

## **Views of an audience: Understanding the orchestral concert experience from player and listener perspectives**

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### **Abstract:**

This paper draws on empirical research with a regional symphony orchestra and its audience, using qualitative surveys and interviews to gain an understanding of how the orchestral concert is experienced from the stage and the auditorium. Player and listener perspectives were sought on the nature of live classical music listening, the marketing of the orchestra, and the interactions between audience and performers. The multi-faceted portrayal of orchestral performance that results raises questions about the appeal of live classical music listening, and its role in the lives of current and potential audience members.

**Keywords:** Orchestra; audience; live music; listening; arts marketing

An orchestral concert at its best has a sense of spectacle and occasion. Often taking place in one of the more formal buildings in a city, and representing a costly and therefore considered night out for regular attenders, going to hear an international symphony orchestra should be a memorable musical event. The music heard might be challenging or familiar, but there will be an expectation of quality – a trust in the professional musicians to be committed and passionate about their work, and to the concert promoters to provide value for money and a physically comfortable yet emotionally exhilarating experience.

This paper explores the shaping and fulfilment of those concert-going expectations for audience members of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO), reporting on a study carried out in the Autumn 2010 concert season. Through an online survey and

follow-up interviews, we invited the audience members to reflect on their own experience and their perceptions of the listeners and players around them and, uniquely, we also sought the players' views of 'their' audience, so gaining multiple views of the marketing, programming and performing life of the orchestra. A regional orchestra of around eighty players, CBSO was founded in 1920, and now gives around 130 concerts a year. It has a prominent presence in the centre of Birmingham, having an administrative and rehearsal home in the CBSO Centre, and giving the majority of its concerts in Symphony Hall, a purpose-built concert venue opened in 1991 which seats over 2000 audience members.

Our collaboration with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra was facilitated by a University of Sheffield 'knowledge exchange' research grant, designed to encourage collaboration between academic researchers and arts practitioners. Through sustained engagement with CBSO over six months, we were able to design our research questions to support the concerns of the organisation, and to benefit from the existing knowledge of the audience and players within the marketing and orchestral management team – while remaining open to the possibility of challenging and critiquing this 'insider' knowledge. Our work built on previous collaborations with arts organisations undertaken by the authors, including Stephanie Pitts' and Chris Spencer's work with Music in the Round, a chamber music organisation in Sheffield (Pitts, 2005; Pitts & Spencer, 2008), Melissa Dobson's investigations of new audiences for classical music (Dobson, 2010), and Kate Gee's explorations of the identities and careers of professional musicians (Gee, 2010). Like many organisations, CBSO's own audience and player research had tended in the past to be very practically focused, and at the start of the project their management declared an interest in the more searching qualitative questions of our previous research. We sought therefore to ask the 'bigger' questions around audience experience, considering the extent to which live orchestral music satisfies an audience's search for a distinctive musical and social experience, and exploring the ways in which live music is portrayed and practised by the various parties involved. We explored the barriers to orchestral concert attendance – noting who was not there as well as who was – and sought the participants' views on the future of classical music in their lives, their city and in the wider arts culture.

### **1. Context: understanding audiences and orchestras**

Ethnographic, psychological and sociological research with classical music audiences and performers has expanded considerably in recent decades, prompted in part by concerns over ageing audiences for live music (Kolb, 2001), the instability of orchestral musicians' careers (Cottrell, 2004), and the implications of both of these factors for music education and cultural policy (Bennett, 2008). Past research on professional orchestral players has presented a somewhat negative picture of their workplace satisfaction: after years of training to the highest standards of solo performance, players are sometimes frustrated by their lack of autonomy in a large ensemble, particularly where their respect for the conductor is low, or working hours are felt to be unreasonable (Levine & Levine, 1996). Orchestral musicians have described a lack of creativity in their work which can lead to them

feeling undervalued, or required 'to produce unspectacular but efficient performances night after night' (Cottrell, 2004: 114). Allmendinger, Hackman and Lehman (1996) attribute some of these difficulties to the disparity of aims between the musical and managerial leaders of the organisation: an extreme example of this was investigated by Mary Ann Glynn (2000), whose qualitative study of the 1996 musicians' strike at the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra exposed the musicians' disillusionment that 'their musical prowess ("skilled as surgeons") was not acknowledged as a key and unique resource' (p. 289). Communicating across the 'ever-widening gulf in [...] aesthetic orientation' (ibid, p. 288), between artistic choices and financial realities, is a problem subsequently addressed by many orchestras, including the CBSO, by the appointment of 'player representatives' who contribute to musical and financial governance. Greater player satisfaction has also been reported where there are opportunities for chamber music performance, which 'create opportunities for more individualized performance and satisfy musicians' need for individual creativity and visibility' (Parasuraman & Purohit, 2000: 82) – and this too is a feature of CBSO practice that is valued by management and players.

Despite these potential sources of frustration for orchestral musicians, Greg Sandow, music critic and advocate for classical music, has highlighted Hackman's later observation that stress or frustration at work is not necessarily a sign of low commitment to the job (Sandow, 2011). The ongoing search for musical and personal satisfaction may be one of the driving motivators for an orchestral musician, with its reported absence providing evidence for the 'continuance commitment' that distinguishes a professional musician from an amateur, who is free to cease musical activities that are no longer enjoyable without loss of income or status (Stebbins, 1992: 51). From the audience perspective, this dissatisfaction is often invisible or misunderstood, particular for those listeners who might be projecting their own experience of amateur music-making onto the professional performances that they attend, without observing the difference in autonomy and motivation between themselves and their professional counterparts. Amateur musicians seek personal and musical enjoyment through their participation in performing groups, valuing the camaraderie of rehearsals and the challenge and satisfaction of performance (Pitts, 2005). An orchestral career might therefore seem like the pinnacle of musical achievement, as demonstrated in research with conservatoire students, who are often overwhelmingly focused on a performing career and can be resistant to encouragement to seek a broader portfolio career in music (e.g. Bennett, 2008). One area which our research sought to explore was the audience's perception of the orchestral musicians' experience, and the extent to which this matched or contradicted the players' views, both in the specific context of CBSO and in the wider studies reported here.

If little is known about how audience members perceive orchestral players, there is even less research evidence for players' perceptions of their audiences. Pianists have traditionally had the most to say on this topic, and Susan Tomes writes a regular blog in which she has sometimes reflected on the difference between her experience of a concert and the feedback she receives from listeners afterwards, as well as on the difficulties of

talking to the audience between concert items, as has become increasingly usual in classical performances (Tomes, 2012). During her time with the Domus chamber ensemble, who aimed to increase their accessibility by performing in a portable geodesic dome, Tomes sought greater contact and 'mutual feedback' with audiences after concerts, and noted the change in conversation that was prompted by such an invitation: 'people do not try to say the silly, nervous things they sometimes say in the Green Rooms of big concert halls; if they do stay behind, they say fresh and honest things, and it's such a relief to see one's efforts measured against people's response' (Tomes, 2004: 17). While Tomes shows herself to be responsive to the after-concert feedback of her audience, other pianists have focused more on the distractions that their listeners provide: Charles Rosen writes of the cough as 'the basic sign of inattention' (Rosen, 2002: 127) and states that 'during the actual playing, the performer's sense of the listeners is largely suppressed – except, of course, when they misbehave' (p. 122).

Orchestral musicians, performing as a collective, might be assumed to be less directly affected by audience feedback, though only the string players typically share the pianist's prerogative of facing sideways to most of their audience and being fully occupied throughout the performance (Rosen, 2002: 121). Cottrell writes of the formulaic nature of applause at orchestral concerts, whereby audience members applaud the arrival of the leader and conductor (even before they have made any musical contribution) and likewise the end of each piece: '[applause] in specific, conventional places is fundamental to the correct procedure of the event and its absence would be unthinkable to the various participants' (Cottrell, 2004: 166). Recent initiatives to encourage new audiences to classical music have challenged these conventions, with the Night Shift of the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, for example, following in the tradition of the Boston Pops by presenting 'no rules classical music' (see Dobson & Pitts, 2011). Even with the formality of a classical concert relaxed, however, audience response is restrained to a far greater degree than in jazz or pop music contexts, and the sheer physical scale of a symphony hall creates a greater distance between performer and audience than is experienced in a chamber music setting, where audience members have described feeling 'more a part of the performance rather than just an observer' (Pitts & Spencer, 2008: 231). Understanding what – or who – orchestral musicians see and hear when they look out at the audience was therefore another focus for our research.

Another area where the interests of audience members, players and management intersect – and not always comfortably – is in the choice of repertoire played by the orchestra. Here there is a balance to be struck between providing sufficient challenge for the players and a distinctive identity for the orchestra, and promoting programmes for which an audience can be guaranteed. Audience members differ in their level of prior musical knowledge, and in the extent to which they are willing to be challenged by new repertoire: previous studies have suggested that frequent attenders are most satisfied by concerts which introduce them to something new, or which they find musically challenging, while less frequent attenders would prefer to hear 'familiar and easily recognisable tunes'

(Roose, 2008:247). Sociological theorists have challenged the notion of 'high- and low-brow' listening in recent decades, proposing a category of 'cultural omnivore' (Peterson & Kern, 1996) which marks a shift in access to classical music, and in the geographical and social mobility that brings listeners of differing musical tastes into greater contact with one another than in previous generations. While this would be an optimistic outlook for arts organisations, some empirical surveys have challenged the level to which classical concert goers are truly 'omnivorous', suggesting that while the audience for 'light classical' music has grown, a more exclusive group still exists, for whom 'the dominant stakes in musical engagement are defined through commitment to contemporary musical forms, not the historical classical canon' (Savage & Gayo, 2011: 344). In addition, when the tastes and experiences of self-declared omnivores are explored, a narrower range of preferences is revealed, and for listeners without a high level of musical education and experience 'classical music represents a terra incognita, knowable only through the visible performers whose function is analogous to popular artists (e.g., Katharine Jenkins) rather than composers, and when the latter are known they are perceived as one homogeneous category (all this Mozart and stuff)' (Atkinson, 2011: 181).

The CBSO website ([www.cbsoco.uk](http://www.cbsoco.uk)) shows the extent to which the organisation has embraced the different musical starting points of its potential audience: a 'first timer's guide' provides a list of repertoire that will be recognisable from films and adverts, and there are links to recordings so that concert-goers can listen to the music in advance. These are welcome initiatives, since previous studies with inexperienced audience members have shown that lack of knowledge and familiarity are significant barriers to concert attendance (Kolb, 2000; Radbourne et al., 2009). Much more significant and widespread barriers, though, are the cost of tickets, lack of time or inclination to attend, and a lack of diversity amongst classical music audiences that makes it difficult for minority or disadvantaged groups to attend (Bunting et al., 2008). While ticket offers help financially, levels of exclusion or simply disinclination can still prevent the regeneration of the audience. We therefore sought in our research to investigate the extent to which audience members and players alike were concerned about recruiting and retaining new audience members, and to explore the ways in which musical taste and preference affected the listening habits and experience of existing concert-goers.

In summary, our overall research aim was to form a multi-faceted picture of the ways in which a CBSO concert is understood and experienced by its various participants – and to extrapolate from this a sense of the musical values and priorities held by players and audience members. In doing so, our research brings into focus the role of live listening in the musical lives of players and audience members, and in the cultural life of the city, so offering wider implications for supporting and promoting classical music in contemporary society.

## **2. Methods, participants and analytical approaches**

Our research methods sought to gain an overview of audience and performer perspectives through an online survey (with paper copies available on request), followed by more in-depth qualitative interviews with a representative sample of respondents. To recruit participants, we distributed flyers at evening concerts with the help of venue staff; audience members were also contacted through mailing lists and links on the CBSO website. Players were approached initially through an e-mail from the orchestral manager, and subsequently via the player reps, with whom we met in the early stages of the research to discuss and refine our questions. Our research approaches were also discussed and agreed with the CBSO marketing and management teams, and went through the standard University of Sheffield ethics approval process. Our research design was informed by previous marketing research carried out by CBSO, to which we were given confidential access: this allowed us to ensure that we gained a representative profile of the audience, focusing on new and regular attenders across the age groups that typically attend the evening concerts at Symphony Hall, Birmingham. We also made use of material in the public domain, including the CBSO website, its regular newsletter, *Music Stand*, and the programme for its '90<sup>th</sup> birthday concert', which included a history of the organisation.

The CBSO had previously collaborated in academic research with Terry O'Sullivan (2009), whose focus group discussions with audience members had identified a concern about ageing or dwindling audiences for classical music. O'Sullivan's research gave us an insight on the behaviour of long-established CBSO audience members, whose loyalty not just to the venue but to 'their' specific seats and familiar immediate neighbours made them highly appreciative, but also sensitive and critical listeners – generally, but not always, in the positive sense of both terms. Newer audience members were shown to be receptive to the social aspects of concert attendance, particularly when they were drawn into the audience 'community' by attending with friends or family members. O'Sullivan's detailed investigations with a small number of participants gave us a benchmark for our larger-scale survey, as well as a perspective from arts marketing to complement our approaches from music and psychology.

Our audience questionnaire resulted in 174 complete responses, of which 60.35% (n=105) were male respondents, and 39.08% (n=69) were female. The skewed age distribution of our responses was representative of CBSO audiences and of classical music listeners more widely (Keaney & Oskala, 2007), in that 72% were approaching or of retirement age: 56-65 yrs (39.65%), 66-75yrs (25.86%), and >75yrs (7.4%). At the end of the questionnaire (Appendix A), respondents were invited to supply contact details if they were willing to be interviewed: of those who volunteered, a purposive sample of 20 interviewees was selected, proportionally matched to the age categories of the survey respondents, and covering a range of frequency of attendance, prior attendance and level of musical engagement. An interview schedule (Appendix B) was designed to probe aspects of the questionnaire responses, and to provide in-depth accounts of experiences of being in the

CBSO audience. Interviews were mainly conducted by telephone, due to the geographical distribution of participants, and each lasted around 30 minutes.

Amongst the CBSO players, take-up for the online questionnaire was very low, and this method of data collection was therefore abandoned after several reminders to the players. The management and player reps suggested that a recent internal survey might have caused response fatigue; we were aware also that asking freelance musicians to give time to a research project was a request that few might feel able to meet. Conversely, the player reps reported a willingness amongst their colleagues to be interviewed, and so we changed our research design to include a narrative inquiry interview (Appendix C), which encouraged players to tell their story of getting into music, belonging to the CBSO, and pursuing a professional music career. This approach sought to understand how players' past experiences had shaped their expectations of orchestral playing and their empathy with audience perspectives, as well as exploring their current satisfaction with their roles and their ambitions for their future musical careers. Our sample for this phase of the study was still disappointingly small, but included some rich conversations that make a contribution to our research aims: six musicians were interviewed from across the orchestral sections, ranging in age from 26 to 55 years, and in their years in post with CBSO from 2 years to 31. Interviews took place in or near the Symphony Hall after rehearsals and each lasted around 45 minutes. In the discussion below, audience responses are indicated by the letter [A] followed by a participant code number; the players' responses are indicated with the letter [P].

Full transcriptions were made of the player and audience interviews, and the data from these and the questionnaires were analysed thematically through repeated readings by the research team. Quantitative results were presented to CBSO using descriptive statistics, but have not been used extensively in this paper, where the emphasis is on exploring the effects of marketing, frequency of attendance, and prior musical experience on audience members' responses to CBSO evening concerts, and on their perceptions of the organisation as a whole. In the discussion sections that follow, we focus on the extent to which the audience know the players, and vice versa, and their shared or conflicting views on the programming and priorities of the orchestra. We consider how these perceptions differ from research on other kinds of live music listening, and on how the reality of orchestral musicians' lives matches the image portrayed in the organisation's marketing and the assumptions made by new and regular concert-goers. Through this multifaceted portrayal of the live orchestral concert, we aim to draw conclusions about the role of classical concerts in the lives of those involved, and to identify ways in which arts organisations, players and audience members might form stronger connections amongst themselves, each other, and with the music that they value.

### 3. Who is here – and not here? Perceptions of the audience from stage and auditorium

It has been well established in previous research, including CBSO’s own internal market research, that audiences for classical music are typically professional or retired, in the over-50 age bracket, relatively affluent and educated, and white middle class (O’Sullivan, 2009; Kolb, 2001). While commentators such as Julian Johnson (2002) have argued strenuously that classical music is not (or should not be) intrinsically elitist, the uncomfortable fact remains that live orchestral concerts reach only a small part of the population (Keaney & Oskala, 2007). Organisations including CBSO have worked hard in recent years to attract new, younger audiences through ticket offers, targeted marketing and changes to the format and formality of concerts. Research with new audiences (Dobson & Pitts, 2011; Dobson, 2010) shows that these initiatives are welcomed to an extent, but that first-time attenders have relatively traditional expectations of attentive, well-informed listening, and are most responsive to pre-concert talks and interaction with players that are perceived as equipping them to participate more fully in the event. The Arts Council England’s work on ‘audience segmentation’ also highlights difficulties in finding communication channels that will reach younger arts consumers and encourage them to attend (Arts Council England, 2011: 19), suggesting that changes to the concert format itself are only part of the solution to challenging perceptions of classical music as ‘difficult’ and unapproachable.

Concerns over declining and ageing audiences were part of the discourse amongst our audience respondents, though there was little consistency in the extent to which they felt CBSO was subject to or addressing this problem: the quotes in **Table 1** illustrate some of these views and the factors that shape them, including choice of repertoire and timing of concerts.

**Table 1:** Perceptions of audience demographic by audience members

Decrease in age of audience	Even though of course, you know, the fact that the audience balance is still slanted towards particular age groups and particular social groups and so on, it does feel a much more...kind of contemporary audience. There are more young and young-middle aged, and middle aged people there. There are still very few people from ethnic minorities there, but there are some, and so it’s definitely got a different sense in that. It feels less clubby. [A136]
Age of audience now more homogenous	I fear it has probably got older. I suspect. I mean I don’t really remember, but I think you know that probably a lot of the people of my own and my wife’s generation that we see at the concerts were probably going to concerts you know when they were younger, like myself. And I mentioned I think on my form that the age of the audience was a worry. And I notice particularly you know now that we are older, we do find the afternoon concerts easier to get to than the evening ones, although we go to both.



	And can't help noticing the fairly significant age of lots of people at the last afternoon concert that we went to, which was quite recently. [A94]
Variation in audience demographic according to concert type	I think it very much depends what the music is. I think there are, well there's a younger audience for certain types of music, but then there are what me and my friends call the blue rinse...sort of Mozart and Beethoven, where the audience is still primarily retired I guess. Or approaching retirement. I went to a concert a couple of weeks ago – another Mahler concert, it's cropped up again, the Third Symphony – and there were a lot of young people there. And I have also noticed, rather strangely, that when they do concerts that are staged operas, that there also seems to be a younger audience. I've certainly got younger people sitting round me. So I think it depends very much on what we're being offered. [A24]

The audience comments show an awareness of the challenges of bringing new audiences to concerts, and of the combination of practical factors (start times for concerts, price of tickets) and matters of preference and choice (repertoire, performers, venue) that might affect people's decisions to attend. Older respondents often made reference to having attended concerts in childhood, in some cases expressing regret that their own offspring had not acquired the same habits: "my daughter and my son haven't got a clue [...] and I will think to myself 'you're missing so much'" [A139]. These experiences of developing lifelong listening habits in childhood are consistent with previous research findings (Kolb, 2001), but their perceived absence amongst younger listeners perhaps illustrates an evolution in music education and family listening habits that is an inevitable feature of societal change (cf. Pitts, 2012). The notion of live orchestral music as "a dying tradition" [A18] is of course disturbing to those within that community, and there was a notable tension amongst the CBSO audience between their enjoyment of the concert series as it stands, and the recognition that new and different events might be needed to widen the audience demographic and ensure its future.

The experience of recognising other audience members at concerts was heightened for frequent attenders by subscription schemes that enable the booking of the same seats for every concert: one listener reported having been "in the same seat every Wednesday and Thursday since the second season in SH [Symphony Hall]" [A19]. In these circumstances, concert-goers "meet the same people on particular concert nights" [A232] and "bump into other people we know in the audience" [A68], and so their impression of the audience will be coloured by familiar, ageing faces, more than by the "small but growing number of young people" [A72], whose presence might have less effect on subscribers' social experience of concert going. Recognising other listeners contributed to the feeling of 'belonging to the CBSO audience', which was a feature of attendance for 57% of the survey respondents: "we see people we have seen before even though we don't personally know them. It makes you feel a little like a family" [A126]. For the other 43%, less frequent or long-term attendance meant that they felt "not really part of the 'in crowd'" [A115], but

many were content with this, saying that concert-going was for them “not a group experience, but very personal and individual” [A205]. Others reported feeling “not very clubbable” [A40], or as if they were not a close fit to the general demographic: “I’m younger than a lot of people there, musical tastes I would imagine very different from others there” [A137].

This division between people who enjoy the sense of a concert-going family, and those who are content to remain outside it, presents a challenge to arts promoters who rely to an extent on loyalty and commitment in securing the future and financing of the organisation (cf. Rentschler et al., 2001). In addition to the subscriber scheme, opportunities to be Friends of CBSO, to endow an orchestral player’s chair, or to take part in coach trips or orchestral tours were available to audience members, and were widely recognised as a way of supporting the orchestra as well as potentially enhancing the experience of attending concerts. While promoting inclusivity for some, however, such groups could leave non-members feeling like outsiders: **Table 2** shows the range of views around the Friends scheme, and highlights the dilemmas facing many arts organisations in nurturing their loyal listeners while ensuring that events remain accessible and welcoming to new and younger audience members.

**Table 2:** Insider/outsider experiences of the Friends of CBSO scheme

<p>Access to information, news and features</p>	<p>You have a regular publication of something called The Music Stand, which is very informative and very chatty. It provides us with basic information like tours that are being planned, where they’re playing elsewhere than Birmingham, things like that. But it also features individual members of the orchestra and you know will do a whole page feature on one of them. It’ll tell us news of not only orchestra but the back room girls and boys. And you know births and marriages...So that we are being treated as if you like grandparents of a big family. [A43]</p>
<p>Members’ events often during the working day</p>	<p>I work, I work nine to five, Monday to Friday. They do occasionally have a members’ evening thing, [...] it’s usually once a year, but the members’ teas are an afternoon matinee concert. And they seem to be more regular. And I just think, and again the pre-concert talks – fabulous, and you know, they’re great things – but they’re at 6.15. So unless you can leg it out of work, or you work right in the city centre, they are...definitely the audience for the pre-concert talks tends to be older. And you get the young people turn up for the concert. Or the young-er people. And whether that’s because yes, they can’t get out of work in time to get into the city, because sometimes the traffic can be awful. [A13]</p>

<p>Friends experience as 'cliquey'</p> <p>Support for education work funded by Friends scheme</p>	<p>We joined Friends originally thinking it would be a way to get to know other people, other music lovers. But actually it doesn't work like that. [...] It was just like a kind of clique of people who knew each other, and then there were all the other people who didn't know each other, and that was the end of it really. [...] I am still a Friend, because I think what they do is really good. We've just sustained the membership because we approve of their education programme. I wish they did more, it would be nice to feel that there were some other things that were not as cliquey but were...you know, were an opportunity to kind of engage slightly with other people. [A16]</p>
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These responses (and others discussed further in Section 4 below) show how the interweaving of shared values and musical priorities is important to the audience: the wellbeing of players and 'back room' staff, and the funding of the education programme, sit alongside musical excellence as a reason to support the organisation.

Having established a detailed picture of what membership of the audience feels like for a range of concert-goers, our interviews with CBSO players offered the opportunity to find out how the audience looks from the stage. Themes from the audience interviews were replicated by the players: an awareness of a largely ageing audience, a recognition that 'lighter' programmes attract younger, less frequent attenders, and an appreciation of the dedication of the CBSO 'groupies' who come to most or all of their performances. **Table 3** summarises these themes and shows the interrelationships between repertoire and social experience in shaping audience demographics.

**Table 3:** Perceptions of audience demographic by players

<p>Attracting students with cheap tickets</p> <p>Older audience for classical music</p> <p>Different audience for lighter programmes</p>	<p>The conservatoire [students] get reduced tickets, so if they turn up on the day of a concert and it's not full, then they get tickets for £4. But they'll be in the Gods in the cheap seats. But what you do see is a whole load of, well grey hair everywhere. I think that's generally the case most places, not so much in London. But classical music in general, it's not cool is it - it's not cool to take your girlfriend. But maybe the Friday night, we've done concerts like the Strictly Come Dancing...and you get a different audience there. Different atmosphere. But the classical stuff, especially the heavy duty classical, the Mahler's, it's the same. [P5]</p>
<p>Lifelong attendance of some older listeners</p>	<p>There are people in the audience who have been coming to watch the orchestra since they were a teenager, and they are now retired. They've been coming regularly since then, so they've seen the</p>

Audience as part of orchestra history	transition from the Town Hall to the Symphony Hall. They've been with us with the different conductors. They know the history of the orchestra inside out, and they are just so dedicated and lovely. [P3]
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For the younger or newer players, particularly, the longevity of some audience members helped to reinforce the sense of the orchestra's history: "Those of them who were lucky enough to watch it 25 or 30 years ago saw the transformations from a provincial orchestra to all of a sudden going around the world and being so well renowned. The idea that they were part of it, that's really important" [P4]. Players were sometimes surprised by the dedication of their most loyal listeners, citing a woman who attends all of their performances – "Even if we do the same concert two or three times in a week, she'll come to all of them" [P4] – and a man who, though living in London, foregoes the variety of orchestras available to him and would "only watch the CBSO if they come down": "I couldn't believe that there was anyone who would think like that! Amazing." [P3].

Through Friends' events and chair endowment schemes (discussed further in the next section), the players meet mainly their most devoted audience members, which might explain their bemusement at some of the more 'fan like' behaviour they encounter. Nonetheless, this opportunity to meet the audience as individuals appears to help mitigate the perception of a 'sea of grey' commented upon by other professional musicians, including the pianist Stephen Hough, whose blog describes the 'fear and uncertainty' of continuing with a Beethoven concerto while an audience member chokes on a cough sweet (Hough, 2010). Like the audience members themselves, the players evidently recognise the individual experiences within an audience that might at first glance appear to be homogeneous, and seem to be on the lookout too for greater diversity amongst their listeners, and for opportunities to help encourage that.

#### **4. Friends or superheroes: the illusion of familiarity**

As already observed, the CBSO employs a range of strategies to make its audience members feel closely connected with the company and its players: the website ([www.cbso.co.uk](http://www.cbso.co.uk)) has prominent 'My CBSO' and 'Get Involved' sections, highlighting the opportunities to join the Friends' scheme, endow an orchestral player's chair, attend social events, read the players' blog or become a volunteer or chorus member. This 'relationship marketing' goes beyond the customer loyalty schemes now familiar from the high street and supermarket, and instead seeks to forge a distinctive and lasting relationship with concert-goers:

The marketing exchange between the artist or arts organisation and customer or patron is intensely personal. The organisation invests time, money and commitment to its mission to give the patron a rewarding experience. The audience also invests time, money and an emotional and social commitment in the arts organisation. It is an exchange of value for both sides. Audiences most

definitely offer something in return for their participation. (Rentschler et al., 2001: 123)

In any transaction of this kind, both parties are aware of the financial imperative of a subscription or loyalty scheme for the organisation, as well as the potential benefits for those who sign up. Just as charities use storytelling to promote empathy and giving amongst potential donors (Merchant et al., 2010), so arts organisations commonly promote a sense of inclusivity through their publicity, which both reinforces and is reinforced by opportunities for membership and participation.

Audience members and players alike acknowledged a sense of responsibility to CBSO that made them more inclined to participate in activities intended to secure future audiences and their ticket income: for the musicians, this meant co-operating in publicity photo shoots and Friends’ social events, and for the audience members, these loyalty factors might outweigh or supplement the practical benefits of subscribing or joining the Friends’ scheme. For both parties, attempts to make the players more ‘human’ or accessible to the audience members were understood as a strategy to increase loyalty and enjoyment amongst listeners, as shown in the players’ views (**Table 4**) and those of the audience (**Table 5**).

**Table 4:** Players’ views of making connections with the audience

Players’ willingness to be involved with audience	I like to be involved if I can with the audience, it’s part of it isn’t it? It’s part of the experience, and you know there would be no point in us being there without an audience. It’s so much a two-way thing. [P5]
Demands on players’ time and energy  Reward of audience’s appreciation	Sometimes, I get a bit, well – the concert finished half hour ago and I’m still talking to you, I really want to go home, but then [laughs], you’re like, they’re just loving it, so that’s cool. Most of the time I quite like it. It’s quite fun kind of having these people that think you’re some sort of super-hero. [P3]
Understanding of audience perspective  Recognition for players	It is all guided by the audience isn’t it? If the audience are interested in our personalities, which they seem to be, and they seem to want to know lots about the people on stage. You have to think about that. If you don’t, then you’re maintaining a rather synthetic barrier to keep them away and us on our pedestals. I also remember a time when the orchestra complained quite a lot, that all the publicity was about the conductor. The orchestra, the players, they never seemed to get any recognition. People don’t complain about that one any more. [P2]
Illusion of familiarity	They are kind of funny, because they feel like they know you

	really well. And like sometimes you'll be walking down the street and they are like 'Hi...' and I'm like 'who the heck are you?' But they kind of feel really familiar with you because they see you all the time. [P3]
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**Table 5:** Audience members' views of making connections with the players

Sense of loyalty Features on individual players	Don't know any of them personally, but do feel as though they are 'our' orchestra. Would choose to hear them rather than other orchestras at Symphony Hall. Their programmes, website and advertising usually feature individual players and I enjoy this. [A115]
Feeling part of a family	Yes, we sit where we can see the players well and know a lot of them by name. We notice when they play a passage particularly well or otherwise! It makes us feel part of the musical family and helps to cultivate loyalty. [A203]
Risk of patronising the audience	I find certain aspects of the CBSO publicity that are clearly aimed at making audiences feel that the players are quirky characters (e.g. the excruciating 'comedy' photos and little biogs in the programmes) patronising and irrelevant, but it doesn't put me off going to the concerts. [A82]  I feel I know and respect them as musicians; the few that I've met have been very nice, interesting people, but I really don't need to know them beyond the music – that slaps of celebrity culture, which I despise. [A24]

The ambivalence towards social connections with the players was perhaps greater amongst the audience members – though it must be borne in mind that the players who were willing to be interviewed by us were likely to be those who felt most positively about social contact outside the orchestra, while amongst the larger audience sample a wider range of views was represented. Both groups, however, demonstrated empathy with the other half of the audience-performer dyad: audience members who were more resistant to familiarity with the players recognised that this might not be welcomed by them, while players sought to understand the audience's enthusiasm by relating it to their own hobbies – “like when I go to the football, and I get all excited about it [...] they think it's that fantastic, you know” [P4]. While the opportunity for social contact might therefore be welcomed as an indication that the CBSO appreciate their audience, the underlying priority is for musical excellence: “I wouldn't bother to go unless they were, first and foremost, a very good orchestra that played fine music” [A135].

The most intensive level of audience-player interaction offered by the CBSO is the chair endowment scheme, whereby an individual or group sponsors a particular player for

around £100 a month, and has direct contact with them through pre-concert drinks once a season and an annual donors' dinner. The six players whom we interviewed were all in endowed chairs, and although they reported an initial reticence for the scheme amongst their colleagues, they felt "it has born nothing but good fruit really" [P2]. Several players had gone beyond the officially stipulated levels of contact with their endowers to form real friendships: [P5] described how "if I fancy having a cup of tea before a concert then yeah I'll just text her, or she'll do the same", while [P2] recalled having a chair endower of a similar age to him who "had all sorts of interests which were similar to mine. I could just talk for hours with him about trains and boats, and things". The scheme also helped to increase understanding of the audience perspective on the CBSO: "It's just nice to talk on a regular basis to a member of the audience who comes to concerts to support you. Then you start to see things from their point of view" [P4]. This empathy between players and audience members has not often been reported – at least in this direction – and is a welcome challenge to the established views of orchestral players as being cynical and dissatisfied in their work (Levine & Levine, 1996). Amongst our admittedly small sample of players, there seemed to be acknowledged value in their relationships with audience members, suggesting that audience loyalty could bring benefits to the organisation beyond the social and financial aims most often at the heart of such schemes.

None of our audience interviewees were chair endowers, and so we were unable to get the other side of the story firsthand. Only three respondents showed awareness of the scheme: one because some friends were involved, and another because she had seen it advertised on the website or in a programme and had "thought, oh, if I had the money I'd like to do that" [A52]. The third expressed "distaste" for the idea of sponsoring a player, stating that "I'd sooner sponsor an instrument rather than a human being" – perhaps reflecting the initial reaction of the orchestra about whether endowers "will be too much in the way, or they'll be a bit annoying" [P5], which had proved over time to be an ungrounded concern. Clearly the chair endowment scheme is suitable for only a small number of audience members, not least because of its cost, but it does seem to be an imaginative supplement to the subscription and Friends' schemes, and one which explicitly values the social contact between players and listeners.

The range of responses on the topic of connections between players and audience members prompts some reflection on how the cult of celebrity (referred to by [A24] in Table 5) and the myths of musical genius (Sloboda et al., 1994) might affect the ways in which audience members perceive the orchestra and its players. The need to see the orchestra as a whole as being of the highest standard is paramount, and a slight distance helps to preserve the mystique that contributes to this: "Feature articles border on the intrusive and risk dumbing down, while being so close is perfectly sufficient" [A201]. Within audience members' watching of the orchestra, however, an assumed intimacy with the players is created through the body language and physical expression of those on stage: "My knowledge of them individually and personally is zero. Their personalities come over to me through their playing and their obvious enjoyment in making music" [A95]. This

identification of a ‘playing persona’ is not the same as a personal friendship, and the mixed responses from the audience members were perhaps as much an indication of their different interpretations of the concept of ‘knowing’ the players, as of their level of engagement with the orchestra. A sense that these highly accomplished players are within reach, yet still at a professional distance, epitomises the experience of live listening, whereby all participants are connected during the performance, but take their separate responses away at the end of the concert. Knowing more about the players is therefore unnecessary to many listeners, and yet the explicit willingness to engage socially with the audience helps even those who do not take up the opportunity to identify with an open ethos and a sense that “CBSO is your ‘local team’ and you are one of the family (!)” [A127]. Implicitly, however, the players and audiences remain two distinct groups – communities within communities – and the sense of connection between a player and an audience member remains an exception within an event which is structured to separate their experiences, as the backstage world meets that of the auditorium for clearly-defined periods of time and specified activities. The divisions are perhaps not as powerful as those depicted by Christopher Small in *Musicking* (1998), his analysis of the symphonic concert as a hierarchical social event, but they are there nonetheless: the blurring of boundaries lies largely within the control of the management, who decide how to present the orchestra, and the players, who cooperate in this presentation to a greater or lesser extent.

### 5. Musical choices: audience and performer views on repertoire

Throughout the discussions of audience demographics, frequency of attendance and enjoyment of CBSO concerts, questions of musical choice were a strong theme. Lighter, popular programmes were widely viewed as attracting younger audiences (see [P5], Table 3), while frequent attenders showed enthusiasm for the substantial works and symphonic series that are also a regular feature of CBSO programming. While concert choice was often dictated by practicalities of cost, concert start time and conflicting commitments, repertoire decisions ranged across a spectrum from favouring familiar works to seeking something new, as shown in **Table 6**.

**Table 6:** Audience decisions on repertoire

Opportunities to hear works rarely played live	[For] me it’s hearing things often that I don’t get to hear regularly in concert. Like the Berg Violin Concerto and King Roger, where very rarely do you get the opportunity to hear them live. I like hearing music that I haven’t heard before. The one thing that can put me off going to a concert is if – I love Beethoven and Brahms etcetera – but you know, [...] if I hear another Brahms symphony I’m going to scream! And I think there are so many wonderful composers that don’t get a look in, that I know that I could spend the rest of my life going every night to Symphony Hall and I won’t
Hearing familiar music too often	
Live listening to works known from recordings	



	hear them. And so for me, stand-out concerts usually include something that I don't know or is relatively new to me, or I've only got on disc. [A24]
Familiar music or relatively safe choices  Avoiding 'overly modern' music	Generally I tend to go to things that either I know I will love from repeated hearings, or I go to things where I'm not absolutely sure and I want to find out. I tend to avoid anything that is overly modern. There [are] a number of contemporary composers who I would pay money to avoid. [A18]
Unfamiliar music as a vehicle for the orchestra  Expectation of high standards in familiar repertoire	I think something unfamiliar often. You know, which makes you actually really listen and think [...] music which shows off the virtuosity of the orchestra, where you come out thinking "gosh, they played that really well". And that isn't usually something like a Beethoven symphony or a Brahms symphony, because they'll play it well whatever, you know? [A12]
Playing safe for a reliable experience	I'm quite careful about what repertoire I pick, so I suppose that's a bit playing it on the safe side – I go and see things that I know I'm going to enjoy, really. So no, I've never come away and thought "that was a waste of time". [A32]

Regular and frequent attenders show themselves to be rooted in the 'familiar' repertoire of nineteenth century symphonies, but open to new experiences, particularly where these are informed by prior listening to recorded music: "Obviously you can never really feel you know something until you've heard it played live. But it's [...] pretty rare that I'll go to a concert when I don't know the piece" [A136]. Those who chose new repertoire were more likely to be "not sure" [A18] of their preference, rather than completely open minded – the exception to this being the subscription ticket holders, whose advance booking for most or all of the concerts in the series brought them in contact with music they would not necessarily have selected for themselves (see **Table 7**).

**Table 7:** Views on repertoire from season ticket holders

Going to some concerts with low expectations  Listening 'properly' and being surprised	I mean sometimes I go to a concert thinking "I wouldn't choose to go to this" if it's something I don't really like, sort of Shostakovich or Tchaikovsky [...]. But then actually, you know, you listen to it – because you're there you listen to it, and I actually come away thinking "well, you know, I've never really listened to it properly before". You know, I've got a prejudice against such a thing and listening, actually being there and listening to it, you feel a bit more positive about it. [A12]
Rewards of listening to unfamiliar music	One of the pleasures of a season ticket I think is that it makes you go to hear pieces of music that you might not have chosen to. And quite often that's much more rewarding than going to hear something that

<p>Not always enjoyable – but variety is still preferable</p>	<p>you know quite well and, you know, you’re just used to. So there are obviously pieces of music that I’ve heard and haven’t enjoyed, but I prefer to hear, I like to hear something new, you know, I like to be forced in a way by the season ticket to have to listen to something, to be exposed to something I wouldn’t naturally choose. [A44]</p>
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The season ticket holders’ views suggest a difference in listening experience between music they are “used to” [A44] and unfamiliar repertoire which makes them “actually really listen” [A12], and variations in prior listening experience mean that this threshold of concentration and engagement will vary amongst the audience as a whole. Several respondents characterised CBSO concert-goers as being particularly attentive, in contrast with Terry O’Sullivan’s focus group with the same organisation, where there were complaints about the coughing and restlessness of other listeners (O’Sullivan, 2009). In our survey, and in the comments included in the 90<sup>th</sup> birthday concert brochure, the impression of a more discerning and committed audience was to the fore: “A CBSO audience pauses at the end of a piece until the conductor’s hands have gone down. Only a CBSO audience does that. That pause is priceless” [A58]. Listeners spoke about the differences between live and recorded music, and while acknowledging the importance of recorded listening in their daily lives, the distinctiveness of the concert hall experience was highly valued by the majority: “At its best, it’s, you know, everything else, for the period while you’re there, you think about nothing but the music” [A32].

Some audience members spoke favourably of the CBSO’s efforts to engage audiences with new repertoire, through pre-concert talks and the Tuned In concerts, described by one listener as follows:

The other thing they’ve introduced – you probably know – is the Insight. We have normally Stephen Johnson and the orchestra on the stage for the first part of the concert, playing through works, bits of works, a work – you know, with illustrated snatches and then more talk. And then the whole thing in the second half. I’m sure it’s called Insight. It’s not that important is it really? I can’t find it. Erm...Yeah, no there is one. Sibelius. Oh, because I took my friend Mick to one of those – Shostakovich 4. Which is very brave of him, really. Ignite it’s called I think. Is it called Ignite? Tuned In, that’s what it’s called. Yeah they do, well the next one is Sibelius’s 5th Symphony. With the orchestral examples, and then the interval, and then the symphony. Excellent idea. [A19]

In his encouragement of his friend’s attendance coupled with a vagueness about the name of the initiative, [A19] illustrates the range of meanings that CBSO has for its various audiences. This regular attender approves of the provision for new audience members, while not quite remembering the details, and he empathises with his friend Mick, facing the challenges of listening to unfamiliar repertoire: “something like Shostakovich 4, which I had

heard before, I find quite difficult. And Mick said if he hadn't gone to the talk he'd have no idea what the hell was going on" [A19]. In our reporting back to CBSO, the management expressed some frustration that suggestions from the audience for recruiting new listeners often overlapped with initiatives that were already in place. O'Sullivan reports a similar lack of awareness but considers this 'a testament, perhaps, to focused targeting' (O'Sullivan, 2009: 220): we too would interpret the audience's ideas as being well-meaning, and evidence of shared concerns for new audience recruitment, even if their knowledge of the full range of CBSO's work was sometimes hazy. The experience of Mick and his friend show how challenging repertoire choices need not be a barrier to new attenders; indeed the comments from our respondents show a high level of exploration amongst listeners, and a willingness to extend the boundaries of existing repertoire knowledge.

For the players, comments on repertoire were fairly minimal, though one player felt the CBSO to be less bound by conventional programming than some of the London orchestras, and echoed many of the audience in appreciating "[the] variety, that you might do a film night, you might do a James Bond night, then you might do a Mahler 3" [P1]. Another saw the advantages in playing familiar repertoire, and even doing the same concert several times in a week: "A lot of the repertoire I've now done already, so when it's coming around now I've done it before, so I can then say, well I'll try it this way. Getting the chance to do stuff different ways." [P3]. [P5] agreed that after thirty years with the orchestra, "I still mostly love everything we play", and overall the players cited respect for the conductor and for the quality of the orchestra as a whole as being more important factors than repertoire in their enjoyment of CBSO membership. One string player referred to her memories of youth orchestra in describing the essence of orchestral playing: "Rehearsing it, and being with all these people, and that sort of experience, of being in a massive team and creating music" [P5]. There is a suggestion within that quote that satisfaction in orchestral playing is as much about the process, problem-solving, and creativity of making a performance together, with the choice of repertoire providing a vehicle for this rather than assuming the significance that it does for some audience members. Players also encounter a great deal more repertoire than all but the most dedicated audience members, making it likely that they will readily find pieces they particularly enjoy, and that the variety itself will sustain their musical engagement.

In attitudes to repertoire, audience members and orchestral players show themselves once more to be sympathetic to one another's needs and preferences, while having an understandably different outlook on the programming aims of the organisation. Their different perspectives show the extent to which context and quantity of musical engagement affect the concert experience: for the orchestral players, and for regular concert-goers, there will always be another concert again soon – while for less frequent attenders, there is perhaps a greater pressure for each concert to be memorable and fulfilling, and for future attendance to be reduced or withdrawn if this is not the case. A live musical event builds upon layers of past musical experience, with loyalty to the organisation highest amongst those who come most frequently to play or listen, and most vulnerable

amongst those whose decision to attend is more considered and less habitual. These attitudes support the theory of 'place attachment' in environmental psychology (Kyle et al., 2004), whereby users of a particular space become increasingly loyal as their positive experiences of events there are reinforced. The listener who feels that "as a local native they are 'MY' BAND!!!" [A58] demonstrates emphatically that repeat attendance fosters a sense of belonging and loyalty, so building a trust in the organisation that encourages open-minded attendance. Both players and season ticket holders, by attending most or all concerts, remove themselves from decisions about programming and seem therefore to be most accepting and appreciative of the variety of repertoire played by the orchestra; where decisions are made more rarely, there is greater room for dissatisfaction or a sense of having missed something in another, not-attended concert. While individual concerts are undoubtedly special and distinctive, therefore, concert-going appears to be strengthened by context, and by having abundant access to a variety of experiences. Getting new listeners to concerts is therefore only the first part of the challenge for arts promoters; enabling repeat attendance and a rich body of experiences is an even greater task, and one which substantively changes the listening experience and the relationship with the organisation.

## **6. Conclusions and implications**

In exploring the views of players and audience members, we have attempted to disentangle some of the musical, social and personal aspects of the live classical concert, and the expectations, decisions and experiences that lead people to attend, and to continue attending. We have been able to access only a partial picture of the barriers to attendance, though even amongst our respondents these were considerable – the financial, practical and attitudinal obstacles to engaging with an orchestra would be much greater in the wider population, and this remains a challenge for researchers in the arts, as much as for arts promoters themselves. Our research verifies the findings of previous studies with classical music audiences in terms of age distribution, expectations of live listening, and the high value and loyalty associated with repeat attendance (cf. Pitts & Spencer, 2008); our findings are also largely consistent with Terry O'Sullivan's (2009) study with the same organisation, as would be expected if the methods of each were robust.

Where our study is distinctive is in its portrayal of the inter-relationships amongst concert participants, both on and off the stage. By including the players' perspective (though limited through the low recruitment of participants), we have provided new insight on the mutual understanding of performers and audience, and on the extent to which their knowledge of one another's priorities and experiences is important to the success of the concerts and the organisation. The marketing strategies and loyalty schemes used by CBSO, in common with many classical music providers, make much of the players' personalities and promote an ethos of inclusivity and access to performers – a strategy which was shown to be accepted by the players, and welcomed to varying degrees by audience members. While not all audience members wished or were able to participate in the loyalty schemes, these appeared to cement the regional identity of the orchestra, making the players familiar

to the audience members, and creating a sense of ‘knowing the orchestra’ which was an incentive to repeat attendance. For players too, the opportunities to meet members of the audience helped create an empathy with the keen listeners’ perspective – often necessarily different from that of the professional players.

We have also demonstrated the cumulative effects of repeat attendance, and shown how long-term engagement with a performing group helps reinforce a sense of belonging and familiarity, as well as providing a context for listening which encourages an open-mindedness to new repertoire. Less regular attenders were, by definition, more selective in their programming choices, and more likely to ‘play safe’ in choosing music already known to them from recordings or previous attendance. The research therefore shows the importance of regular attendance in sustaining and building audience loyalty, which is to some degree at odds with the focus on bringing in new audiences as a way of developing the organisation. Reaching more diverse audiences is often seen as a social and moral imperative – built into the requirements for charitable and public funding, for example (see Kawashima, 2000) – but arts organisations will be aware of the greater financial safety of increasing the engagement of those people already convinced of the value of their product (Hand, 2011: 95). The business and cultural aims of the organisation can sometimes be in tension, and our respondents implicitly (or sometimes explicitly) showed an awareness of the social responsibilities of the CBSO, not just to provide work for the players and good value, high quality musical performances for the existing audience, but to contribute to the cultural life of the city and to bring classical music to under-represented groups, particularly young people.

The social aspects of concert-going can be too much emphasised in both research and marketing: high quality music-making was the underlying rationale for attendance in most cases, though our respondents were less vociferous about the distractions of live listening than in O’Sullivan’s (2009) study, perhaps because our wider sample reached beyond the highly engaged listeners of O’Sullivan’s focus groups, and so included respondents who were less demanding of the experience. The human interactions of the concert hall are perhaps best understood on a continuum, from those players and audience members who value genuine individual connections with one another, to those who are content with an assumed intimacy created through recognition of the people around them and mutual engagement in a shared activity. By this argument, opportunities for interaction with players, or for knowledge and familiarity acquired through publicity and programme features, are valuable to all audience members, whether they acknowledge this or not, since they create an ethos of community which supports the listening experience throughout that continuum. Our study has shown, therefore, the contribution of human interaction in live listening – the audience is more than ‘a collective and noisy opinion’ expressed at the end of a performance (Rosen, 2002: 121), and the players more than the producers of the notes.

Future research could consider more directly the ways in which the fulfilment and enthusiasm of frequent attenders might be replicated throughout the audience, making new audience members feel welcome and occasional attenders more inclined to go to

concerts more frequently. The strengthening of the concert-creating community appears to rest on a growth in familiarity and loyalty, rather than necessarily upon an increase in interaction, which would be unwelcome to some listeners whose stated priority is the music 'alone'. We would suggest that isolating the musical quality from the social experience is a false separation, however, not only for the notions of friendship and belonging which will be valued by some members of the audience, but also for the listening experience, which is strengthened by the collective act of engagement.

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**Kate Gee** completed a PhD at the University of Sheffield in 2010 on the professional identity of brass musicians. She has taught psychology and counselling skills at Sheffield Hallam University, and is now lecturer in the Applied Social Sciences department at Canterbury Christ Church University.

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## **Appendix A: Audience questionnaire**

University of Sheffield and CBSO audience questionnaire, Autumn 2010.

Thank you for responding to our questionnaire about your experiences with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, and your attitudes to music more widely. We're a team of researchers from the University of Sheffield, currently working with the CBSO on a project about how music organisations work and what they contribute to people's lives. We'll be using our research to help the CBSO gain deeper understanding of their audience to inform future plans, and to contribute to academic research on experiences of live music listening. All your responses will be treated in confidence and will be used anonymously in any reports or publications arising from this study. If you would like to know more about our work, please see our website – <http://www.sparc.dept.shef.ac.uk/>. Many thanks for your participation.

### **A. First, some questions about your concert attendance**

1. How often do you attend the following types of concerts (please tick all that apply):



	Most Weeks	Most months	Two or three times a year	Once a year or less	Never
CBSO evening concerts at Symphony Hall					
CBSO matinee concerts at Symphony Hall					
CBSO Family concerts					
CBSO Friday Night Classics concerts					
Centre Stage at CBSO Centre					
Concerts in the Birmingham International Concert Season					
Welsh National Opera at Birmingham Hippodrome					
Birmingham Royal Ballet at Birmingham Hippodrome					
Other classical concerts in Birmingham					
Classical concerts outside Birmingham					

2. How do you decide which concerts to attend?

3. What reasons may make you choose not to attend a particular concert?

**B. Next, your thoughts about the CBSO and Symphony Hall**

4. Which aspects of the CBSO's marketing do you read regularly (please tick all that apply):

- website   
  season brochure   
  letters sent directly to you   
  MusicStand (quarterly newsletter)   
  concert programmes   
  other printed materials   
  monthly e-newsletter

5. How well do you feel that you know the CBSO's players, conductors and Music Director – and what contributes to this?

b) Is this aspect of the CBSO's concerts important to you – and if so why (or why not)?

6. What particularly appeals to you, if anything, about Symphony Hall as a concert venue (e.g. the acoustics, the ambience, the foyer areas...)?

7. What would you change, if anything, about Symphony Hall as a concert venue?

**C. Some questions about the CBSO audience**

8. From your perceptions of other people attending concerts, how would you describe a *typical* CBSO audience member?

- Age and gender

- Musical interests/experience
- Likely occupation
- Other characteristics

9. How closely do *you* fit the pattern you have described above?

10. Do you feel part of the “regular” CBSO audience? Please explain why (or why not) and what contributes to this.

11. How would you describe the experience of attending a CBSO concert to someone who has never been to one before?

**D. Now turning to your views on classical music concerts in general ...**

12. In your opinion, what makes the experience of attending a classical concert enjoyable?

13. What would you change, if anything, about the experience of attending classical music concerts?

14. In general terms, how would you describe the experience of going to a classical concert to someone who has never attended one before?

**E. And some broader questions about music in your life**

15. How important is attending classical concerts in your life? *Please explain...*

16. What, if any, are the other main musical activities in your life – and how important are they?

	Very important	Fairly important	Not important	Never tried
Listening to recorded music				
Singing to an audience or rehearsing for a performance				
Playing a musical instrument to an audience or rehearsing for a performance				
Playing an instrument or singing for your own pleasure				
Writing music				
Going to see musicals/music theatre				
Going to see opera/operetta				
Going to hear jazz				
Going to other live music events				

b) Please add any comments here about the musical activities you most enjoy or do most frequently:

17. How would you describe the musical scene in Birmingham as a whole?

18. What would you say the CSBO contributes to musical life in Birmingham?

**F. Finally, please give us some brief information about you ...**

19. Are you:  17 or under  18-25  26-35  36-45  46-55  
 56-65  66-75  76 or above

20. Are you:  male  female

21. Please tell us your main occupation (and state if you are retired):

22. Please tell us how far you usually travel to attend CBSO concerts:  less than 5 miles  5-10 miles  10-20 miles  20-50 miles  More than 50 miles

23. Please tell us whether you usually go to concerts:  on your own  to meet up with friends  with a partner or family  other (please explain)

24. At which CBSO concert did you hear about our research?

**MANY THANKS FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS SURVEY**

*We'd like to ask some audience members a few more questions about their experiences of attending CBSO concerts. If you are willing to take part in a follow-up interview, please give your contact details below:*

NAME:

TELEPHONE:

E-MAIL:

**Appendix B: Audience interview schedule**

**1. Can we start by talking about your history with the CBSO:**

- What was your first encounter with the orchestra?
- How did your connection with the CBSO develop from there?

**2. Has your experience of attending CBSO concerts changed since you first started attending?**

- Developing knowledge about the music; about the players (musicians and conductor) – how do these affect your experience?
- Feeling 'at home' within the concert hall, and with the other audience members?  
Actually knowing other attenders / recognising familiar faces / just a sense of being amongst a group of like-minded people? Again, how important is this in your attendance decisions and your experience / enjoyment?
- Has anything about the concerts themselves changed? [programming / personalities of the players or conductors / popularity of the concerts]

**3. Can you tell me about a CBSO concert that's been a highlight for you?**

- What qualities made the concert special?
- Did that concert have any impact on your future listening or attendance?

**4. Have there been CBSO concerts that you haven't enjoyed?**

- What didn't you enjoy – music, performers, own state of mind...?

**5. Is there anything you would want to change about attending CBSO concerts?**

**6. Are you a friend / subscriber / chair endower?**

- What does that bring / mean to you?

**7. How important is going to CBSO concerts within your concert attendance generally?**

- How does it compare to / interact with the Town Hall/Symphony Hall international concert season?

**8. What are your impressions of Symphony Hall as a venue – do you enjoy going to concerts there?**

- Q. responses as prompts – what they like / don't like.
- Favourite place to sit? If so, why do you like to sit there?
- How does Symphony Hall compare to other venues in which you see classical music?

**9. What do you feel that the CBSO contributes to cultural life in Birmingham?**

- What does it bring? What is unique about it?

**10. Is there anything the CBSO could be doing to nurture audience members' loyalty to the orchestra further?**

**11. Do you have any ideas about how new audience members could be introduced to the CBSO and encouraged to attend concerts – or is the CBSO already doing enough?**

**12. And thinking more generally about the concerts that you go to, how does attending concerts fit in with the other things that you do in your spare time?**

- Does it take priority? Or more of a 'now and again'?
- How important to you is attending classical concerts? What do you get out of it / enjoy about it?

**13. How do you generally choose which classical concerts to go to?**

- Performers
- programme
- familiarity: music you know / don't know / a mix
- venue
- advertising

**14. What kinds of things are important in a concert in order for you to enjoy it?**

- Q. responses as prompts

- Quality of performers
- Repertoire played
- Sense of communication from performers. Sense of enjoyment from performers?
- Individual experience – being excited / transported by the performance

**15. Is there an element to which going to classical concerts is a social activity for you?**

- Social vs. individual experience
- Is it important to you that an audience is 'well-behaved'? Why/ why not?

**16. How does attending live music compare to listening to a recording, in your experience?**

- Visuals
- Communication
- One-off event...
- Do live events offer you something that listening to recorded music doesn't?

**17. You said on the questionnaire that you listen to recorded music [fairly regularly]. Can you tell me a bit about when you listen to recorded music and what kind of a role it fulfils for you?**

- Situations in which they listen: where, when, why

**18. Are there any ways in which your live and recorded listening interact?**

- Use Q responses as prompts if appropriate
- e.g. would you listen to a piece before going to hear it live / listening after / memories of an event
- Is this usually a positive relationship, or does it have hindrances?

**19. What kind of a role does music play in your life overall?**

- Social, enjoyment, escape, relaxation, satisfaction

**20. Is there anything about classical concerts as a whole that you would change if you could?**

- Programming
- Formality
- Prices
- Venues...

**21. Is there anything else you'd like to say about the CBSO or about classical concerts more generally?**

## **Appendix C: Player interview schedule**

**Would you mind just saying your name, age, instrument, and position clearly for the tape.**

**And now can you start by talking about how you began music, and your family background?**

- When did you start, how long have you been playing?
- Does music run in your family? / parents / brothers / sisters
- At what point did you know music was what you wanted to do?
- Did you have any musical role models whilst you were learning? / Do you still have any?
- Did you go to music college / university? Do you remember why they made those choices?

**Can we talk a bit about your career since you finished education?**

- How easy / tricky was it to transition from college into your career as a musician?
- Were your aims to freelance / go for a job? Why did you have these aims?
- Are you in your ideal job?
- How did you develop your career?
- What sort of skills / qualities do you think you need to be a good orchestral musician?

**So I want to talk a bit more about your identity as a musician and your orchestral work ...**

- What keeps you motivated and developing your musical skills / ability?
- Is there such a thing as professional development for you? How do you keep developing musically / personally?
- If the CBSO were to offer you professional development what would you want?
- Do you have someone that you could call a mentor / role model? (What role did your teacher / other members of your section / colleagues beyond the orchestra / family / friends have?)
- Has your focus on orchestral work / freelancing / teaching shifted over your career?
- Would you say music was integral to your identity / sense of who you are?
- How long will you keep doing orchestral work / will you ever retire?

**Can we talk more specifically about your work with the CBSO?**

- You've worked with the CBSO for \_\_\_ years. (make sure of role)
- What is your section like?
- Have you worked for any other orchestras? What makes this organisation unique / an organisation that you want to stay with? What are the benefits of playing in a regional orchestra like the CBSO?
- How does it support you in continuing to fulfil your own musical ambitions? / How does it contribute to you developing as a musician?
- How is the orchestra viewed by other musicians outside the CBSO?
- What do you think about the public 'image' of the orchestra – (look at the marketing that is on the website – images / straplines to make it appear more personal). Does it reflect the real identity of the orchestra?
- Would you be keen to develop your career by playing for any other orchestra? If so what / why etc?
- What do you think about the relationship between this orchestra and the city of Birmingham? How is it received / perceived etc.?

**If we talk briefly about your experiences of doing a concert:**

- Going to a concert is a social experience for an audience, but a work experience for you. Are there elements of doing a concert that are social?
- Have your experiences of doing concerts with the CBSO changed over time? (Become easier / repertoire / players / sound etc. of the orchestra)
- Do you ever consider the audience when you are playing?
- What do you think about the CBSO audiences? (Do you recognize any of the audience / do you feel at home in Symphony Hall?)
- What is Symphony Hall like as a home venue? What changes would you make?
- Is there a particular concert experience that has been a highlight for you? If so, what and why (either good or bad).
- What about the relationship between the CBSO and wider cultural life in Birmingham?