study reveals that the personal listening experience involved with social media is complex. Almost any kind of digital technology in the concert hall is still disruptive for some older patrons. Yet this study has demonstrated that slowly integrating social media into concert halls until it becomes the “norm” can occur through an existing community of listeners; music groups could perhaps not have made Tweet Seats and Facebook livestreaming work without a current fan base or digital network made up of current and new listeners. Although organizations adopting these practices are outsourcing some aspects of their public relations to their listeners in order to avoid costs and are trying to attract newer, future audiences, this study has provided rich observations of how social media has changed the concert attendance for those listeners. Such programs attract people who are already

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interested in the music, and their online identities can influence other followers or listeners to try the program. Ultimately, the accessibility and informality of social media engagement can ease some of the attendance barriers to classical music concerts.

Interviews with Tweet Seaters in the opera hall for final dress rehearsals reveal that most of the respondents already have some exposure to classical music. The program has reached music critics, young professionals in music, cultural promoters in the area, and audiences re-integrating themselves to classical music in their adult years. Although the general target is young professionals that might form a future audience and “replace” the aging audience, there are still many factors that keep younger audiences from trying opera. As many arts studies have reported, the major reasons that keep young people from attending include lack of time, being too busy with their young families, trying to establish themselves in their careers, and not having someone with whom to attend. Tweet Seats does not solve most of these fundamental attendance barriers.

The way that Tweet Seats reaches newer audiences is through the current Tweet Seaters; the respondents tend to invite a friend as a free plus-one who is curious about trying opera out for the first time, and so this is the primary method for recruiting future attendees through existing participants. Through this risk-free option, the program helps people interested in opera to experience it for the first time, attending for free and with someone they know. Although participants’ followers who are already interested in classical music attend occasionally, it is still unclear how successful the program is as a recruitment tool. If anything, Tweet Seats has been a strategy for opera companies to

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321 Connor, Los Angeles Opera, conducted September 14, 2017; Arriana, Boston Lyric Opera, conducted September 23, 2017; Emily, Boston Lyric Opera, conducted October 25, 2017.
outsource their marketing to an existing online classical music community who help to begin and to contribute to the virtual conversation about it.

The DSO has been the only organization to regularly livestream their concerts online for free on Facebook Live. That they are free and easily accessible are the main reasons that audience members, already fans of classical music and or the DSO, view the orchestra’s livestream. The technology involved in the audience members watching the concert streamed online allows viewers to change traditional nonverbal concert etiquette in the concert hall by commenting and providing immediate feedback to DSO personnel and to each other. The informality introduced through integrating Facebook Live allows listeners, new and old, at any distance, to connect online and to continue what for many has been a long-standing relationship with their community orchestra.

In the case of the DSO, Facebook Live demonstrates that there is already a population to whom the organization can reach out: the current and former Detroit residents. Particularly, residents who have grown up with DSO outreach programs have been directly affected, leading them to be actively engaged through the livestreams. Although the DSO’s personnel are aware of their current fan base, their goal is to reach new audiences in the downtown area who are affected by attendance barriers: no internet access, the cost of attending in person, and a sense of a lack of relevancy of classical music. However, the age range that the DSO and many other organizations hope to reach, young professionals, was not represented in the pre-selected interviews. The typical concert attendance age-range of 40 to 60 years old was also predominant demographic of the interviewees, most likely because they are already the audience members interested in watching.
What makes the DSO different is the existence of already formed communities that have resulted from the outreach programs in Detroit. DSO fans gravitate towards the underdog narrative of the ensemble because people can relate to a story of struggle and find the members of the orchestra approachable on a personal level. Because of Detroit’s economic struggles and the DSO’s financial difficulties dating from as far back as the nineteenth century, the city has long had to devise ways to support their orchestra. As a result, there has always been strong community support from Detroiter beyond the patronage system or the business people on the Board.

There are several differences between the impacts of the two platforms. The most obvious difference is how each platform attracts a specific age range. Twitter attracts a younger age group, between the 20s and 40s, or young professionals, though it is increasing to over 40 years, while Facebook users reflect the older adults, people who are in their 40s to 65 and older. Participants who responded to requests to be interviewed fell into these varying age ranges according to their use of Twitter or Facebook Live. In addition, the two platforms create a different sense of liveness. For Twitter, the liveness manifests from the live-tweeting of audience members who are physically watching and listening to the opera at the venue, while people outside of the event cannot experience it in the same way that Tweet Seaters can. None of the opera is broadcast in real-time, but the tweets occur in real-time in conjunction with the performance. This causes the reactions to reflect a specific moment in time; they are also conversational due to constant exchange between live-tweeters, and only those who were present in that

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window of time can experience the commentary on the performance. Like Tweet Seaters, Facebook Live users function as both audience members and commentators, but in contrast, they are part of what is available to everyone on the worldwide web, as listeners both in the concert hall and on the livestream can hear the performance, just as they can. Similar to live-tweeting, the chatroom comments are happening during the performance, providing personal reactions from audience members who have logged on to join in on the conversation. However, the livestream of a DSO concert on Facebook is also temporal; the video and comments are all removed right after the event, forever remaining a live experience for those who attended and participated. Even though both platforms open the conversation to all audience members, regardless of their varying classical music experience, Tweet Seaters in this study tended to show more music literacy through their live-tweeting, commenting about specific arias, overtures, voice types, or details specific to the opera’s plot, for example. Facebook users typically generated fewer specific comments, such as greetings and congratulatory remarks to orchestra members.

The time commitment involved for a Tweet Seater is significantly higher than that for a Facebook Live user. The Tweet Seater is required to attend the entire dress rehearsal and agrees that they will be contributing tweets in hopes that their commentary will help attract future audience members. Additionally, there is a specific number of tweets that each person is required to have sent out throughout the dress rehearsal (i.e., thirty to fifty tweets, depending on the requested amount by the personnel). In effect, the combined tweets from Tweet Seaters get the particular opera and the opera company trending during the evening due to the high volume of activity from five to fifty live-tweeters. In
contrast, Facebook Live users face no requirements by the organization and thus have the option to tune in and out of the performance and/or chatroom altogether. However, some Facebook users will occasionally have a conversation with other audience members who are commenting about the soloist or comparing their experience of the concert to that of the same program the night before.

A Tweet Seater’s online presence tends to be more reflective of their identity than that of a Facebook Live user. Selected Twitter users have several thousand followers due to the nature of their paid jobs as promoters of cultural events in their area or because they are dedicated fans who attend classical music concerts for fun and are thus seen as a reliable source by their personal community. Listeners among the handful of self-selected interviewees tended to have a strong background in classical music as well, and so they had previously shared their experiences of and recommendations for a performance they just attended, even apart from their engagement with the opera company’s Twitter program. Facebook Live users, in contrast, have less of a need to establish an online presence, due to their more personal reasons for viewing the livestream. Because they are more concerned with merely checking the livestream for a few minutes or as part of their role as parents to inform themselves for their children’s music education, they take less of an active role as a participant than as Tweet Seaters might. This disparity in levels of online engagement is also reflective of the nature of the two platforms and their limits, as well as the ways in which they have attracted a certain audience; younger audiences on Twitter with no video involved, and a growing, largely older audience on Facebook which allows for a full-length livestream.
When comparing the experience of users of Tweet Seats and Facebook Live, there are several similarities, such as their attraction to the platforms due to the affordability of performances. As a means of appealing to new audiences, that they were allowed to attend without cost was a prominent theme for interviewees from both Twitter and Facebook Live events. That these events involved low financial risk was the main incentive that attracted audience members with any amount of classical music exposure to try live-tweeting or Facebook Live. Although there is some time commitment involved in live-tweeting at an opera dress rehearsal, the waived fee of a ticket combined with the opportunity itself draws in many fans. In addition, Facebook Live allows for the flexibility of tuning in or out of the livestream and multi-tasking at no expense to the viewer and in the comfort of one’s home. However, it should be noted that by making attending a concert or opera free or affordable these programs will not necessarily save groups from financial difficulties.

Regardless of whether the platform involves users attending online or in person, the sense of community created from the fact that the individual audience member is not the only one participating and the knowledge that they were among people with the same interests attracted many participants. In general, the idea of a formed online community, based on the existing fan community, was most prominent for DSO users. Although personnel have mentioned that they have reached viewers all over the United States and worldwide, this study’s interviewees emphasized ties to the local Detroit community. In fact, the Facebook Live users that stand out in the chatroom are the ones that mention that they recently went to the performance the night before and those who mention that they are current and/or former Detroit residents who know someone in the orchestra. The
majority of interviewees participated in the DSO’s outreach efforts while growing up as well.

At least for the self-selected interviewees, the platforms themselves, Twitter and Facebook Live, were not the chief reason classical music fans engaged with the concerts, but they were more of a way to facilitate communication among a community surrounding classical music that was already there. In contrast, the opera company’s use of Tweet Seats demonstrated its use of the existing classical music communities online to promote the opera and the company on social media, outsourcing part of its public relations. Opera companies that incorporate the Tweet Seats program are already soliciting applicants based on their various levels of classical music exposure, thus, ensuring the involvement of users who can contribute their knowledge to the online conversation as well as those completely new to the genre. However, with both live-tweeters and Facebook Live commentators, there is always a risk of the more experienced classical music listeners overshadowing or intimidating the newer commentators. If the platform and the atmosphere among its users is hospitable, other audience members will make an effort to tweet or to comment in the Facebook Live chatroom as well, because they want to show their support of the music organization. Regardless of the platform or music ensemble involved, there is still the need to mitigate between current loyal listeners and newer audience members.\(^{323}\)

In their own ways, Twitter and Facebook can both help create a digital form of liveness, or “being there” for followers. Both platforms allow for spontaneous, immediate

reactions by the audience members who choose to share a quick tweet or comment in the chatroom about what they are experiencing in that moment. The experience itself is temporal, and only those in attendance within the allotted performance time are able to experience the social and musical aspects of the performances, as neither type of event is saved or archived online. Live-tweeting at the live event can be considered as reflecting “being there” for the participants because the tweets represent their real-time reactions, which occurred at a particular moment in time.

The majority of tweeting respondents admit that they have come to appreciate opera more as they have become older; former music students see the value of and work that goes into a production, while other listeners want to connect with other people who also enjoy classical music. One of the most meaningful aspects of Tweet Seats is the creation of a community with other listeners and fans to connect with audience members who share the same level of classical music experience and of learning from more experienced listeners. Through their online presence, users at opera dress rehearsals can extend the topics at the center of their relationships in their wired community to include opera. In addition, many interviewees emphasized the program’s originality and its new means of experiencing opera, appreciating the art form and its reintroduction into their adult lives. However, although the event aims to invite new audiences to try opera for the first time, Tweet Seats still relies on knowledgeable listeners who maintain a sense of “exclusivity” and who value the VIP aspect of the event that separates them from a varied population of audience members. The Facebook livestreams help continue to foster classical music experiences and perceived relationships with the DSO and to allow those who can no longer attend in person to digitally reconnect to the ensemble. The previously
established community now has a reliable means of learning about classical music presented by their favorite hometown orchestra to parents, fans, and music educators, as well as the ability to share their experience with new listeners. Thus, an already existing community is further reinforced through these social media efforts.

Many interviewees have had past experience with classical music which informs their experiences when attending classical music concerts both in person and online. The users with a stronger background in classical music tend to provide mixed reviews of Twitter and Facebook Live. In general, they certainly see the potential and far-reaching possibilities of integrating social media in the concert hall. However, the intended goal of getting younger audiences in the concert hall through purchasing a full-priced ticket is not obvious to them. Few of the interviews in either group were in the age-range that ensembles reportedly target.

The interpersonal informality on social media eliminates some traditional concert etiquette by allowing newer audience members and the less musically literate to react along with other viewers as they normally would on those platforms, as opposed to sitting silently in the concert hall. Doing so affects their social experience; both Twitter and Facebook open the floor for immediate reactions apart from possible music jargon by other experienced classical music listeners, which could be intimidating to newer audience members.\textsuperscript{324} With less technical language, and a range of listeners, from veterans to newer listeners, can find a way to interact with each other online by commenting on what they know or what interests them. Furthermore, knowledgeable

\textsuperscript{324} Pitts, "Social and Online Experiences: Shaping Live Listening Expectations in Classical Music," 67.
interviewees made sure to mention that they had learned about some aspect of the music or had come to see a staging in a different way than expressed in the newer listeners’ comments.

The online and offline presence of audience members alleviated any sense of being alone for this event, especially for those attending for the first time. Live-tweeting in a group allowed users to have social interactions with each other online and also offline if they chose to do so. Seeing others’ comments in both platforms prevented audience members from feeling alone in their own contributions to the conversation. Additionally, the lack of rules and the few expectations from supervising personnel helped remove any nervousness surrounding how audience members should engage online, placing the focus on “the personal experience of listening”\(^\text{325}\) that might not make it into newspaper reviews, which have a limited word count or focus on a specific angle. Even if audience members cannot always support the opera or concert venue financially, helping with its publicity online also emphasizes their personal investment, through their ability to pique the interest of friends of friends to go and try it, even if only through a free event.

Interview respondents’ experiences suggested how childhood outreach programs strongly influence later involvement of classical music in their adult life. Classical music has accompanied these interviewees “through a continuum of their lives,”\(^\text{326}\) and their comments demonstrated how their investment in and relationship with music has grown over the years.\(^\text{327}\) Both groups of interviewees had a significant amount of classical music

\(^{325}\) Ibid., 67.
\(^{326}\) Nowak, 132.
\(^{327}\) Ibid., 135-136.
exposure during their childhood, suggesting that individuals have continued to connect and or reconnect with opera or orchestral music as a result of their previous experiences. Although many interviewees had some form of exposure to classical music growing up, the increasing interest of some audience members was due to the fact that they had more time to become invested as they got older. Various reasons play into this: their children are interested in or involved with music, or as time has passed the audience member demonstrates a new appreciation for the genre, and reinvesting their time is a way to reconnect with their past classical music experiences. For Facebook Live users, a major influence on their behavior is parenthood and their children’s education; they want to pass on their appreciation for music to their offspring. Because it is easier to share a Facebook Live performance at home with friends and family, Tweet Seats had a weak correlation of parents using Twitter to educate children about classical music; it functions as a string of conversations via live-tweets and is only coherent as a Tweet Seater.

Meanwhile, as Tweet Seaters consist of both young professionals and the more typical middle-aged audience attendees, live-tweeting also allows viewers both to relive their past experiences and memories associated with classical music and to further foster their growing interest in it as current fans.328

A final observation about both groups of interviewees is in regard to how they understand the value of integrating social media with classical music concert attendance. Although the more experienced classical music audience members expressed mixed feelings about the long-term value of integrating social media during live performances, they agree that it enhanced their community, music, and social experience. Even though it

328 Ibid., 145.
is unclear whether the intended recruitment of young professionals has been successful, according to interviewees, there is some evidence of an increased number of younger attendees going to the opera dress rehearsals at opera houses. Comments by interviewees suggest the continuity of outreach programs directed at youth by the DSO, and in general, media users’ comments demonstrate how an individual’s concert attendance experience can be spread through electronic and traditional word-of-mouth to friends and family. Finally, one idea that returns from personal interviews is that we value the practice of “recreating” classical music to experience it in a live setting. In the nineteenth century, audience members were expected to be contemplative and follow the concert etiquette of remaining attentive in silence. With the addition of digital technology in the twenty-first century, the live listening experience has been repackaged: an audience member can curate their experience from the user-side of tuning in and out while live-tweeting at a dress rehearsal or wash dishes after hearing a selected piece on Facebook Live.

**Future Research**

This study focused on self-selected interviewees who were willing to participate; those individuals tended to have a strongly informed background in classical music, which made them comfortable in discussing their musical and social experiences. Future studies of the live listening experience of classical music with social media can involve a follow-up interview with participants years later, as Nowak and boyd have done, in order to understand changes in taste and preference. I was only able to obtain one response

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329 Ariel, Los Angeles Opera, conducted September 21, 2017; Brie, Boston Lyric Opera, conducted October 2, 2017; Arriana, Boston Lyric Opera, conducted September 23, 2017.
from the United Kingdom mid analysis of my data collection, so online users from other continents might be interviewed as well. Either study would require a several year-long project in order to obtain enough participants in the targeted demographic.

Several other ensembles have integrated social media use during concerts and dress rehearsals as well. Another major orchestra, the New York Philharmonic, has been using Facebook Live for a number of its concerts and could be the subject of investigation. However, it does not currently announce which concerts will be livestreamed ahead of time, unlike the DSO, which has an online calendar and clock countdown. The Philharmonic’s practices are perhaps due to copyright issues or lack of permissions from visiting soloists; it does not seem to have media integration agreements in the ensemble’s contracts similar to those that the DSO actively pursued. Other online hosts or groups that focus on livestreaming performances in general, such as the NewMusicBox Company and Medici.tv, could be potential research avenues as they stream a host of selected concerts online by a variety of ensembles that include classical music, new music, ballet, and more. Both of these companies also utilize other livestreaming platforms as additional outlets to reach more audiences through Facebook Live and YouTube.

It would be interesting to determine whether the “fear of missing out” trend, or FOMO, affects the live listening experience on these platforms as well as what the future of social media can offer and to whom. Recent Pew Research studies have also shown a shift in social media platform use in which younger social media users are

beginning to migrate from Facebook and Twitter to more temporal social media platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat, which may come to influence classical music’s social media. However, Facebook is generally still highly used by most ages of social media users.331

Further studies in how the changing demographics affect online live classical music listening will help scholars understand the adaptability of these users who want to engage online and how music organizations continue to adjust to these shifts. According to Jiang, older generations are also increasingly embracing “digital life” as Generation Xers and Baby Boomers are now more likely to own a tablet and use social media.332 Although these social media platforms are free to users and can be easily implemented by music ensembles, they may not solve the economic problems that ensembles face, even if organizations integrating social media successfully engage online audiences.

Significance

This study has demonstrated that technology changes the experience of classical music and the way audiences view concert attendance. In integrating informal media platforms, such as Twitter and Facebook, opera companies and orchestras are not able to overcome financial issues or necessarily to attract audiences. However, interviews with their users did reveal their changing attitudes towards classical music concert attendance.

and how social media can enhance their live listening experiences. In general, the use of livestreaming capabilities with Facebook Live makes classical music more available to people who might be apprehensive about attending for the first time, mitigating the elitist culture surrounding traditional concert etiquette and reassuring those who feel they do not know enough about the performance. The ability to see what a concert is like in the comfort of home without financial investment or time constraints lessens the sense of risk and can potentially pique enough interest for a viewer to then attend in person. Viewing others’ reactions can also alleviate any misapprehensions about personal reactions and how to express them; the freedom provided by other viewers demonstrates that listeners can talk about anything that is happening onstage. For the DSO, Facebook Live is more than about reaching newer audiences. Users’ comments demonstrated their focus on the Detroit area as a whole and the existing fan community that exists for that specific orchestra. Thus, Facebook Live highlights and possibly strengthens the community that the orchestra already has.

Twitter also has the possibility of allowing active users to reach wider audiences. The motive for adopting Tweet Seats is to outsource marketing to users with a huge following who read their tweets and trust them to recommend a performance due to their expertise. Through followers living vicariously through online experts within the classical music community, Tweet Seats further spreads the electronic personal recommendations in the form of personal reactions from audience members whose reviews might weigh on their readers’ decision to attend a future performance. Because the tweets cannot be deleted, unless by the user, the immediate reaction can easily be retweeted to other interested parties. As many of the live-tweeters echo, Tweet Seats is a
new way to experience opera and can make it less intimidating to new audiences. However, although some Tweet Seaters might be new opera attendees, the entire program relies on a core of already somewhat knowledgeable fans.

Overall, social media opens up discussion of what classical music attendance can mean to current and future audiences. According to personnel and selected interviewees’ experiences, these social media methods do not necessarily dissuade audience members from attending live performances in person. Based on the pre-selected users for this study, the majority of participants have demonstrated how much their prior and childhood music experiences affected their re-integration of classical music into their lives as an adult. Organizations actively outsourcing public relations through media platforms, such as Tweet Seats, in order to continue fostering electronic word-of-mouth can rely on the trust among listeners who share the same interest in music. While a broader platform such as Facebook Live can expand the entire concert experience to worldwide viewers, individual ensembles such as the DSO can share the narrative of its city and show the world its community’s continuing support.

With texts and tweets, classical music seems less intimidating or “stuffy” for potential listeners, and social media can alleviate some of the stigma of both classical music and digital technology use at live performances. It no longer needs to be self-contained within the concert hall. Personal accounts of lifelong and recent classical music listeners’ online engagement illuminate their changing musical and social experiences, which are useful as ensembles consider the best ways to engage with audiences through new media. These case studies of opera companies and an orchestra utilizing technology
in the concert hall demonstrate the new directions of the live classical music listening experience.
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Interviews

APPENDIX A: ASSURANCE FORM

Hang Nguyen, MM, BA
How Audiences Engage with Opera Companies and Symphony Orchestras Using Twitter and Facebook

Assurances

Principal Investigator (PI) - As PI, I assure that:

- I am ultimately responsible for the conduct of the study.
- I agree to comply with all applicable IRB policies and procedures, and applicable federal, state and local laws.
- The application is consistent with proposal(s) submitted to external funding agencies.
- The research will only be performed by qualified personnel.
- All persons assisting with the research are adequately informed about the protocol and their research-related duties and functions.
- I will not implement any changes in the approved IRB application, study protocol, or informed consent process without prior IRB approval (except in an emergency, if necessary to safeguard the well-being of a human participant).
- If unavailable to conduct this research personally, as when on sabbatical leave, I will arrange for another investigator to assume direct responsibility for the study. Either this person is named as another investigator in this application, or I will notify the IRB of such arrangements.
- I will obtain Continuing Review approval prior to 12:01 am on the date the approval for the study expires. I understand that I fail to apply for continuing review, approval for the study will automatically expire, and all study activity must cease until IRB approval is granted.
- If protected health information is used or created as part of this research project, the research team agrees NOT to reuse or disclose the information to any other person or entity (beyond the named research team) except as required by law, for authorized oversight of the research project, or unless subsequent IRB approval is obtained for such reuse or disclosure.
- If members of the research team access protected health information from a covered component in order to seek consent/authorization for research, such access is necessary for the research, is solely for that purpose, and the information will not be removed from the covered component.
- Neither I nor any member of the research team has a significant financial interest, as defined by the University of Iowa Operations Manual, whereby the value of the interest to me or any member of the research team could be influenced by the outcome of the study.

EFFECTIVE 10/1/09 If the above stated research study has a plan to compensate the research subjects participating in this project, I acknowledge that our unit has a Cash Handling Procedure that has been approved by Accounting Services.

I further assure that the proposed research is not currently being conducted and will not begin until IRB approval has been obtained.

Signature of Principal Investigator

Date

Printed Name of the Principal Investigator

DEO (Department Chair) - My signature assures that the investigator:

- Is qualified to conduct the research as described in this application.
- Has adequate resources, facilities, and numbers of qualified staff to conduct the research as described in this application.
- Has used sound study design consistent with the standards of the investigator’s area of research.

EFFECTIVE 10/1/09 If the above stated research study has a plan to compensate the research subjects participating in this project, I acknowledge that our unit has a Cash Handling Procedure that has been approved by Accounting Services.

Has available time to oversee and conduct this project.

Signature of DEO (Department Chair)

Date

Printed Name of the (Department Chair)
Faculty Supervisor (If PI is a student) The faculty sponsor must be a member of the UI faculty and is considered the responsible party for legal and ethical performance of the project.

As the faculty supervisor on this research application, I assure that:

- I will meet with the student investigator on a regular basis and monitor study progress.
- The student is knowledgeable about the regulations and policies governing research with human subjects and has sufficient training and experience to conduct this particular study in accord with the approved protocol.
- If I will be unavailable to supervise this research personally, as when on sabbatical leave, I will arrange for an alternate Faculty Supervisor to assume direct responsibility in my absence and I will advise the IRB by letter in advance of such arrangements.
- EFFECTIVE 10/1/09 If the above stated research study has a plan to compensate the research subjects participating in this project, I acknowledge that our unit has a Cash Handling Procedure that has been approved by Accounting Services.

[Signature]
Marian Wilson Kimber

[Date]
9/9/17

Printed Name of the Supervising Faculty
APPENDIX B: APPROVAL MEMO FOR FORM MODIFICATION

IRB ID #: 201706733
To: Hang Nguyen
From: IRB-02, DHHS Registration # IRB000001000, Univ of Iowa, DHHS Federalwide Assurance # FWA00003007
Re: Audiences’ Engagement With Twitter and Facebook Live During Classical Music Performances: Community and Connectivity Through Live Listening Experiences

Approval Date: 11/21/18
Next IRB Approval Due Before: N/A
Type of Application: Modification
Type of Application Review: Exempt
Approved for Populations:
- Children
- Prisoners
- Pregnant Women, Fetuses, Neonates
Source of Support:

The following documents have been submitted for the above review and approval:
No new attachments.

This approval has been electronically signed by IRB Chair:
Anthony Quinlan, CIP, MBA
11/21/18 1404

As Principal Investigator, you are responsible for ensuring this project is conducted in compliance with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations, institutional policies, and requirements of the IRB, which include, but are not limited to, the following:

IRB Approval: IRB approval indicates that this project meets the regulatory requirements for the protection of human subjects. The research is approved to be conducted as described in the HawkIRB application. The addition or omission of study activities is not permitted without prior IRB review and approval.
does not absolve the principal investigator from complying with other institutional, collegiate, or departmental policies or procedures.

**Agency Notification:** If this is a New Project or Continuing Review application and the project is funded by an external government or non-profit agency, the original HHS 310 form, "Protection of Human Subjects Assurance Identification/IRB Certification/Declaration of Exemption," has been forwarded to the UI Division of Sponsored Programs, 100 Gilmore Hall, for appropriate action. You will receive a signed copy from Sponsored Programs.

**Recruitment:** Your IRB application has been approved for recruitment of subjects not to exceed the number indicated on your application form. The IRB has approved all recruitment strategies described in the application. It is not necessary to use all of these strategies, but no additional recruitment strategies may be used without IRB approval.

**Continuing Review:** Federal regulations require that the IRB re-approve research projects at intervals appropriate to the degree of risk, but no less than once per year. This process is called “continuing review.” Continuing review for non-exempt research is required to occur as long as the research remains active for long-term follow-up of research subjects, even when the research is permanently closed to enrollment of new subjects and all subjects have completed all research-related interventions and to occur when the remaining research activities are limited to collection of private identifiable information. This includes data identified with a study ID# for which a link exists between the ID# and subject identifying information. Your project “expires” at 12:01 AM on the date indicated on the preceding page (“Next IRB Approval Due on or Before”). You must obtain your next IRB approval of this project on or before that expiration date. You are responsible for submitting a Continuing Review application in sufficient time for approval before the expiration date, however the HOI will send a reminder notice approximately 60 and 30 days prior to the expiration date.

**Modifications:** Any change in this research project or materials must be submitted on a Modification application to the IRB for prior review and approval, except when a change is necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to subjects. The investigator is required to promptly notify the IRB of any changes made without IRB approval to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to subjects using the Modification/Update Form. Modifications requiring the prior review and approval of the IRB include but are not limited to: changing the protocol or study procedures, changing investigators or funding sources, changing the informed consent document, increasing the anticipated total number of subjects from what was originally approved, or adding any new materials (e.g., letters to subjects, ads, questionnaires).

**Unanticipated Problems Involving Risks:** You must promptly report to the IRB any serious and/or unexpected adverse experience, as defined in the UI Investigator’s Guide, and any other unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others. The Reportable Events Form (REF) should be used for reporting to the IRB. Reports from the investigator to the IRB must be submitted via HawkIRB within ten working days of the event or within 10 working days of the FI becoming aware of the event.

**Audits/Record-Keeping:** Your research records may be audited at any time during or after the implementation of your project. Federal and University policies require that all research records be maintained for a period of three (3) years following the close of the research project. For research that involves drugs or devices seeking FDA approval, the research records must be kept for a period of three years after the FDA has taken final action on the marketing application. For research that involves Protected Health Information (PHI) under HIPAA, the research records must be kept for a period of six (6) years following the close of the research project.

**Additional Information:** Complete information regarding research involving human subjects at the University of Iowa is available in the “Investigator’s Guide to Human Subjects Research.” Research investigators are expected to comply with these policies and procedures, and to be familiar with the University’s Federalwide Assurance, the Belmont Report, 45CFR46, and other applicable regulations prior to conducting the research. These documents and IRB application and related forms are available on the Human Subjects Office website or are available by calling 335-6564.
We invite you to participate in a research study being conducted by investigators from The University of Iowa. The purpose of the study is to understand the motivations of participating online audience members and whether online engagement affects their social and musical experiences during live Classical music concerts on social media.

1. The subject will set up an interview date with the Principal Investigator to occur within 1-2 weeks for a Skype/Gchat interview.
2. The Principal Investigator will audio record the interview.
3. If a phone call interview is not possible, the Principal Investigator will offer to email the interview questions to the subject. The subject will have 1-2 weeks to email their responses to the Principal Investigator.
4. The phone call interview will last between 1-1.5 hours.
5. The Principal Investigator will transcribe the interview within 1-2 weeks of the interview to delete the audio recording.
6. A followup interview will be determined by the Primary Investigator if clarifications to the subject’s responses are necessary. It is possible that additional questions will be asked based on the nature of the answers that the subject has provided from the main interview session in order to further explain a detail to their experience.
7. If a followup interview is necessary, the Principal Investigator will email the subject for consent to a followup interview.
8. The subject can have the option to respond to the followup question/s through email. The subject will have 1-2 weeks to email their response back to the Principal Investigator.

Audio recordings will be destroyed once transcribed on a word document and email addresses will be removed from any document after the interview/s to ensure the subject’s confidentiality. We will not collect your name or any identifying information about you. It will not be possible to link you to your responses on the survey.

Taking part in this research study is completely voluntary. If you do not wish to participate in this study, you can choose to withdraw from the study at any time through email or emailing the survey without answering any of the questions.
If you have questions about the rights of research subjects, please contact the Human Subjects Office, 105 Hardin Library for the Health Sciences, 600 Newton Rd, The University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA 52242-1098, (319) 335-6564, or e-mail irb@uiowa.edu.

Thank you very much for your consideration of this research study.
APPENDIX D: TWITTER CORRESPONDENCE RECRUITMENT

FOR IRB USE ONLY
APPROVED BY: IRB-02
IRB ID #: 201706733
APPROVAL DATE: 07/19/17
EXPIRATION DATE: N/A

Dear [username on Twitter],

Hello, my name is Hang Nguyen and I am a PhD student in Music History at the University of Iowa. I am in the middle of conducting my dissertation on classical music concerts and social media use. I saw that you were part of Tweet Seats on (event date/title) for (music organization name). I was wondering if you would be interested in participating in my study through an interview on Skype or Gchat to discuss your experience/s as a Tweet Seater. The interview would last no longer than 1-1.5 hours. If you would like further information before consenting to this study, please let me know if you would like for me to send you a consent form that will provide you with a summary of the study.

Otherwise, please feel free to ask me any questions here on Twitter, or email me at hang-nguyen@uiowa.edu for any questions or clarifications. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Hang Nguyen
Dear ____________,

Hello, my name is Hang Nguyen and I am a PhD student in Music History at the University of Iowa. I am in the middle of conducting my dissertation on classical music concerts and social media use. I saw that you were active on Facebook Live on (event date/title) for (music organization name). I was wondering if you would be interested in participating in my study through an interview on Skype or Gchat to discuss your experience/s using Facebook Live during the concert. The interview would last no longer than 1-1.5 hours. If you would like further information before consenting to this study, please let me know if you would like for me to send you a consent form that will provide you with a summary of the study.

Otherwise, please feel free to ask me any questions here on Facebook messenger, or email me at hang-nguyen@uiowa.edu for any questions or clarifications. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Hang Nguyen
Dear ____________,

Hello, my name is Hang Nguyen and I am a PhD student in Music History at the University of Iowa. I am in the middle of conducting my dissertation on classical music concerts and social media use. The purpose of the study is to understand who is using Facebook Live and Twitter at classical music concerts, the motivations of online users’ interactions during a live concert, and whether being online affects the musical and social experience of the concert. I would be interested in understanding the social media personnel’s point of view on this online phenomenon as well.

I noticed that (music organization name) is currently using (Facebook Live or Tweet Seats) to engage with audiences. I was wondering if you would be willing to participate in my study through an online interview via Skype or Gchat to discuss whether (Facebook Live or Tweet Seats) fits your organization’s needs and whether the organization’s online presence has reached those needs. The interview would last no longer than 1-1.5 hours. If you would like further information before consenting to this study, please let me know if you would like a summary of the study and a consent form to read over.

Otherwise, please feel free to email me at hang-nguyen@uiowa.edu for any questions or clarifications. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Hang Nguyen
APPENDIX G: SOCIAL MEDIA USER INTERVIEW

Username:

Age:

Occupation:

Education level:

Musical experience (please explain why you fall under your chosen category): [please select one]
Had childhood music lessons   No music training   Amateur musician   Professional musician   Other:__________________________________

1) How often do you attend performances?

2) Who do you usually go to a performance with? Why?

3) What is your primary reason for interacting on (platform name) with (opera company/orchestra)?

4) What got you interested in Tweet Seats/Facebook Live?

5) What was your experience like?

6) Please describe your overall experience of listening and viewing classical music on social media.

7) How did using Tweet Seats/Facebook Live affect your social experience? Musical experience?

8) Can you explain what you particularly enjoyed/disliked about the experience?

9) What is your opinion of the current programming at the opera/symphony orchestra?

10) What kind of programming would get you to come more often to performances?

11) Do you think that you’re going as frequently as you want to online? If not, what’s keeping you from participating from either venue setting?
12) Do you think that you’re going as frequently as you want to offline? If not, what’s keeping you from participating from either venue setting?
APPENDIX H: OPERA/SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA PERSONNEL INTERVIEW

1) May I record our conversation for my research since I won’t be able to write everything down?

2) Who is the target audience for your organization?
   2a) What are the demographics of your current audience?

2b) What demographic/s do you hope to increase for concert attendance and how will you do so?

3) Have you found that Tweet Seats/Facebook Live is a right fit for your organization’s goals? Why/why not?

4) Do you have statistical/qualitative evidence of your effort that demonstrates building online relationships with your target audience? If so, what are they?

5) How has having an online presence affected interaction with young adult through social media?

6) What attendance barriers that are unique to your organization are keeping people from attending your concerts?
   6a) What are you doing to resolve these attendance barriers?

7) How do you ensure that both old and new audience members feel welcome?333

8) How do you ensure that new audience members come back?334

9) May I document your name, title, and your affiliated organization? Or do you wish that I keep your identity anonymous and generalize your organization as a “major symphony orchestra/opera company” in the final document?

333 Mendels and Held, 10.
334 Ibid.