

CHAMBER MUSIC IN ALTERNATIVE VENUES IN THE 21ST-CENTURY U.S.:
INVESTIGATING THE EFFECT OF NEW VENUES ON CONCERT CULTURE, PROGRAMMING
AND THE BUSINESS OF CLASSICAL MUSIC

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates chamber music performances outside of traditional concert venues in the U.S. in the 21st century. The literature review traces the use of non-traditional venues throughout history from Bach's coffee house concerts to the gallery and loft concerts, which first emerged in the 1950s and 60s. The literature review will also look at the business of classical music established in the 20th century.

The study explores whether new venues have changed the landscape of classical music by interviewing players and concert promoters who present concerts in non-traditional venues as well as owners of popular music venues, which host classical music. Using these individuals' experience in presenting concerts in both traditional and non-traditional venues, the study articulates the change in concert atmosphere between these two types of venues. It also illuminates how musicians change their programming and concert presentation for new venues. Finally, the study investigates the financial arrangements between audience, performers, presenters and venues to discover any differences in this system between traditional and non-traditional venues.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 2: A HISTORY OF ALTERNATIVE VENUES.....	4
2.1 ALTERNATIVE VENUES 1500 - 1950.....	5
2.2 HAPPENINGS.....	14
2.3 LOFTS.....	17
2.4 ART GALLERIES AND MUSEUMS.....	21
2.5 DEDICATED PERFORMANCE SPACES.....	26
2.6 PUBLIC SPACES.....	33
CHAPTER 3: THE STATE OF MAINSTREAM CLASSICAL MUSIC.....	36
3.1 BUDGET INFLATION.....	37
3.2 THE NON-PROFIT BUSINESS MODEL.....	39
3.3 DECLINE OF PUBLIC SUPPORT.....	44
3.4 FINANCIAL SURVIVAL FOR MUSICIANS.....	46
3.5 THE AUDIENCE.....	49
CHAPTER 4: ALTERNATIVE VENUES IN THE 21ST CENTURY.....	57
4.1 PIONEERS.....	57
4.2 ALTERNATIVE VENUE PERFORMANCE ORGANIZATIONS.....	60

4.3 VENUES.....	62
4.4 ALTERNATIVE VENUES GO MAINSTREAM.....	66
4.5 THE NEXT ALTERNATIVE VENUE: PUBLIC SPACES.....	67
CHAPTER 5: THE DRAW OF ALTERNATIVE VENUES.....	70
CHAPTER 6: THE BUSINESS OF ALTERNATIVE VENUES.....	75
6.1 FUNDING SYSTEMS.....	75
6.2 REVENUE.....	78
6.3 COSTS.....	80
6.4 SUBSIDIZED CONCERTS.....	81
6.5 MARKETING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS.....	84
6.6 VENUE PARTNERSHIPS.....	88
CHAPTER 7: THE AUDIENCE AT ALTERNATIVE VENUES.....	93
7.1 DEMOGRAPHICS.....	93
7.2 NEW AUDIENCES.....	95
CHAPTER 8: THE EVOLUTION OF CONCERT CULTURE.....	98
8.1 STAGES AND PERFORMANCE AREAS.....	99
8.2 AMPLIFICATION AND ACOUSTICS.....	100
8.3 NOISE LEVELS.....	102
8.4 ATTENTION AND ENGAGEMENT.....	104
8.5 CHANGES IN CONCERT PRESENTATION.....	106
CHAPTER 9: REPERTOIRE IN ALTERNATIVE VENUES.....	111
9.1 NEW MUSIC.....	112

9.2 ELECTRO-ACOUSTIC AND MULTI-MEDIA PERFORMANCE.....	113
9.3 THE EFFECT OF CONCERT ATMOSPHERE ON REPERTOIRE.....	113
9.4 COLLABORATIONS WITH POPULAR GROUPS.....	115
9.5 CHAMBER MUSIC INFLUENCED BY POPULAR MUSIC.....	116
CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSION.....	118
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	124
APPENDIX A - LIST OF INTERVIEW SUBJECTS.....	131
APPENDIX B - INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: PERFORMERS / ENSEMBLES.....	133
APPENDIX C - INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: PRESENTERS.....	135
APPENDIX D - INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: VENUES.....	137

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Classical musicians in the first years of the 21st century stormed popular music venues and began to use them as an alternative space for classical performance. By 2006, two organizations dedicated to classical performance in bars and clubs emerged: Classical Revolution and Opera on Tap. In 2008 (Le) Poisson Rouge, a New York City club created to host both classical and popular music opened its doors. Once an extremely rare occurrence, today classical musicians perform regularly at these alternative venues in most major U.S. cities. The purpose of this research is to provide the classical music industry with a clear understanding of classical music performance in bars and clubs. It investigates why classical musicians are drawn to these venues and how they affect the business of classical music, whether new audiences for classical music are attracted to these concerts and how these performances differ from those given in concert halls. Finally, the study explores how repertoire performed in alternative venues is different from the music programmed in concert halls. Alternative venues push classical music in a new direction that could aid the survival of the art form in the future.

To place these findings in historical context, the second chapter defines alternative venues and traces their use throughout history from Bach's coffee house concerts to gallery and loft concerts in the 1970s. The third chapter surveys concert

culture, the classical music business and repertoire in traditional concert halls. Chapter four follows the recent rise of popular music venues as an alternative space for classical concerts. The following chapters answer the essential questions of the study regarding the business, audience, concert culture and repertoire in alternative venues.

This study investigates the topic of alternative venues through interviews with players and concert producers who present concerts in these spaces. Owners and managers of popular music venues who host classical music were also interviewed. A certain amount of information on recent alternative venue concerts is available on ensemble, concert series and venue websites, as well as in newspaper reviews. These sources are limited and far from comprehensive. Those directly involved with presenting the events are the best available source of information on alternative venue concerts in the last 12 years.

It is, of course, beyond the scope of any study to create a completely comprehensive picture of alternative venue concerts because records have not been consistently kept. To make the study as relevant and helpful as possible to the classical music industry, it focuses on leaders in the field of alternative venue presentation. Performers, ensembles, concert presenters and venues were invited to participate in the study based upon the frequency with which they present classical concerts in alternative venues and the quality of the concerts presented. Participants include owners, music directors and managers of the Revolution Cafe, (Le) Poisson Rouge, Barbès and the Waypost. These venues host some of the longest running, most prominent series for classical musicians in bars and clubs. Representatives of a number

of leading classical or new music ensembles that perform regularly in alternative venues participated. These ensembles include Project Trio, Victoire, Alarm Will Sound, the JACK Quartet, the Degenerate Art Ensemble, Bang on a Can and the International Contemporary Ensemble. Soloist and alternative venue pioneer Matt Haimovitz also took part. Finally, representatives for the organizations Classical Revolution and Opera on Tap, which specialize in alternative-venue performance, also shared their experiences. These participants present a wide range of perspectives on and wealth of experience in alternative-venue performance. A full list of study participants and interview questions is included in the appendix. These questions were asked of each participant although interview subjects were sometimes asked to expand upon their answers. Most interviews were conducted via video call or phone. The first citation of each interview is noted with a footnote and subsequent attributions appear in the body of the text only.

The classical music business has suffered from lack of funding and dwindling audiences in recent years. Concerts presented in alternative venues appear to be one of the only aspects of the industry that is growing and growing very quickly. Classical musicians and arts administrators need a clear understanding of how these events work and whether they are financially and artistically successful. Those in the industry could potentially use this information to help sustain the lives and artistic projects of musicians living today and expand the audience for classical music.

CHAPTER 2

A HISTORY OF ALTERNATIVE VENUES

Throughout history, unconventional venues have arisen to provide an alternative to traditional spaces for music performance. Alternative venues are places where classical music is performed less often than in traditional spaces. They tend to be new spaces for performance and provide a novel concert atmosphere for both performers and audience. Performances at these venues are generally not sponsored by the large organizations that support classical music and are usually more open to struggling artists. Often, these spaces inspire new styles of music. Over the course of history, each new alternative venue rode a wave of popularity that coincided with its novelty. Eventually, as audiences became accustomed to a non-traditional space, it either fell out of favor or became part of conventional musical life.

In the 16th to 18th Centuries, traditional spaces for chamber music included courts, small public concert halls and churches. During this time musicians also performed in alternative venues like coffee shops, taverns and pleasure gardens. By the 19th century, large concert halls became the most traditional venue for chamber music. Small gatherings in private homes, known as salons, were a popular alternative venue during the 1800s. By the turn of the 20th century, traditional chamber music venues included concert halls, private homes and universities. New

alternative venues arose in the form of lofts, galleries and art spaces in the 1950s to 1970s. These alternative venues for chamber music, like many before them, were then swept into mainstream classical musical life.

2.1 Alternative Venues 1500 - 1950

The first traditional space for chamber music was the court. There is evidence of chamber music in the courts of Italy, England and Spain starting in the 1500s.¹ In Vienna in the 1700s, most noble homes kept a staff of musicians, in addition to the musicians at the Imperial Court.² Haydn wrote chamber music for the Esterházy family for "festive social occasions."³ Much of Mozart's chamber music was written for the court of the Archbishop of Salzburg and Beethoven also wrote some early chamber music for the court in Bonn.⁴ Chamber music began as a private affair at the homes of the nobility.

Instrumental music in the church dates back to the Middle Ages or earlier. Churches represent one of the most traditional homes for chamber music throughout the history of western music. There is evidence of instruments besides the organ accompanying polyphony in the Middle Ages.⁵ During the Renaissance, church services often included performances with instruments and voice together as well as

¹ A. Hyatt King, *Chamber Music* (London: M. Parrish, 1948),10.

² *Ibid.*, 28.

³ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 41-42.

⁵ Robert J. Novotny, "Instrumental Music and the liturgy," *Caecilia* Volume 89. No. 2, Summer (1962): 55.

performances by instruments alone.⁶ Usually at that time "the same musicians who played for court dances and entertainment would be found with their instruments in the court chapel."⁷ Instruments became even more common in church services in the Baroque. Bach frequently wrote cantatas for St. Thomas' church, which combined voices and instruments. To this day, music with instruments is an important part of the musical life of most churches.

Concert halls first emerge as a traditional venue for chamber music in London. In the 1670s, several chamber music societies were formed, which hosted music both at music clubs and in private homes.⁸ The first public concert hall is claimed to be the Holywell music room in Oxford, opened in 1748, which can seat 300.⁹ Early public concert spaces were the same size as a spacious room within a private home and the audiences were of a high social class, similar to the audiences at court.¹⁰ "There was in fact no essential difference between the musical recreations of great houses and the earliest public concerts. Players, singers, and program were largely fluid. There might be solos, duets, trios, concertos, choruses, and symphonies given in quite casual order in the same programme....The whole atmosphere was far more intimate and personal, the

⁶ Ibid., 57.

⁷ Ibid., 58.

⁸ King, *Chamber Music*, 25.

⁹ George Dyson, *The Progress of Music* (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), 153.

¹⁰ Ibid.

standard of performance more casual, than we are now accustomed to in public."¹¹ The first events in concert halls grew directly out of chamber music evenings at court and in private homes and, despite the change of venue, at first resembled more casual chamber music parties.

Alternative venues to courts, churches and concert halls existed even in the 1700s. Small bands of professional musicians performed concerts in inns and taverns around England.¹² Usually these performances took place in a 'long room,' a large room within the tavern that was rented out to private parties.¹³ The St. Cecilia Society, a chamber music society that gave subscription concerts in Charleston, South Carolina, gave performances in the long rooms of several taverns and coffee houses between 1766 and 1820. These spaces included Dillon's Tavern, the Carolina Coffee House and the City Tavern.¹⁴ Some of the taverns and coffee houses, which hosted music in the 18th century, became public music halls.¹⁵

Pleasure gardens became a popular alternative venue in this time period as well. These are outdoor public gardens dedicated to the enjoyment of the general public. For example, the Vauxhall Gardens in London, opened in 1742, hosted musical concerts as

¹¹ Ibid., 154.

¹² King, *Chamber Music*, 25.

¹³ Nicholas Michael Butler, *Votaries of Apollo* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2007), 113.

¹⁴ Ibid., 113 - 123.

¹⁵ Dyson, *The Progress of Music*, 161.

well as other entertainments, including tight rope walking.¹⁶ In the 18th century there were pleasure gardens in most major cities in Europe. Both Mozart and Beethoven performed in these venues during their careers.¹⁷

The Collegium Musicum in Leipzig frequently performed in coffee shops during the 18th century. The Collegium Musicum, founded by Telemann in 1701, was a student music performance group.¹⁸ J.S. Bach took over the leadership of the group from 1729-1737 and again 1739-1741. At this time, the primary conventional venue for chamber music in Leipzig was St. Thomas' Church. Bach wrote most of his Leipzig compositions for services there. However, during this time, Bach also performed in coffee shops with the students of the Collegium Musicum. The group performed weekly two-hour concerts during his tenure. In the winter they played at Zimmermann's Coffee House in town on Friday nights from 8-10pm. The Collegium performed at Zimmermann's Coffee Garden outside the city gates on Wednesdays from 4-6pm in the summer. They added an additional Tuesday evening performance during the three annual Leipzig trade fairs.¹⁹

Coffee houses were in vogue in Leipzig and around Europe at this time. "In Bach's day, drinking coffee was very much an adult and galant activity, associated with

¹⁶ Ibid., 159.

¹⁷ Ibid., 160.

¹⁸ Raymond Erickson, *The Worlds of Johann Sebastian Bach* (New York: Amadeus Press, 2009), 163.

¹⁹ George B. Stauffer, "Music for 'Cavaliers et Dames': Bach and the Repertoire of His Collegium Musicum" in *About Bach*, ed. Butler, Gregory (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 135.

reading newspapers, lively conversation, and listening to music."²⁰ The kinds of concerts the Collegium Musicum gave at Zimmerman's Coffee House during Bach's directorship fit the atmosphere of this social activity. Like cover charges at today's clubs, the audience was charged a 3 groschen admission charge, which is about \$9 in today's currency.²¹ There were no programs for the concerts, and they probably took the form of reading sessions in which the exact program was not planned in advance.²² J.S. Bach wrote works for these sessions. Most of the works of other composers featured in the concerts were in the galant style. George Stauffer conjectures that this simpler style "appealed to the coffee-drinking, tobacco-smoking audiences...that attended the Collegium concerts."²³ Stauffer suggests that performances at coffee shops contributed to a shift towards the simpler, pre-classical style.

As public concerts in concert halls became more and more traditional in the 19th century, the musical salon emerged as an alternative space. The intimate setting of house concerts became, at this point in history, alternative to the primary venue of the concert hall. The musical salon was a meeting for both social and artistic activities in the homes of the nobility and its origins date back to the Baroque and Rococo periods.²⁴

²⁰ Erickson, *The Worlds of Johann Sebastian Bach*, 158.

²¹ Stauffer, "Music for 'Cavaliers et Dames': Bach and the Repertoire of His Collegium Musicum," 136.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ernst Hilmar, *Franz Schubert In His Time* (Portland, Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1988), 23.

There is some debate about how seriously the music was considered at these multi-functional social events. Ernst Hilmar argues that music salons in Vienna around 1800 were for entertainment and that the music was not "seriously cultivated," because amateur nobleman sat in with the professional musicians.²⁵ However, George Dyson argues that these amateur musicians among the nobility took the art of music very seriously. Hosting chamber music was very much in vogue and the "noble patrons were men who knew the music from the inside...it was a direct and personal devotion to the art."²⁶ In either case, hosting music in a salon setting became all the rage by the beginning of the 19th century and those taking part would have had a range of interests from socializing to serious music-making.

Schubertiades were probably the most famous salons in history. The term was coined when court secretary Josef Wilhelm Witteczek organized a series of concerts he called "Schubertiaden" to feature the music of Schubert.²⁷ These concerts were held in a rotating group of homes among the same social group and "mostly likely the primary objective was social" to listen to music and dance among friends.²⁸ The evenings included partner dancing and no critical discussion of the music. Schubert played his own works but also accompanied the dancing.²⁹

²⁵ Hilmar, *Franz Schubert In His Time*, 24.

²⁶ Dyson, *The Progress of Music*, 81.

²⁷ Hilmar, *Franz Schubert In His Time*, 26.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 28.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 28 - 31.

Composers including Schubert, Chopin, Schumann and Mendelssohn tailored pieces to the intimacy and party atmosphere of the salon setting. Miniatures became popular for solo piano, piano and voice, and for small chamber groups. Composers "merely adjusted...to a cult of the small form which was based upon the existence of the salon."³⁰ The salon was "a merry place where music functioned as aristocratic entertainment."³¹ The salon venue had a significant influence on the music written for it.

Part of the value to attendees of salons was the social prestige of an invitation. The salon was for "relatively small elite audiences."³² During the second half of the 19th century, printed music and the rise of piano manufacture made it possible for many middle class homes to host their own salons. At that point, the salon lost its "caché" and "elite" character.³³ The salon was no longer a sign of social prestige and the phenomenon fell out of favor among the elite.

In the second half of 19th century the large public concert hall became the dominant traditional venue for classical music performance. Several factors precipitated this shift. First, thanks to the industrial revolution, a growing middle class had money to

³⁰ Heinrich Eduard Jacob, *Felix Mendelssohn and his Times* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963), 181.

³¹ Richard Taruskin, *Music in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 78.

³² *Ibid.*, 75.

³³ *Ibid.*, 79.

spend on tickets.³⁴ Also, the grand piano was becoming louder, more powerful and better suited to a hall rather than a large room.³⁵ Finally, virtuoso performers like Paganini and Liszt attracted large audiences to their performances, necessitating larger spaces. Large concert halls were built all over Europe. Among these were the Musikverein in Vienna, built in 1870, which seats 2,000, Royal Albert Hall, built in 1871 with a capacity of 6,500, and Carnegie Hall, opened in 1891, which seats 2,645.³⁶ These halls hosted symphonic music as well as soloists and chamber music.

The erection of these great concert halls coincided with the "canonization" of the great classical composers in both symphonic and chamber music.³⁷ For example, in 1858, the popular concert series at St. James Hall in London included the music of Beethoven, Haydn, Mozart, Mendelssohn and Weber.³⁸ By 1870, 80% of the music being performed was by dead composers, as compared to 1800, when 80% of the music played was by living composers.³⁹ Performing music that was time-tested ensured high audience turnout and, as Richard Taruskin points out, "Veneration of the masters,

³⁴ Taruskin, *Music in the Nineteenth Century*, 676.

³⁵ King, *Chamber Music*, 54 - 57.

³⁶ Taruskin, *Music in the Nineteenth Century*, 676 - 679.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 79.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 680.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

moreover, conferred a cachet not only on producers and purveyors, but on consumers, too."⁴⁰

By the late 19th century, conventional venues for chamber music spanned a large variety of settings. For example, this music had moved into large public concert halls. A popular chamber music series took place in St. James Hall from 1858 - 1898.⁴¹ St. James Hall, opened in 1858, had a seating capacity of 2,127.⁴² Chamber music was still presented in more intimate settings, including private homes and smaller public places. The South Place Sunday Concerts in London, a chamber music series in the National Gallery, spanned from 1887 to 1946.⁴³ In the U.S., Mrs. Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, an important patron of chamber music, established chamber music concerts, starting around 1917, in the auditorium in the Library of Congress and in a festival in the Berkshires.⁴⁴ A great number of chamber concerts in the 20th century took place at colleges and universities, where many composers and performers were employed.⁴⁵ Chamber music in the early 20th century played in homes, concert halls, libraries, museums, outdoor festivals and colleges.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 681.

⁴¹ King, *Chamber Music*, 67.

⁴² Taruskin, *Music in the Nineteenth Century*, 676.

⁴³ King, *Chamber Music*, 67.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 66.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 67.

2.2 Happenings

The middle of the 20th century saw the emergence of experimental performing arts in unconventional spaces. One of the first examples of this is what came to be known as the first "happening." This was an untitled event in 1952 at the dining hall in Black Mountain College.⁴⁶ The performance consisted of a series of unrelated performances of solo dance, film, slides, paintings, records, poetry reading and piano.⁴⁷ A group of artists-in-residence at the college put together the event, including the composer John Cage, choreographer Merce Cunningham, choreographer/poet Charles Olson, pianist/composer David Tudor and visual artist Robert Rauschenberg.⁴⁸ Between 35 and 50 people were in attendance, including students, faculty and locals. The audience was seated in chairs arranged into four triangles, forming a single square, and most of the "performances" occurred outside this arrangement of chairs.⁴⁹ Although the audience was seated, their attention was not directed towards a single stage area. Cage and Olson each gave lectures from the top of a ladder. A movie and slides were projected on opposite sides of the room. Tudor performed piano and Cunningham and

⁴⁶ William Fetterman, *John Cage's Theatre Pieces: Notations and Performances* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1996), 97.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Melanie Kloetzel and Carolyn Pavlik, *Site Dance: Choreographers And The Lure Of Alternative Spaces* (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2011), 7.

⁴⁹ Fetterman, *John Cage's Theatre Pieces: Notations and Performances*, 97 - 98.

the other dancers moved around the room.⁵⁰ Several features of this performance became hallmarks of experimental performances given in the 1950s through 70s. The event was multi-media and strove to create a new performance context. Moving away from a venue with a formal stage, the physical relationship of the audience and musicians changed. In addition, by moving out of a concert hall and into a dining hall, performance is seen in a new context - not presented in a concert hall built to venerate the old masters but in a place of everyday living.

John Cage never adopted the term "happening" for his own events, but he did go on to stage many more theatre pieces in collaboration with Merce Cunningham. The details of the events were often determined by chance procedures. They occurred in cafeterias, museums, plazas and gymnasiums.⁵¹ Cage developed a series of performances that he named a Musicircus. A Musicircus, like a happening, was a simultaneous performance of several multi-media events. In Musicircus Variations I - VIII, written between 1958-67, Cage addressed the issue of performance space. For example, in the score to Variations IV, he gives the following options for a performance space: "1. a theatre (with either one floor or with balcony or balconies), 2. a building with one or more floors, 3. an apartment or suite, 4. a closed space (i.e. "a cave"), or 5. an outdoor space."⁵²

⁵⁰ Michael Nyman, *Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 72.

⁵¹ Kloetzel and Pavlik, *Site Dance*, 9.

⁵² Fetterman, *John Cage's Theatre Pieces*, 125.

Clearly, Cage was open-ended about what kind of venue could hold a Musicircus or other theatre piece. Cage performed many of these pieces at art galleries, including the Palmer Gallery in LA in 1964 and the Sculpture Court of the Art Gallery of Toronto in 1966.⁵³ Since the works were multi-media with visual art elements, it is not surprising that they were often staged in galleries. Musicircuses were held in more unusual locations as well, like the Musicircus performed at the Stock Pavilion at the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana in 1967.⁵⁴ Cage was also involved in putting on an all-night concert in 1963 at the Pocket Theater in New York, a former pornography theater. The performance was of Satie's *Vexations*, an 87-second piece, repeated 840 times. Andy Warhol was among the attendees. Each was charged a \$5 admission fee but offered 5 cents back for every twenty minutes they stayed.⁵⁵ Cage continued to stage multi-media events in galleries into the 1980s.⁵⁶ Cage was pioneering in mixing new forms of expression with new venues. Within the next generation of artists were many admirers, who were influenced by his work.

Happenings became popular in the 1960s, and were staged in lofts, stores, galleries and other increasingly unconventional venues. Those organizing happenings deliberately avoided raised stages in order to encourage inter-mingling between

⁵³ Ibid., 125 - 135.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 138.

⁵⁵ Steven Watson, *Factory Made: Warhol and the Sixties* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2003), 107.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 122, 153.

audience and performers.⁵⁷ From 1958-64, happenings in New York "were as common and important to the downtown art community as more traditional gallery displays."⁵⁸ Soon museums began to commission these performance events. In 1962 the Walker Art Gallery in Minneapolis invited Kaprow to host an event, and also in 1962 Claes Oldenburg was invited to perform an event at the Dallas Museum of Contemporary Art.⁵⁹ The historian Barbara Haskell conjectures that once happenings were commissioned and brought into the commercial realm, they quickly lost their "vener of chic" and fell out of favor by the end of the decade.⁶⁰

2.3 Lofts

A new performance space that emerged in the 1960s in the New York City neighborhood of SoHo, was the loft. Artists lived in the "industrial slum" of SoHo for the cheap rents and large spaces.⁶¹ The lofts many favored were above factories and warehouses and gave visual artists the space they needed to work. At first they resided there illegally, because SoHo was not zoned to be residential. Starting in the mid-70s, SoHo was still zoned for manufacturing, but a certification system was put in place to

⁵⁷ Kloetzel and Pavlik, *Site Dance*, 8.

⁵⁸ Barbara Haskell, *Blam! The Explosion of Pop, Minimalism, and Performance 1958-1964* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1984), 42.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Richard Kostelanetz, *Soho: The Rise and Fall of an Artist's Colony* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 3.

make exceptions for artists, playwrights and composers to live there.⁶² By the mid-1970s about 3,500 people, mostly artists, were living in SoHo.⁶³

In 1960, Yoko Ono hosted a series of concerts in her loft in SoHo, organized by the composer La Monte Young. From 1960 - 61, Young presented eight programs in Ono's loft. Young said this series "was perhaps the first to take place in a loft in New York City, thus representing one of the beginnings of alternative performance spaces."⁶⁴ Ono decided to give concerts in her loft because, as she said in an interview with Kyle Gann, "in those days, there was only Town Hall and Carnegie Hall."⁶⁵ Gann declared the start of this series as the beginning of the division between "uptown" and "downtown" music. Uptown music, new music performed in Town Hall, Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center was "a continuation of the European tradition - primarily, the 12-tone tradition."⁶⁶ He defined downtown music as new music, often written for spaces south of 20th Street in Manhattan, which emphasized personal expression over tradition.⁶⁷

The concerts in Ono's loft became a place for emerging and experimental performance artists who were not welcome on the big stages of uptown New York.

⁶² Ibid., 17.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Keith Potter, *Four Musical Minimalists: La Monte Young, Terry Riley, Steve Reich, Philip Glass* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 50.

⁶⁵ Kyle Gann, *Music Downtown: Writings from The Village Voice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 4.

⁶⁶ "Breaking the Chain: An Essay on Downtown Music," Kyle Gann, accessed March 27, 2013, <http://www.kylegann.com/downtown.html>.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

Programs included Young's *Composition 1960 #*, which called for a B-natural and F-sharp "to be held for a long time," and Yoko Ono's "Wall Piece for Orchestra," in which performers bang their heads against a wall.⁶⁸ Eventually many of the artists, poets, musicians and performers involved in these early loft concerts came to be known as the performance group FLUXUS, led by George Maciunas.⁶⁹

Later La Monte Young hosted rehearsals and performances in the loft he shared with Marian Zazeela. The loft became a meeting place for musicians and visual artists.⁷⁰ Rehearsals for the ensemble Theatre of Eternal Music were held there as well.⁷¹ The group started to incorporate elements of the loft environment into their drone pieces. For example the drone the aquarium made became part of the music.⁷² Later Young and Zazeela moved into the "Dream House" on Harrison Street, and in 1979 opened the house for performances, recordings and gallery displays.⁷³

By the 1970s, loft concerts were happening all over SoHo. Philip Glass gave unadvertised concerts on Sunday afternoons in his own loft on Bleeker Street.⁷⁴ The Philip Glass Ensemble also performed his *Music with Changing Parts* at the loft of

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Haskell, *Blam!*, 53.

⁷⁰ Potter, *Four Musical Minimalists*, 53.

⁷¹ Ibid., 61 - 64.

⁷² Ibid., 70.

⁷³ Ibid., 99.

⁷⁴ Nyman, *Experimental Music*, 303.

minimalist sculptor Donald Judd.⁷⁵ Meredith Monk presented her performance art works in her own loft at this time as well.⁷⁶ Although almost all the performances going on in lofts in the 1970s were of experimental new music, there were exceptions. For example, Robert Beacher founded the SoHo Baroque Opera Company in his own loft. Beacher presented operas he revived by Rameau, Telemann, Cimarosa and Galuppi, and would sometimes combine these performances with newly commissioned works.⁷⁷

Performers and composers in the 1970s gave loft concerts for both practical and artistic reasons. Performing in your own or a friend's loft was free, an important factor to struggling artists. The lofts were also a relatively small space, perfect for a small audience of friends and fellow artists.⁷⁸ The choice of the loft as a performance space was also an aesthetic one. Composers were determined "to reintegrate their music into the normal flow of daily life. In the most obvious respect this meant rejecting the formality of classical orchestra concerts, the tuxedos and the distant proscenium stage."⁷⁹ Philip Glass said in his compositions at the time that he was "trying to alter the traditional staid concert situation."⁸⁰

⁷⁵ K. Robert Schwarz, *Minimalists* (London: Phaidon, 1996), 125.

⁷⁶ Kloetzel and Pavlik, *Site Dance*, 15.

⁷⁷ Kostelanetz, *Soho*, 107.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Gann, *Music Downtown*, 3.

⁸⁰ Richard Kostelanetz and Robert Flemming, *Writings on Glass: Essays, Interviews, Criticism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 41.

Loft concerts represented part of the "local, insider's phenomenon" of arts in SoHo in the 60s and 70s.⁸¹ When composers like Steve Reich and Glass started to gain more attention, they left this scene for larger halls and larger audiences. When Glass performed in lofts it was for, as he said, "the community of visual artists that lived in downtown New York City, theater artists, people in dance, some musicians."⁸² For both artistic and economic reasons, Glass moved on to larger, more conventional halls.⁸³ Also, in the 1980s, as SoHo became better known and more popular, rents rose, forcing many artists and galleries out of the area. This effectively ended the unique artist's colony that thrived in SoHo in the 60s and 70s.⁸⁴

2.4 Art Galleries and Museums

Art galleries and museums also emerged as new alternative performance venues in the 1960s and 70s. Visual artists and musicians lived and worked together in SoHo, and musical performances made their way to venues traditionally reserved for visual art. The minimalist composers used art galleries to host their performances and found the arts community more welcoming to their music than the classical music community at the beginning of their careers. Philip Glass said that in his early career he played "countless gallery and loft concerts" and that "it was the visual arts people who were

⁸¹ Gann, *Music Downtown*, xiv.

⁸² Kostelanetz and Flemming, *Writings on Glass*, 195.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Kostelanetz, *Soho*, 212 - 224.

really behind these events and who solidly supported them."⁸⁵ Early in Steve Reich's career "the personal, as well as aesthetic, connections he made with the art world in the 1960s allowed Reich access to art galleries as performance spaces long before he became accepted in Western classical music circles."⁸⁶

A staggering number of concerts and performance events were given in galleries and museums in the 1960s and 70s. Meredith Monk performed often in galleries when she first came to New York because she was unhappy with the raised stages of theatres.⁸⁷ Monk gave the first performance of *Juice*, a multi-media event at the Guggenheim Museum, which she chose for both its acoustic and architectural features.⁸⁸ She also gave performances at the gallery space of the Judson Church in New York, the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History and the Chicago Museum for Contemporary Art between 1967 and 1969.⁸⁹ Terry Riley participated in a number of all-night concerts at galleries, including one of the first in 1967 at the Philadelphia College of Art.⁹⁰ He played his *An All Night Flight* for solo saxophone, which lasted 8 hours, 30

⁸⁵ Philip Glass and Robert T. Jones, *Music by Philip Glass* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 23.

⁸⁶ Nyman, *Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond*, 174.

⁸⁷ Kloetzel and Pavlik, *Site Dance*, 31.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁹⁰ Wim Mertens, *American Minimal Music: La Monte Young, Terry Riley, Steve Reich, Philip Glass* (London: Kahn & Averill, 1988), 42.

minutes, including breaks for Riley where tape loops of his performance continued to play.⁹¹

Steve Reich and Philip Glass both presented gallery and museum concerts regularly from the late 60s through the early 80s. Reich developed a relationship with the Park Place Gallery, an artist cooperative run by Paula Cooper, and premiered *Piano Phase* there in March 1967.⁹² Also in 1967, Reich premiered a tape piece called *Buy Art*, *Buy Art* for a gallery show in Philadelphia, created from recordings of various artists saying "buy art."⁹³ Glass and Reich had a joint performing ensemble, later to evolve separately into Steve Reich and Musicians and the Philip Glass Ensemble, which performed at the Whitney Museum, the Guggenheim Museum and the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis from 1969-70.⁹⁴ Reich would continue his relationship with the Whitney, giving the premiere of *My Name Is: Ensemble Portrait* there in 1981.⁹⁵

Starting in the 1980s, the number of performance events in museums and galleries began to decline, especially in SoHo. As many galleries left SoHo for Chelsea and other less expensive areas, "the kinds of concerts presented in their spaces disappeared as well."⁹⁶ Performing artists also sought new venues that could

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Nyman, *Experimental Music*, 173.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 197.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 173.

⁹⁶ Kostelanetz, *Soho*, 112.

accommodate larger audiences. Philip Glass, Terry Riley, Steve Reich and Meredith Monk moved to bigger performance spaces to accommodate their "large and enthusiastic audiences."⁹⁷ Performance artist Laurie Andersen worked primarily in galleries in SoHo "until the desire for better acoustics took her to other venues."⁹⁸ However, concerts in galleries and museums still happen frequently today. Although the explosion of performances in these venues slowed starting in the 1980s, concert series at the Whitney Museum, the Walker Art Gallery and countless other museums and galleries around the country continue to thrive today. In fact, these concerts are so common in the 21st century that galleries and museums can now be defined as "traditional" venues for chamber music performance.

In the 1970s, art galleries and museums were novel places to host concerts. They were open to young and experimental artists with new ideas but little prior experience. Now many of these once revolutionary concert spaces have hosted concerts for many years, and have all the trappings of a concert hall series, including artistic directors and established funding. According to its website, the Whitney Museum has a "long-standing history of performing arts" and "formally began presenting music in its galleries in the 1960s."⁹⁹ They continue performances today and, along with presenting

⁹⁷ Adams, *Hallelujah Junction: Composing an American Life* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008), 119.

⁹⁸ Mark J. Prendergast, *The Ambient Century: From Mahler to Trance: The Evolution of Sound in the Electronic Age* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2000), 346.

⁹⁹ "The Whitney," accessed January 30, 2013, <http://whitney.org/Performances/History>.

emerging artists, continue relationships with performers like Steve Reich, who has been established in his career for decades. While some established museum and gallery series continue to support young artists, the competition to perform at these events is now much higher than in their beginnings. Long-running, established concert series can be found in museums and galleries all over the United States today.

Classical and contemporary artists working today in both traditional and alternative venues, tend to categorize museum and galleries as traditional venues. Founding member of So Percussion, Doug Perkins explained they played many of these concerts when establishing the ensemble. "I don't think we thought they were alternative because, well, certainly the music that we were doing, Steve Reich's music came out of an art gallery. So, for us that felt not alternative but in fact it felt like at home. The most appropriate venue was the art galleries."¹⁰⁰ Gavin Chuck, Managing Director of Alarm Will Sound, a contemporary music chamber orchestra, mentioned that the ensemble has "played in museums before but I wouldn't consider those unconventional or non-conventional."¹⁰¹ Galleries and museums have become a standard location for music performances in the classical genre, especially the sub-genre of contemporary music.

Although these are now established venues, they can still maintain significant differences from most concert halls. Some gallery concerts are ticketed events with standard rows of seats, an established start time and the same expectations from the

¹⁰⁰ Doug Perkins, interview by author, November 6, 2012.

¹⁰¹ Gavin Chuck, interview by author, August 30, 2012.

audience as any concert hall. Other gallery and museum concerts have a more open format. Sascha Jacobsen, bandleader and composer for the San Francisco-based Musical Art Quintet notes, "The great thing about museums is that often times people can just walk in and out as they please. You don't have to sit for the whole show. There's kids that can come and run around."¹⁰² In addition to a freer concert format, museums and galleries can bring new audiences who wouldn't seek out a classical concert in a hall. Kenny Savelson, executive director of Bang on a Can, found that when the organization performs in galleries they find "people who associate more with visual art" than with new music.¹⁰³ Art galleries and museums, which have grown into a part of classical music's establishment, continue to enrich the art with different formats and new audiences.

2.5 Dedicated Performance Spaces

SoHo in the 60s and 70s also saw the creation of several new alternative venues specifically created to host performances. These were spaces for the presentation of multi-media performances and were generally without the typical raised stage of concert halls and theatres. Packed into a 5x5 block area with multiple galleries in SoHo in 1975 were the performance spaces The Performing Garage, The Kitchen, the Dia Dance Space, The Byrd Hoffman School of Birds and the Red Spot Outdoor Slide Theater.¹⁰⁴ These spaces were usually converted buildings. The Performance Garage, for

¹⁰² Sascha Jacobsen, interview by author, October 15, 2012.

¹⁰³ Kenny Savelson, interview by author, November 16, 2012.

¹⁰⁴ Kostelanetz, *Soho*, 1.

example, was simply an open space, converted from an old truck garage, with no stage and no chairs.¹⁰⁵

The Kitchen Center for Video, Music, Dance, Performance, Film and Literature was founded in 1971 in the kitchen of the Mercer Arts Center in the Broadway Central Hotel. The group was forced to move from its original location when the roof collapsed, but kept the name The Kitchen when they moved to a loft space on Broome Street in 1973.¹⁰⁶ This new space was a large open room with cast iron columns, large windows and blackout curtains that was constantly rearranged for needs of performances and installations.¹⁰⁷ In 1986 the center moved to West 19th Street where it is still located today.¹⁰⁸

Two founders of the Kitchen, Steina and Woody Vasulka, wrote that they founded the venue "to perform an experiment" for new sounds created through a synthesizer.¹⁰⁹ Experimentalism in the arts has been a hallmark of this institution ever since. From some of the musicians' standpoint, there was also a practical reason for getting involved with The Kitchen. Garrett List, one of the early musicians to perform at

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁰⁶ Lee Morrissey, *The Kitchen Turns Twenty: A Retrospective Anthology* (New York: Kitchen Center for Video, Music, Dance, Performance, Film, and Literature, 1992), 1.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 48.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

the center, said, "we were quite simply looking for a place to play."¹¹⁰ The first music performance at The Kitchen was "A Cage Sampling Heard at The Kitchen" in 1973.¹¹¹ The center hosted different genres of experimental music by including jazz and avant-garde rock by the late 70s.¹¹² As The Kitchen became more established in the arts world, however, it was more difficult to keep its doors open to new and struggling artists. John Kelly, coming to New York in the early 80s wondered, "how to infiltrate the Ivory Tower deceptively know by the mundane title of 'The Kitchen?'"¹¹³

Many of the alternative spaces formed in the 60s and 70s did not survive the difficulty of funding those institutions through the 80s. Significant performance spaces that were forced to close their doors include the Filmmaker's Cinemathèque, The Byrd Hoffman School of Birds and the Red Spot Outdoor Slide Theater. Those that did survive into the 21st century became part of mainstream classical music. Two organizations that started as informal, artist-run spaces in the 1970s have grown up to become venerable, established New York new music destinations: The Kitchen and Roulette. The Kitchen today is still a relatively small concert space with a maximum capacity of 200. It now has a lobby with a ticket desk, 10 rows of riser seating and sophisticated built-in sound and lighting equipment. The stage is not raised and the space looks somewhat like a black box warehouse. Maintaining some of its do-it-yourself spirit, beer is sold out of giant

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 23.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 16.

¹¹² Ibid., 19.

¹¹³ Ibid., 97

buckets in the hallway to the audience seating. Although there is some difference in character from a concert hall-certainly the decor is more industrial than sumptuous-the standard auditorium seating does encourage a listening experience very similar to a concert hall.

The Kitchen's current home is a much more sophisticated, and expensive, concert space than in its original location. According to its website, the Kitchen employs 13 staff members, including 5 curators.¹¹⁴ It has been a non-profit organization since 1973 and has a 24-member board of directors.¹¹⁵ The Kitchen lists as funders on its website 28 foundations, the National Endowment for the Arts, 3 state and city agencies and 13 banks and corporations including UBS, Goldman Sachs, HSBC, Sotheby's, Time Warner and Bank of America.¹¹⁶ The Kitchen is using the same funding model as most symphony orchestras, by relying heavily on grants and corporate donations to cover costs. The Kitchen is still a place for experimental work but now this work must please a large board of directors, 5 curators and a substantial body of corporate, private and government funders.

Roulette is a performance space that grew from a loft space into a concert hall. According to Amanda Davis, a program director at Roulette, the concert series started in Jim Staley's loft in Tribeca in 1978, moved to a space on Green Street and then to their

¹¹⁴ "The Kitchen," accessed January 31, 2013, <http://www.thekitchen.org/page/23/1>.

¹¹⁵ "The Kitchen," accessed January 31, 2013, <http://www.thekitchen.org/page/163/3>.

¹¹⁶ "The Kitchen," accessed January 31, 2013, <http://www.thekitchen.org/page/167/>.

current home in the trendy Park Slope section of Brooklyn in 2011.¹¹⁷ The new Roulette is an auditorium space in a YWCA building, rented on a 10-year lease by the organization. The space has a capacity of 400 seated and 600 standing. According to Davis, the organization made some adjustments to the space by adding a second, lower stage, creating a multi-level effect, and installing sophisticated new sound and lighting systems. When they rented the auditorium it already had an open main floor, where chairs can be placed and removed, and theater chairs on the balcony level. Although the main floor space is flexible, Davis said "we wanted to have a concert hall, so it's usually seated." They have used the flexibility of the space to put performers in the audience area in the past, though. There is a bar in the lobby. Audience members are free to bring food and drink inside the auditorium but are expected to maintain total silence during the performances. "The audience is really good. Sometimes our pieces are so quiet that you can hear a pin drop," explained Davis. Roulette is now a concert hall with similar expectations for the audience as you would find in any other classical music hall.

Roulette has also become established as an organization and in its funding structure. According to its Spring 2013 program, Roulette has a 17-member board of directors, a 24-member staff and 5 interns. It lists 26 foundations, the city of Brooklyn, the New York City Council, New York Community Trust, New York State Council for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts as funders. The program also lists private individuals giving thousands of dollars each to fund the current season. Several board members are listed as having given over \$1,000 to Roulette for the current season,

¹¹⁷ Amanda Davis, interview by author, Brooklyn, NY, January 12, 2013.

including one listed as having given over \$10,000. Roulette uses a familiar mix of funding sources including foundations, government agencies and wealthy individuals, some of whom oversee the organization as members of the board of directors. According to Davis, Roulette derives additional funding from renting the space several nights a week and from the proceeds of the bar.

This established funding system helps Roulette maintain a concert hall space and pay artists flat fees, while keeping ticket prices low. Roulette strives to keep their concerts accessible financially and offers most events for \$15. The organization also strives to support young artists. They have a grant through the Jerome Foundation to host emerging artists and Davis said they utilize their younger staff to find new acts. Jim Staley, the founder of Roulette, still does most of the programming and Davis mentions that they "get a lot of the same performers performing" multiple times from season to season although new submissions "mixes the pool a little bit wider." The composer and founder of the ensemble Victoire, Missy Mazzoli, sees it as one of several "typical concert venues" for new music in New York.¹¹⁸ While it still caters to a niche market within the classical music industry of new music lovers, Roulette has become an established concert organization giving performances in a typical concert setting for classical music.

John Zorn's the Stone, a space for experimental music in New York City, is an interesting case of a relatively young and anti-establishment dedicated art space. John Zorn is a composer and saxophonist, active in the New York City avant-garde scene since

¹¹⁸ Missy Mazzoli, interview by author, November 13, 2012.

the 1970s.¹¹⁹ A 2005 New York Times article announcing the opening of the Stone explains how the space works. "There are no drinks or merchandise at the Stone, and the club is giving all the door proceeds to the musicians, each month's six-nights-a-week programming will be booked by a single musician...and the operating costs will be covered by Zorn's record-making on his own label, Tzadik."¹²⁰ The curating position is rotated on a monthly basis. The Stone's website states that, "the Stone is booked purely on a curatorial basis. We do not accept demos of any kind."¹²¹ Therefore, if you do not know one of the assigned curators, or come to their attention through public performances or connections, you cannot apply to play at the Stone. According to Joe Merolla, a volunteer working the door of the Stone on January 13th 2013, the Stone is non-profit and entirely run by volunteers. The donations from a monthly jazz improv session help to pay the rent for the storefront space.

The Stone is a small space with a capacity for around 35-40 seated and 70 standing. The door price is set at \$10 per show. Young and less established artists are able to book performances at the Stone, for example, composer and performer Leah Paul, who has a small following and connections with many experimental artists around New York. The space itself is hard to find. At the street corner the Stone's website lists

¹¹⁹ "All Music," accessed March 13, 2013, <http://www.allmusic.com/artist/john-zorn-mn0000239329>.

¹²⁰ Ben Ratliff, "For Jazz Musicians and Fans, a (Tiny) Room of Their Own," *New York Times*, April 5, 2005, accessed January 16, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2005/04/05/arts/music/05ston.html?_r=0.

¹²¹ "The Stone," accessed January 17, 2013, <http://thestonenyc.com/>.

as its location, there is a convenience store on one side of the street and what appears to be nothing on the other. On closer inspection of this seemingly abandoned corner, a small glass door has "the stone" printed on it in around 18 pt. font. Musicians arriving late to perform can be heard from inside the performance space saying, "this is it...no, really?" As musician and the Stone volunteer Joe Merolla put it, "It wouldn't be underground music if it were easy to find."¹²²

Despite its small size, difficulty to find and tiny budget, the Stone is still built on the same model of concert space as most of the performance spaces emerging from the 1970s. Chairs are often placed in rows and the expectation for the audience is silence during performances. This is a formal concert setting where the artists perform and the audience sits silent and still, only applauding when the end of a classical work is indicated. The music programmed at this space is uninhibited by large private and corporate donations or government funding but the setting is much more in line with the alternative spaces of the 1970s than of today. This space stands today between alternative and traditional concert settings.

2.6 Public Spaces

Many performers have taken their talents to the street. Performances in public spaces serve several functions. They offer emerging artists an audience they might not otherwise be able to draw to performances. They also give the general public the opportunity to encounter art in their everyday lives. One of Laurie Anderson's first famous works, called *Performance Art*, was performed on a New York City street in

¹²² Joe Merolla, interview by author, January 13, 2014, New York, NY.

1975. Anderson played the violin on top of an ice block, wearing ice skates. The piece lasted until the ice melted.¹²³ Meredith Monk used a parking lot in SoHo to stage a performance.¹²⁴ The innovative dancer and choreographer, Twyla Tharp performed in outdoor spaces, including Central Park in 1969.¹²⁵ Richard Kostelanetz, walking the streets of SoHo in the 70s, found a cellist playing J.S. Bach Suites and a brass quartet.¹²⁶ Wendy Chambers organized outdoor public activities including *Street Music* (1978). Artist Robert Moran put on activities involving entire towns.¹²⁷ In San Francisco in the 1970s, John Adams said that, "with my friends I made avant-garde music in every imaginable location throughout the city; in underground culverts, in an arboretum in Golden Gate Park...in dank storefronts and bookstore lofts."¹²⁸

An important organization in the history of alternative venues from 1979 - 1992 was the New Music America festival, a yearly event that began at The Kitchen.¹²⁹ The festival took place in a different city each year and, in 1992, featured several cities simultaneously. In 1981 in San Francisco, music for the festival was hosted at the

¹²³ Prendergast, *The Ambient Century*, 346.

¹²⁴ Kloetzel and Pavlik, *Site Dance*, 15.

¹²⁵ Kostelanetz, *Soho*, 80.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 201.

¹²⁷ Eric Salzman, *Twentieth-Century Music: An Introduction* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2002), 197.

¹²⁸ Adams, *Hallelujah Junction*, 80.

¹²⁹ Iris Brooks, *New Music Across America* (Valencia, California: California Institute of the Arts in conjunction with High Performance Books, 1992), 7.

Exploratorium. In Chicago, the festival put on events at the zoo, the pier and the harbor.¹³⁰ In the late 80s, festivals in Philadelphia, Miami and Montreal included sound installations in subways.¹³¹ In 1992, one of the most innovative cities in the use of alternative spaces in the New Music Across America festival was Portland, ME. The festival involved a piano dropped by a crane into the main square for a concert, concerts at nightclubs, and shows put on in storefront windows with the music piped out to the audience on the street.¹³² Street performances remain alternative to this day. Concerts that surprise the public by turning up in unusual places still stand outside the norm of the classical music industry. Several examples of this type of performance will be explored in future chapters.

Alternative venues stand apart from the mainstream of classical music. They often feature different music, cater to an alternative audience and create a unique atmosphere. They emerge with a different set of rules and expectations than a standard venue. In every era, the alternative venue has been defined to a certain degree by what it is not: traditional. Understanding the milieu from which an alternative venue emerged, is vital to the appreciation of that venue.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 92.

CHAPTER 3

THE STATE OF MAINSTREAM CLASSICAL MUSIC

Before investigating the effects of new venues on classical music, it is helpful to consider the state of the industry in the 20th and 21st centuries. Most classical music in 21st-century alternative venues is chamber music, largely because both the stages and concert budgets are small. However, organizations tracking the classical music industry have been most effective at tracing the largest organizations, usually symphony orchestras. Therefore this chapter will primarily focus on the best-documented aspect of 20th-century classical music, the orchestra. Most large classical music organizations are facing decreasing revenue from government and private sources. Meanwhile their audiences have steadily become smaller and older since 1980. However, in the relatively recent past, classical music was a popular genre with financially healthy organizations.

During the late 19th century and early 20th century, classical music was a popular art form with orchestras funded primarily by ticket sales.¹³³ Orchestras at the turn of the 20th century regularly performed for large, enthusiastic audiences. At the premiere of Dvorak's *Symphony No. 9* the performance was sold-out and the police

¹³³ Norman Lebrecht, *Who Killed Classical Music? Maestros, Managers, and Corporate Politics* (Secaucus, NJ: Birch Lane Press, 1998), 23.

were called to calm those that could not attend.¹³⁴ Afterwards, Dvorak was "mobbed by music critics eager to congratulate him."¹³⁵ The Philadelphia Orchestra gave 9 performances of Mahler's *Symphony No. 8* in 1916 for a total of 25,000 people.¹³⁶ In the 1929 - 30 season, the Metropolitan Opera made a profit of \$90,937, or about 1.2 million in today's dollars.¹³⁷ However, before a drop in attendance in the late 20th century, the cost of orchestral performance grew exponentially. In 1946, the average large U.S. orchestra broke even giving 100 concerts. In 1991 the average orchestra gave 200 concerts and operated at an average loss of \$735,000. The business model for arts in the United States became to "lose money wisely" as William Schumann, the first president of Lincoln Center, put it.¹³⁸

3.1 Budget Inflation

A primary reason that orchestra's budgets grew so rapidly in the second half of the 20th century was fees to conductors and soloists. An American Symphony Orchestra League study found orchestra's budgets had risen 8 times between 1971 and 1992, with the majority of the increase going to soloists and conductors.¹³⁹ The fees for conductors

¹³⁴ Alice Goldfarb Marquis, *Art Lessons: Learning from the Rise and Fall of Public Arts Funding* (New York: Basic Books, 1995), 151.

¹³⁵ Joseph Horowitz, *Classical Music in America: A History of its Rise and Fall* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2005), 537.

¹³⁶ Marquis, *Art Lessons*, 143.

¹³⁷ Lebrecht, *Who Killed Classical Music?*, 23.

¹³⁸ Marquis, *Art Lessons*, 33.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 174.

and soloists rose 35 - 50% from 1990 to 1995 alone.¹⁴⁰ Author Joseph Horowitz conjectures that the cult of great conductors and soloists, which emerged after 1930 in the U.S., sidelined the support for living composers and pushed orchestral programming in a conservative direction.¹⁴¹ Orchestras largely abandoned the idea of performing popular music of their time, even as they poured more and more money into stars with high fees.

At the same time as orchestras' budgets were far outpacing income from ticket sales, from 1950 to 1980, the arts sector in the United States had "exponential growth in financial and labor resources."¹⁴² An "art boom" occurred in the U.S. in the 1960s, when half of all orchestras worldwide were located in the U.S. From 1966 to 1974, the number of concerts given by orchestras in the U.S. grew by 80%.¹⁴³ From 1965 to 1984 the number of arts organizations in the U.S. increased by 700% and the number of orchestras increased from 58 to 145.¹⁴⁴ Not only were there many more orchestras in the U.S. by the 1980s, but they were also giving many more concerts per season. This

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 192.

¹⁴¹ Horowitz, *Classical Music in America*, 537.

¹⁴² John Kreidler, "Leverage Lost: The Non-Profit Arts in the Post-Ford Era," *In Motion*, February 16, 1996, accessed October 14, 2012, <http://www.inmotionmagazine.com/lost.html>.

¹⁴³ Marquis, *Art Lessons*, 144.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 200.

boom coincided with a large increase in the number of Americans going to college and more free time for Americans during their working years and when they retired.¹⁴⁵

Alice Goldfarb Marquis in her book, *Art Lessons*, calls this "the riddle of insolvent arts organizations in the midst of a public clamoring for more arts."¹⁴⁶ As the Metropolitan Opera was faced with financial problems and considered cancelling their season in 1960, mediator Arthur Goldberg said "the arts economic crisis was not caused by decline but by unparalleled growth."¹⁴⁷ Joseph Horowitz explained that, "Orchestras, all told, had more salaried players, more concerts, more tours. As of 1950, symphonic seasons of twenty to thirty weeks were typical in large cities. So, however, were deficits and 'save the symphony' campaigns."¹⁴⁸ During the 1960s, many U.S. university campuses built large and expensive concert halls with the assumption that "presenters needed public funding because ticket prices that would be high enough to cover all costs would drive away too much of the audience."¹⁴⁹

3.2 The Non-Profit Business Model

By the 1950s the arts industry had settled into a business model which relied on grants and individual and corporate donations to bridge the gap between ticket sale income and the cost of presenting concerts. By the 1990s, arts organizations made

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 54.

¹⁴⁸ Horowitz, *Classical Music in America*, 411.

¹⁴⁹ Marquis, *Art Lessons*, 155.

roughly half their budget through ticket sales and half by donations, mostly through wealthy individuals and foundations.¹⁵⁰ By 2000, performance income at symphony orchestras covered an average of only 45% of performance expenses alone at 32 U.S. symphony orchestras.¹⁵¹ In arts organizations "the business side theoretically fell to trustees, usually wealthy individuals willing to meet the inevitable annual deficit with personal contributions. Though facing budgets of millions of dollars, the artists found it distracting, if not demeaning, to worry about the nuts and bolts of managing the enterprise - box office, accounting, subscription sales, promotion, advertising, publicity, fundraising."¹⁵² Music organizations became heavily dependent on wealthy and corporate donors both for funding and oversight, in the form of board members.

Orchestra boards full of wealthy donors and representatives of sponsoring corporations pushed orchestras in a conservative direction. "From the beginning, orchestra boards represented the social elite; in exchange for generous contributions, this group also controlled programming."¹⁵³ These wealthy, generally older board members tended to have conservative tastes. Charged with the overseeing the finances of musical organizations, boards often insisted on classical 'hits' that could be guaranteed to fill halls, instead of investing in new music. "It became one function of the

¹⁵⁰ Kreidler, "Leverage Lost."

¹⁵¹ Robert J. Flanagan, "Report to Andrew W. Mellon Foundation," March 2008, accessed March 14, 2013, <http://www.gsb.stanford.edu/news/packages/pdf/Flanagan.pdf>, 12.

¹⁵² Marquis, *Art Lessons*, 4.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 152.

board to serve as a fiscal watchdog, restraining financially irresponsible programming—often without the benefit of musical expertise."¹⁵⁴ In the 1980s, when corporations started to sponsor arts events "most corporations were not interested in supporting experimental work. Instead, they attached themselves to the well-established organizations and expected some direct benefits from their generosity."¹⁵⁵ In 1987, Ernest Fleischmann, then the Los Angeles Philharmonic general director, noted that each year orchestras try to change and vary "what is essentially a rather limited, fairly standard nineteenth and early-twentieth-century orchestral repertoire... Is it then so very surprising that our audiences seem to get older every year and our musicians more bored and frustrated?"¹⁵⁶ Little has changed in the orchestral world's programming model in the years since then.

Another source of revenue for arts organizations during this art boom was government and private grants. The arts grant was "invented by the Ford Foundation in the late 1950s", when it began an arts subsidy program, unprecedented in the United States.¹⁵⁷ The Foundation created a series of short-term grants that required matching funding from arts organizations.¹⁵⁸ When the National Endowment for the Arts was

¹⁵⁴ Horowitz, *Classical Music in America*, 413.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 169.

¹⁵⁶ Lebrecht, *Who Killed Classical Music?*, 213.

¹⁵⁷ Kreidler, "Leverage Lost."

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

formed in 1965, a government arts subsidy program, it was also largely built around the system of matching funding.¹⁵⁹

In order to take advantage of funding offered by the Ford Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts and other foundations built on the same model, arts organizations needed to devote more and more time to grant-writing and fundraising activities. This led to the rise of the profession of arts administrator and further divorced musicians from the business of presenting concerts. The artist Loren Munk observed this phenomenon in the visual arts world in the 1980s. At a public discussion at the Galapagos Art Space on January 10th, 2013, he discussed this change. "When I first got to New York in the 80s the government was much more generous with grants" Munk said.¹⁶⁰ He described the emergence of a whole "class" of grant writers and writing grant proposals "became their art form." He went on to say that, "quality of art during that period, for me, was not great." Due to arts organizations' widespread budget shortfalls during this period, the art of the grant proposal became inextricably linked with the business of presenting classical concerts.

An ever-increasing professional support staff geared towards raising money began to exert more and more artistic control. The National Endowment for the Arts in assigning grants preferred to deal with arts administrators who were "consistent, dependable administrators, cool heads who understood how to fill out complex grant applications and meet deadlines, rather than volatile artists, their outlandish visions,

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Loren Monk, in public discussion at Galapagos Art Space, New York, NY, January 10, 2013.

unorthodox work habits, and temperamental spirits. But while professional management pleased trustees and private patrons, it dampened the creative impulse. It preferred...the well-known classical to the imaginative leap, the pedestrian to the unexpected."¹⁶¹ Marquis points out that "the NEA has spent almost all its money on good, gray, mainstream organizations that produce an unexceptionable, aging repertoire unlikely to disturb anyone."¹⁶² This system put more and more money towards the most conservative, largest organizations in the classical music world.

In the last 60 years, classical music organizations have been selling their product as rarified art. This marketing strategy could be related to the non-profit structure. To justify a special tax-exempt status, most arts organizations worked to define themselves as high art, worthy of financial support, as opposed to popular art and music. "While distancing themselves from commercial culture and refining a jargon and an etiquette that estranged most of the public from their activities, the nonprofit 'high' arts organizations that were proliferating around the United States also insisted that they were engaged in civilizing the masses and contributing to general civic well-being."¹⁶³ In order to qualify as a non-profit organization with the IRS, non-literary arts organizations must form themselves under the educational heading. Therefore, "educating" the public with art becomes a part of every grant application and the justification for keeping non-profit status. The non-profit system cuts off arts organizations from working with the

¹⁶¹ Marquis, *Art Lessons*, 114.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 252.

¹⁶³ Marquis, *Art Lessons*, 5.

entertainment industry, stymieing collaboration among artists of different genres.¹⁶⁴ A new system of funding concerts that would allow classical music to fund itself, without justifying its existence through the lens of "education" would free musicians to move in a more progressive, current, popular direction.

3.3 Decline of Public Support

In the 80s and 90s, political goodwill and government funding for the arts decreased as society's priorities changed. A study of 63 American orchestras showed that on average the orchestras ran deficits from 1987 to 2000, although there was a temporary financial rebound from 1997 to 1999.¹⁶⁵ In the early 1990s corporate sponsorship shifted largely to rock concerts, sports and medical and environmental charities.¹⁶⁶ At that time "audiences were collapsing, state funding was begrudged, corporate sponsorship was dwindling. Society was shifting its resources to new needs."¹⁶⁷ For some organizations, wealthy boards stepped in to cover large budget shortfalls. However the New Orleans and Denver orchestras were closed, before being re-opened by the musicians, and in 1995 Louisville fired some musicians and reduced the salaries of the remaining players.¹⁶⁸ Orchestras were struggling to maintain the

¹⁶⁴ Lebrecht, *Who Killed Classical Music?*, 257.

¹⁶⁵ Flanagan, "Repoert to Andrew W. Mellon Foundation," 22.

¹⁶⁶ Lebrecht, *Who Killed Classical Music?*, 190.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 174.

budgets, which increased on average 8 times between 1971 and 1992.¹⁶⁹ Most orchestras chose to deal with budget shortfalls and dwindling audiences by increasing investment in administration. From 1987 to 1995, orchestras spent 57% more on advertising, promoting and marketing and 52% more on fundraising.¹⁷⁰

Financial difficulties for classical organizations continued into the 21st century. After a brief financial recovery in the late 1990s, the recession that began in 2001 again "produced formidable deficits in the American symphonic community."¹⁷¹ Seventeen orchestras closed between 1986 and 2006.¹⁷² A further blow to the classical music industry was the 2008 financial crisis, often cited as the worst financial crisis to hit the U.S. since the Great Depression. In 2010, "the orchestras of New York, Atlanta and Detroit ran multimillion-dollar deficits, as have the Metropolitan Opera and the San Francisco Opera."¹⁷³ The Honolulu Symphony folded and the Louisville Symphony filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection.¹⁷⁴ Carnegie Hall reduced the number of concerts

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Marquis, *Art Lessons*, 149.

¹⁷¹ Horowitz, *Classical Music in America*, 514.

¹⁷² Allan Kozinn, "Check the Numbers: Rumors of Classical Music's Demise Are Dead Wrong" *New York Times*, May 28, 2006, accessed October 10, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/28/arts/music/28kozi.html?pagewanted=all>.

¹⁷³ Brian Wise, "Classical Music in 2010: Joyful Noise, Troubled Silence," December 26, 2010, <http://www.wqxr.org/#!/articles/wqxr-features/2010/dec/26/classical-music-2010-joyful-noise-troubled-silence/>.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

it presented by 10 - 15% as a preventative budgetary measure.¹⁷⁵ Today orchestras across the country are working to reduce costs and place themselves on firmer financial footing.

3.4 Financial Survival for Musicians

For individual musicians, the ability to make a living and have some financial security has risen and fallen over the course of the 20th century. Before the 1950s, most U.S. orchestras, including the big 5 - New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Cleveland and Chicago - were all part-time. Musicians supplemented their income with other performances and teaching.¹⁷⁶ The rise of the full-time orchestra during the arts boom provided full-time employment for many classical musicians. In 1994, Alice Goldfarb Marquis noted that, "of all nonprofit art forms, orchestras provide the greatest number of individual artists with full-time employment."¹⁷⁷

Many musicians working outside the realm of a single full-time job in the 20th-century United States had a difficult time making ends meet. Individual artists were not eligible for most grants and small musical organizations faced a tough battle for funding when pitted against large symphony orchestras. Funding from the National Endowment for the Arts often rested upon how organized an arts group was and how adamant the supporters. "Wherever the field was tightly organized and possessed of a vociferous constituency, as for orchestras, the panels recommended funding of about one in four

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Marquis, *Art Lessons*, 144.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 146.

applications. Without much organized pressure from a field, as with individual fellowships, the ratio was about one in forty."¹⁷⁸ Much of the arts funding system in the United States has been geared towards supporting large organizations, making securing monies for independent artists and small collectives very difficult.

The life of a freelance musician was described by the economists William Baumol and William Bowen in their 1966 book, *The Performing Arts: The Economic Dilemma*: "In many ways...the working conditions of the performer fall below what might be considered reasonable standards...exhausting tours, high professional expenses, frequent unemployment with its accompanying uncertainty, the rarity of paid vacations and the frequent lack of provision for retirement all add up to what most of us would consider a nightmare world were we suddenly plunged into it."¹⁷⁹ In 1977 a survey of the performing arts union by the AFL-CIO found that "most performing artists actually work considerably less than full-time at their profession, primarily because not enough work is available."¹⁸⁰ The study found only 1 in 5 performers worked for one employer, and it was common to work for up to 10 employers in a year. At the time, median income for performing artists was close to the median income of the country but far below other groups with similar education levels.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 159.

¹⁷⁹ Kreidler, "Leverage Lost."

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

Musicians facing these challenges also encountered an increasingly crowded field. The number of individuals holding degrees in the performing arts exploded in the late 20th century. In the 60s there were many "institutions of higher learning that poured tens of thousands of graduates into the performing and visual arts, a glut that no funding system could possibly absorb."¹⁸² In 1950, 213 arts doctorates were awarded but in 1970, 1,130 arts doctorates were awarded.¹⁸³ As universities added arts programs, professors often had to admit less qualified students to keep the majors full. "These programs grew without regard for how the arts sector could support such vastly increased numbers of certified arts graduates. Even worse, the university setting often hobbled artists of genuine talent, even as it rewarded plodding time-servers holding the right degree."¹⁸⁴ Many college music performance programs were geared towards a career in an orchestra or as a soloist with a manager. "For many gifted young instrumentalists, music school is a type of job training: they want to know how to play the notes and how to win an audition," explained Horowitz.¹⁸⁵ Facing a world with fewer orchestras, many college graduates in music were left unprepared to find other ways to make a living.

Graduates holding degrees in music pouring into a field with limited employment prospects continued into the 21st century. Between 1998 and 2010 the number of

¹⁸² Marquis, *Art Lessons*, 85.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁸⁵ Horowitz, *Classical Music in America*, 534.

college arts degrees awarded annually in the United States rose steadily from 75,000 to 129,000.¹⁸⁶ According to the National Endowment for the Arts employment statistics for 2008, unemployment was 3% for professionals, 6.1% for the general workforce, and 8.4% for performing artists. "Artist unemployment rates would be even higher if not for the large number of artists leaving the workforce...(which) may be attributed to artists' discouragement over job prospects."¹⁸⁷

3.5 The Audience

Audience attendance has also been a significant problem for the classical music industry in the last 30 years. Earlier in the 20th century, attending classical concerts was a popular pastime. However, by the early 1970s, a Ford Foundation survey found among the general population that 96% had seen movie in the last year, 25% had seen a professional jazz, rock or folk performance but only 10% had seen an orchestra concert.¹⁸⁸ Demand for classical concerts decreased further in the 80s and 90s. National Endowment for the Arts data released with a 2008 study show the steady decline in attendance. The percentage of adults attending classical music performances in 1982 was 13%, in 1992 was 12.5%, in 2002 was 11.6% and in 2008 was 9.3%.¹⁸⁹ The decline in

¹⁸⁶ "Americans for the Arts: Arts Index," accessed March 14, 2013, <http://www.artsindexusa.org/national-arts-index>.

¹⁸⁷ "National Endowment for the Arts: Arts Employment Statistics 2008," last modified March 4, 2009, <http://www.nea.gov/news/news09/artist-unemployment-rates.html>.

¹⁸⁸ Marquis, *Art Lessons*, 99.

¹⁸⁹ Jennifer L. Novak-Leonard and Alan S. Brown, "Beyond Attendance: A multi-modal understanding of arts participation," page #, last modified February 1, 2011, <http://www.arts.gov/research/2008-SPPA-BeyondAttendance.pdf>.

audience attendance at classical concerts has challenged the mainstream classical industry both financially and in their struggle to remain a vital part of American culture.

Those who attend arts events in the United States have generally fit certain demographic patterns. Those with higher education, higher income, more free time and those located in major cities are most likely to be involved with the arts.¹⁹⁰ From the 1950s to the 1970s, more Americans went to college, enjoyed higher incomes and had more free time, producing more arts consumers at the same time as producing more artists.¹⁹¹ However, in the 80s and 90s leisure time and real wages decreased for the average American.¹⁹² These decreases correspond with the drop in attendance at classical concerts documented above. It is possible that a future increase in income and free time for Americans could provide a boost to the arts sector.

Arts organizations are also highly concentrated in the largest cities in the United States. According to a 2008 study by the National Endowment for the Arts "in 2007, nearly 90 percent of nonprofit arts groups resided in metro areas (core urban areas with populations of 50,000 or greater). The 10 largest metros were home to 30 percent of nonprofit arts organizations. One in five was located in the top five metros. The greater New York City area alone accounted for 11 percent of the nonprofit arts sector."¹⁹³ In

¹⁹⁰ Kreidler, "Leverage Lost."

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ "National Endowment for the Arts: Arts Participation Data from 2008," last modified February 1, 2011, <http://www.nea.gov/research/Notes/101.pdf>.

1995, despite the presence of 2,000 orchestras in the U.S., the largest 25 accounted for half of total attendance.¹⁹⁴ However tracking attendance at established, non-profit arts organizations only gives a partial picture. When less formal arts participation was considered in the National Endowment of the Arts 2008 study, participation rates were roughly the same for urban and rural areas.¹⁹⁵ Although arts organizations are concentrated in large urban areas, the arts defined more broadly are just as likely to be seen anywhere in the U.S.

The age of the audience attending classical concerts today is a good indicator of the industry's health. Greg Sandow, an author, former music critic, Juilliard professor and keen observer of the classical music industry, has researched the rise in audience age over the past 30 years. He discovered that the average age of the audience in 1937 was around 30, in 1955 was younger than 35, and in the 1960s was 38.¹⁹⁶ However, in the 1980s it appears that the audience started to age and was not replaced by younger classical music fans. A study by the National Endowment for the Arts showed the largest age group for classical audiences in 1992 was between 35 and 44. However by 2002, the largest age group was between 45 and 54.¹⁹⁷ This data shows that the same aging generation of classical music fans made up the majority of the audience in the 90s and

¹⁹⁴ Marquis, *Art Lessons*, 149.

¹⁹⁵ "National Endowment for the Arts: Arts Participation Data from 2008."

¹⁹⁶ Greg Sandow, "Age of the Audience," *Arts Journal*, March 10, 2008, accessed January 16, 2013, http://www.artsjournal.com/sandow/2008/03/age_of_the_audience.html.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

2000s. People tend to remain fans of the music they discovered in their teens and twenties. For example, baby boomers dominated jazz performances in the 1980s and today.¹⁹⁸ If this trend of failing to attract younger audiences to classical concerts continues, the bulk of classical music fans attending traditional concerts will die out, without being replaced.

As the audience for classical music ages, there continues to be an influx of young players into the industry. Sandow calls this "the paradox of younger people studying classical music, and making careers in the field, even while others their age rarely go to classical performances. As a result of this, youth orchestras thrive, music schools thrive, and orchestras have seen an influx of expert younger players (which makes them now younger than their audience)."¹⁹⁹ Many musicians born in the 80s and 90s are eager to perform classical music. However, few of their peers are interested in attending concert hall events. There is, however, the potential for young musicians to mine their networks and communities for new classical fans, if they could make the music as appealing to their audience as it is to them.

Many in the classical music industry have conjectured that the dwindling and aging audience for classical music is due to the elitist image mainstream classical music projects. Musicians are often dressed in tuxedos and an air of elegance pervades much of classical music's advertising. In his important survey of 20th century classical music

¹⁹⁸ "National Endowment for the Arts: Arts Participation Data from 2008."

¹⁹⁹ Greg Sandow, "Rebirth: The Future of Classical Music, Chapter 1," 5, accessed January 16, 2013, <http://www.gregsandow.com/BookBlog/RevisedCh1Riffs.pdf>.

The Rest is Noise, Alex Ross asserts that "classical music is widely mocked as a stuck-up, sissified, intrinsically un-American pursuit."²⁰⁰ Kyle Gann, writing in 1994, said that classical music in America "has been kept a pristine Euro-transplant, treasured for its exotic snob value, not its relevance."²⁰¹ These historians and others throughout the industry worried that this elitist image and dwindling audiences went hand in hand.

Young listeners today don't recognize the high art versus popular music polarity perpetuated by much of the classical music industry. According to Greg Sandow, "Just about everyone young I know – and many people who aren't young – don't draw what we might call class distinctions between high and low culture."²⁰² Their personal judgments about quality "don't follow the old cultural boundaries, which for many younger people no longer exist."²⁰³ Most young Americans have access to a wide variety of music and listen to an eclectic, personalized mixture. Computer savvy listeners can find music of all types and, as Kenny Savelson pointed out, "You can go home and look that up and whatever road that takes you down, you could probably extend back and go from listening to The National, the rock band, to Zappa to Varese to Stravinsky and that's the thread and you end up with Debussy or something. An hour later, it's like, how did I get here?"

²⁰⁰ Ross, *The Rest Is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century*, 514.

²⁰¹ Gann, *Music Downtown: Writings from The Village Voice*, 89.

²⁰² Greg Sandow, "Rebirth: The Future of Classical Music, Chapter 3," 21-22, accessed January 16, 2013, <http://www.gregsandow.com/BookBlog/Ch3Riff.pdf>.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

There is, therefore, an opportunity for classical music to find fans among a younger generation. Part of the problem, however, is the concert atmosphere. A 2002 study on the consumption of classical music found that 10 to 15 percent of Americans have a "close or moderately close relationship with classical music, and again as many have weaker ties. Only half of those who showed a strong preference for attending classical music concerts actually attend."²⁰⁴ So only half of self-identified classical music fans at the time came to a concert. Even if young people discover they like some classical music, many may not be interested in coming to a symphony concert or traditional chamber music series.

The leisure-time habits of most 21st-century Americans are not a good match for the traditional concerts or the subscription-series models of many classical events. This mismatch has been a problem for the classical music industry for thirty years. According to Judith Huggins Balfe's article on the baby boom generation's patterns as an audience, "This generation also may be reluctant to purchase even a single ticket to a high art event that requires arrival at a set time, and constrains the audience to a silent, passive posture until the performance ends. Rather, the increasing preference may be shifting to forms of performance, such as comedy, literary salons and jazz, that are more interactive, flexible with regard to arrival and departure times, and less constraining on one's behavior during the course of the event."²⁰⁵ Today generations younger than the

²⁰⁴ John S. and James. L. Knight Foundation, *Classical Music Consumer Segmentation Study: How Americans Relate to Classical Music and Their Local Orchestras* (Southport, Conn.: Audience Insight, 2002), 9.

²⁰⁵ Kreidler, "Leverage Lost."

baby boomers carry these expectations further. Richard Florida looks at the habits of these generations in his book, *The Rise of the Creative Class*. He notes that many young art consumers today define themselves by their appreciation for alternative, independent art forms. They also expect to participate in arts events by interacting with the artists and other art lovers.²⁰⁶ This interaction, not to mention the freedom to come and go, dress as you please and make noise during the performance, is missing in most classical concert hall performances.

A 2002 study by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation asked consumers what changes they would like to see at classical concerts to make them more enjoyable. The study found that the majority of concertgoers would enjoy greetings from the stage, short introductions to pieces, longer intermissions for socializing, more casual clothes for musicians and thematic lighting and decorating.²⁰⁷ The call among audiences in this study was overwhelming in its request for more casual concerts. Younger members of the audience especially valued ambience and social interaction over the educational or spiritual value of concerts.²⁰⁸ Many people are already moving to attend arts events where a more casual atmosphere exists. According to the NEA, "relatively high rates of

²⁰⁶ Sandow, "Rebirth: The Future of Classical Music, Chapter 3," 16.

²⁰⁷ John S. and James. L. Knight Foundation, *Classical Music Consumer Segmentation Study*, 15.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 128.

attendance at arts festivals-as well as attendance at schools and places of worship-suggest the importance of venue to overall arts-participation rates."²⁰⁹

Tellingly, the Knight Foundation found that "more people dislike going to classical concerts than like going,"²¹⁰ and about a quarter of those who attended classical concerts during the study period "expressed a feeling of ambivalence or worse about the activity."²¹¹ Combining the distaste among the general population for classical concerts with a demand from those attending for a less formal atmosphere, it seems obvious that classical music, in order to broaden its appeal, needs to eliminate the formalities and provide a more welcoming social atmosphere. Focus group research for the study found that many decisions regarding whether or not to attend a concert rested upon social factors.²¹² In other words, most attendees saw going to a concert as a social event, largely revolving around visiting friends, not a chance to experience a transformative or educational artistic experience. These audience demands for a more casual concert atmosphere are a veritable recipe for the chamber concerts in new alternative venues that began to emerge at the turn of the 21st century all over the United States.

²⁰⁹ "National Endowment for the Arts: Arts Participation Data from 2008."

²¹⁰ John S. and James. L. Knight Foundation, *Classical Music Consumer Segmentation Study*, 39.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 40.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 11.

CHAPTER 4

ALTERNATIVE VENUES IN THE 21st CENTURY

The beginning of the 21st century marks the rise of bar, club and cafe performance spaces as a popular alternative venue for chamber music. These new venues create a novel atmosphere for chamber music, distinct from the traditional concert halls, museums and previous generation of dedicated performance spaces. Previously the domain of popular and jazz music, some bars, clubs and cafes now host classical chamber music as well. By the late 1990s, several pioneering college music students staged their first concerts in these new venues. In 2000, Matt Haimovitz launched his first alternative venue tour. The middle of the decade saw the establishment of several bars and clubs in New York City as alternative venues for classical music, including Barbès, Joe's Pub and (Le) Poisson Rouge. Opera on Tap and Classical Revolution, two nationwide organizations dedicated to classical performance in bars and clubs, were established at this time as well.

4.1 Pioneers

A few classical musicians gave performances in bars and clubs in the 1960s - 80s. Terry Riley famously performed *Poppy Nogood and the Phantom Band* and *A Rainbow in Curved Air* at the Electric Circus, a psychedelic rock club, in 1969.²¹³ Some of the same

²¹³ Kostelanetz and Flemming, *Writings on Glass*, 134.

performers putting on shows at The Kitchen in the 70s also performed with rock groups at the nearby punk clubs CBGB's and the Mudd Club.²¹⁴ The Ear Inn, a nearby bar, hosted concerts and poetry readings from the 80s into the 21st century.²¹⁵ On the West Coast in the 1980s, the composer John Adams, working in collaboration with the San Francisco Symphony, hosted the New and Unusual Music concerts at an industrial warehouse. The series later moved to what Adams described in his book, *Hallelujah Junction*, as an unnamed "nasty dank nightclub venue."²¹⁶

Performing classical music in venues originally created to host popular, rock, jazz and folk music seemed to occur to more artists around the late 1990s and early 2000s. One of the earliest examples was the Young Composer's Collective Series co-founded by Joshua Kohl. This series ran from 1993 to 2000, when it was transitioned into the Degenerate Art Ensemble, still in existence today. The concerts were presented in rock clubs around Seattle including Crocodile Cafe, Weathered Wall, Ok Hotel, Speakeasy and Ispy.²¹⁷ The series featured new music by an eclectic group of composers. As Kohl put it, "we would have a 17-piece orchestra in some rock club under a bridge." This group of musicians created a lasting presence in the club scene in Seattle.

Adventurous music students in the 1990s were finding their way into popular music venues and producing their own concerts in those spaces. Eric Lamb, a flutist in

²¹⁴ Morrissey, *The Kitchen Turns Twenty*, 18-19.

²¹⁵ Kostelanetz, *Soho*, 112.

²¹⁶ Adams, *Hallelujah Junction*, 109.

²¹⁷ Joshua Kohl, interview by author, December 3, 2012.

the International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE), recalled playing in an event space on Oberlin's campus around 1996 that could be fashioned into "a night club for students" and hosted concerts. Charith Premawardhana, founder of Classical Revolution, remembers playing chamber music in a restaurant in 1996 while home in Chicago from studying at the Interlochen Arts Academy. John Pickford Richards, a founding member of the JACK Quartet, played new music in outdoor parks and bars starting in his freshman year at Eastman in 1998.²¹⁸ In the early 2000s, the young ensemble So Percussion began to book themselves in clubs during their tours of more traditional venues.

Matt Haimovitz was probably the first classical musician with an established concert career to venture into popular music venues. His first performance of this type was a CD release party in 2000 at the Iron Horse Music Hall in Northampton, Massachusetts for his recording of the complete Cello Suites by J.S. Bach. He described the venue as a "folk coffeehouse," which hosted folk and jazz music as well as singer / songwriters.²¹⁹ He soon followed this performance with his *Bach Listening-Room Tour*. During this tour he performed the Bach Cello Suites at "clubs across the U.S., Canada and the U.K."²²⁰ In 2003, he launched his next tour, the *Anthem Tour*, featuring new music by American composers and performing in clubs in all 50 states. The tour was

²¹⁸ John Pickford Richards, interview by author, November 3, 2012.

²¹⁹ Matt Haimovitz, interview by author, December 17, 2012.

²²⁰ "Oxingale Records," accessed February 2, 2013, <http://oxingalerecords.com/matt-haimovitz/>.

named for Haimovitz's piece *Anthem*, a work inspired by the Jimi Hendrix version of the Star Spangled Banner. "I pretty much devoted one or two full seasons to playing these alternative venues. I didn't do anything but (that)," Haimovitz explained. He continued to devote over half of his performances to alternative venues until 2009, when he reduced his touring schedule.

4.2 Alternative Venue Performance Organizations

In 2005, singer Anne Hiatt and a number of other vocalists formed Opera on Tap in New York City. Their first performance was held at Freddy's Bar and Backroom in the Park Slope area of Brooklyn.²²¹ Their residency at Freddy's continues today along with a second residency at Barbès, which is located in the same neighborhood. Opera on Tap has expanded to include chapters in several other cities, which operate under the umbrella of its non-profit organization. On its website, Opera on Tap lists 12 additional chapters. These chapters share a website, run their finances through the central non-profit corporation and are, according to Damien Elwood, director of Opera on Tap Los Angeles, "reasonably autonomous as to how we run things...because each city is different." Opera on Tap is one of the first presenting organizations specializing in classical music performance in bars, to expand nationally.

In 2006, Charith Premawardhana and a group of classical chamber musicians formed Classical Revolution in San Francisco. (Disclosure: the author is co-director of Classical Revolution: L.A.). The first alternative venue concert Premawardhana booked in San Francisco was his graduate viola recital for the San Francisco Conservatory. "The

²²¹ Ibid.

concert hall was booked, so I booked my solo recital at the bar across the street...[at the Eagles Drift Inn," he explained. After graduating in 2006, Premawardhana began playing in bars regularly. Around the same time a colleague, Ed Baskerville, who would participate in Classical Revolution in San Francisco before heading the Ann Arbor chapter, set up a reading session at the Sunrise Restaurant in San Francisco's Mission District as part of the bi-monthly Mission Arts Performance Project.

Joe Lewis, a jazz musician, had recently taken over bookings at the Revolution Cafe, a small bar in the Mission District. Lewis asked his friend Premawardhana to start a classical night at the bar. After the success of the first two events, Classical Revolution nights at the Revolution Cafe began on a weekly basis in November of 2006. They have continued every week to this day. These 'chamber jams' at the cafe usually consist of sight-reading sessions of standard chamber music repertoire and sometimes include guest chamber ensembles. As Classical Revolution in San Francisco expanded, performances were booked in cafes, coffee houses, art spaces, community dance venues, restaurants, bars, wine bars, jazz clubs and rock venues around the Bay area. Typically the organization in San Francisco has averaged 120 concerts a year.

Violinist Mattie Kaiser participated in Classical Revolution in San Francisco in 2006 and, within the first six months of its founding, moved to Portland and started the first chapter, Classical Revolution PDX. After the initial request to start the chapter, Classical Revolution PDX was run independently and became an Oregon-based non-profit corporation in 2011. Kaiser said she saw the chamber jams at the Revolution Cafe as an inspiration for starting her chapter, "but I had to adjust pretty quickly to make it fit

the dynamics of Portland rather than San Francisco," she explained.²²² In 2011 and 2012, Classical Revolution PDX hosted approximately thirty events in alternative venues including cafes, bars, rock clubs and warehouses.

In the past seven years, around thirty chapters of Classical Revolution have produced concerts around the U.S., Canada and Europe. Chapters include New York, Chicago, Houston, Boston, Cleveland, Toronto, Berlin and London. Each chapter is run independently under a variety of different organizational models. Some chapters are small operations, primarily organized by one individual with no budget, and some, like Classical Revolution PDX and Classical Revolution Chicago, are independent non-profit corporations with their own board of directors. All chapters produce classical events in alternative venues but the organization, marketing, programming and home venues differ from city to city. The network of chapters provides performance opportunities for travelling musicians and musicians arriving in a new city.

4.3 Venues

In the New York City area in the 2000s a number of popular venues that were friendly to classical music emerged. One of the first of these was Barbès, which opened in 2002 in Brooklyn. Owner Olivier Conan said he opened the little bar "as a performance space" for "pretty much anything that is not rock or singer / songwriters."²²³ He reasoned that, "a lot of places cater to singer / songwriters or rock bands," so he wanted "to cater to people who tend to compose their own music."

²²² Mattie Kaiser, interview by author, October 2, 2012.

²²³ Olivier Conan, interview by author, January 17, 2013.

Barbès hosts a mix of folk, world, jazz and classical music as well as music that is difficult to categorize and may combine elements of all these styles. Conan explained that part of the purpose of opening the bar "was to give an outlet to the kind of music that was not necessarily being booked in New York." He said, "We found our niche very quickly. We do things that are different." Included in that eclectic mix were classical musicians performing the wide variety of styles encompassed by the term "classical."

Joe's Pub became another popular spot for classical chamber music performance. The venue is a bar / performance space with cabaret-style seating and food and drink service, inside the Public Theater on Lafayette Street in New York. Opened in 1998, the pub's mission is to support "young artists while providing established artists with an intimate space to perform and develop new work."²²⁴ The venue hosts "Broadway, cabaret, dance, world, singer-songwriter, jazz, country and indie genres."²²⁵ According to Doug Perkins, Bang on a Can's record label, Cantaloupe Music, had an open invitation to host CD release parties at Joe's pub in the mid-2000s. So Percussion, Matt Haimovitz, Project Trio and Missy Mazzoli's band Victoire have all performed at the venue.

In 2008, the first club specifically founded to host both classical and popular music, (Le) Poisson Rouge, opened in New York. LPR was started by classical musicians David Handler and Justin Kantor on the site of the old Village Gate jazz club in

²²⁴ "Joe's Pub," accessed March 13, 2013, <http://www.joespub.com/content/view/24/44/>.

²²⁵ Ibid.

Greenwich Village. Called a "high-art cabaret space" by Daniel J. Wakin of the *New York Times*,²²⁶ LPR is a space built for music from classical to rock to independent music of all kinds. The space can be set up with cabaret-style seating surrounding the relatively small stage, resembling a jazz club. Table seating can be removed for standing room only events, which transform the space into the set-up of a rock club. In its programming, Anthony Tommasini of the *New York Times*, noted that "(Le) Poisson Rouge is following in the path of places like Joe's Pub in the East Village and Barbès in Park Slope, clubs that mix classical and contemporary fare."²²⁷ This space, however, is the first club of this kind to imagine classical music as part of its programming from the beginning.

Handler and Kantor hired their first employee, Ronen Givony, to handle booking acts the year before the opening of the club. The three had met through Givony's popular Worldless Music Series, founded in 2006.²²⁸ This series, which Greg Sandow called "one of the most successful" new series in New York at that time, would combine an indie-rock band on half the bill with a classical performer on the other half.²²⁹ "I went a few times and he might have a pianist playing Bach, he might have free jazz improv, he

²²⁶ Daniel J. Wakin, "Met Opera Concerts Set For Le Poisson Rouge," *New York Times*, September, 13, 2012, accessed December 15, 2012, <http://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/09/13/met-opera-concerts-set-for-le-poisson-rouge/>.

²²⁷ Anthony Tommasini, "The Music Is Classical, and the Bar Is Busy," *New York Times*, October 3, 2008, accessed December 15, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/31/arts/music/31pois.html?_r=0.

²²⁸ Ronen Givony, interview by author, January 5, 2013.

²²⁹ Greg Sandow, interview by author, January 18, 2013.

might have a combination of Shostakovich and noise improvisation on the classical side. It was really unpredictable," Sandow said. Wordless Music Series events have been held "at Lincoln Center, various churches around town, the Whitney Museum and the Met Museum," according to Givony. When he started booking for (Le) Poisson Rouge, Givony took his eclectic booking style to a club space.

From its inception, (Le) Poisson Rouge was never really "alternative" in the sense of being off the radar of the classical community. The opening of the club was featured in the New York Times arts section, and classical performances there are reviewed by the Times regularly, alongside articles about concerts at Carnegie Hall. Doug Perkins categorizes (Le) Poisson Rouge as a "traditional non-traditional" venue, "because LPR always started with the idea of presenting classical music. So it's a sympathetic place with a nice piano and an understanding of what we need and then audiences...come expecting that."

In addition to the established venues for classical music described above, musicians have booked themselves at countless other popular music venues. Alarm Will Sound recorded their CD "Reich at the Roxy" in 2006, which was recorded live at the Roxy nightclub in New York. Missy Mazzoli performs with her ensemble Victoire, at rock and punk clubs around the country. Matt Haimovitz, touring his album, Shuffle.Play.Listen, with Christopher O'Riley in 2012, performed at several large, established clubs that haven't hosted much classical music, including Yoshi's in San Francisco, the Highline Ballroom in New York and Regattabar in Boston. As some clubs

and bars become popular venues for classical music, musicians continue to branch out and find new places to play.

4.4 Alternative Venues Go Mainstream

Musicians and journalists have noted the growing regularity of classical performances in bars and clubs. Articles about Classical Revolution and its chapters have appeared in the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Detroit News, The Economist, San Francisco Chronicle, Houston Chronicle, Los Angeles Times, Cleveland Plain Dealer and several other prominent publications. For many musicians in their twenties and thirties, performance in bars and clubs is now an essential part of their classical career. Doug Perkins said playing in alternative venues is "just what we do nowadays," so much so that, "I no longer consider them alternative." Missy Mazzoli, who launched her career in art spaces and new alternative venues said these venues are a "huge part of my life... To me, they pay my bills and they're mainstream."

In the past three years, even big-budget, established classical organizations have started to utilize bars and clubs for performances. (Le) Poisson Rouge has in recent years hosted acts that regularly fill concert halls. Recently the Kronos Quartet, Terry Riley, Alisa Weilerstein and Hélène Grimaud have all played at the club. In September of 2012, a New York Times article announced the Metropolitan Opera would be staging reduced productions of two new operas at (Le) Poisson Rouge. The article states, "the collaboration gives the Met some visibility in the slightly hipper, younger and more contemporary music scene, and adds big-institution luster to (Le) Poisson Rouge, which

has become firmly established as a New York concert site."²³⁰ Ensemble HD, a chamber group whose members perform with the Cleveland Orchestra, perform at the Happy Dog Saloon in Cleveland several times a year. They are planning to record an album live at the bar.²³¹ Barbès regularly features artists booked there by the Concert Artists Guild, a well-established classical concert agency. Large institutions are gaining from the "cool" factor of alternative spaces, and many alternative spaces are becoming more established within the classical world.

4.5 The Next Alternative Venue: Public Spaces

In addition to working in venues traditionally used for popular and jazz music performance, musicians are also presenting concerts in parks and outdoor spaces without stages or a previous concert tradition. Ossia, the Eastman School of Music's student-run new music organization, presented a work called *Playing Outside* by Robert Morris at a park in Rochester. Alan Pierson, music director of Alarm Will Sound and the Brooklyn Philharmonic, recalled that Morris "transformed the whole park into an event space and created this really interesting experience where players were moving through the park, reconfiguring themselves as they went, and creating all different kinds of musical experiences in various configurations in the park."²³² Doug Perkins has recently presented what he calls, "site specific, big works" in outdoor locations. According to

²³⁰ Daniel J. Wakin, "Met Opera Concerts Set For Le Poisson Rouge," *New York Times*, September, 13, 2012, accessed December 13, 2012, <http://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/09/13/met-opera-concerts-set-for-le-poisson-rouge/>.

²³¹ Rebecca Gross, "In Cleveland, the Sudsier Side of Symphonies," March 29, 2013, accessed April 2, 2013, <http://artworks.arts.gov/?p=16487>.

²³² Alan Pierson, interview by the author, December 19, 2012.

Perkins, he's performed in "fields and parks and forests," a Boy Scout campground, a frisbee gold course and in Central Park Lake. Charith Premawardhana brought Classical Revolution performances to the Occupy San Francisco protests. Alan Pierson, even brought the Brooklyn Philharmonic out to Restoration Plaza and, as he puts it, "turned their plaza into a concert space." According to Gavin Chuck, Alarm Will Sound is planning several events in the next season at a new outdoor space, the Media Commons, in the arts district of St. Louis.

Classical musicians can be found these days presenting events in a wide variety of public spaces. The annual Bang on a Can Marathon has occurred for several years at the World Financial Center Winter Garden. The Winter Garden is a large, indoor courtyard in the center of a huge office building. The marathon concert typically draws "5,000 people over the course of a 12-hour day," according to Kenny Savelson. The New York Philharmonic performed under the direction of Alan Gilbert at the Park Avenue Armory, which was built in the 19th-century as a military facility.²³³ The Degenerate Art Ensemble performed last year with a string quartet in the underground loading docks behind the Seattle Opera. The Long Beach Opera has performed in recent seasons "in unconventional locations, including a swimming pool, a parking garage and aboard the Queen Mary," a retired ocean liner anchored in Long Beach harbor.²³⁴ Classical

²³³ "Park Avenue Armory," accessed March 27, 2013, http://www.armoryonpark.org/index.php/programs_events/detail/NY_Philharmonic/.

²³⁴ David Ng, "Long Beach's Andreas Mitisek named as one of 'Next Wave' talents," *Los Angeles Times*, August 20, 2012, accessed February 4, 2013,

Revolution PDX was invited to play on a streetcar line in Portland last year to celebrate the expansion of a line.

Classical musicians have also been inspired by the 21st-century trend, the flash mob. These performances occur without warning in public spaces. Matt Haimovitz, as part of his college residencies in the last few years, has incorporated a flash concert. He explains that, "the flash concert will be in an unexpected place. That is also up to the imagination of the presenter and they've come up with some really wacky things for me to do, which were fun. They know that I'm open to just about anything." Following this model, Haimovitz has recently played in hallways, pottery stores and markets, where people may come upon him unexpectedly. Bang on a Can started an ensemble called the Asphalt Orchestra in 2009. The group, according to Savelson, "is designed to be played out on the street...they march... So, their natural habitat is actually playing outdoors or out in public." Even as bars and clubs are becoming the established alternative venue, classical musicians are looking for the next, undiscovered alternative venue. As Doug Perkins put it, "I'm trying to think about what the new alternative is... As a fetishist of new and strange things I'm trying to figure out something newer and crazier."

<http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/culture/la-et-cm-andreas-mitisek-long-beach-opera-next-wave-20120819,0,7153777.story>

CHAPTER 5

THE DRAW OF ALTERNATIVE VENUES

Musicians cited reasons for performing in alternative venues that fell into several themes. Almost all of those interviewed cited the availability of popular music venues as a part of their motivation. It was simply easier to book the local bar than a concert hall. Several of the pioneers of alternative venue performance already played in these spaces in popular bands. It seemed natural to them to perform classical music in the same places. Alternative venues also offered a quicker, easier way to plan a concert. Perhaps because of this, most interviewees found a feeling of artistic independence, the freedom to experiment, lower pressure and more fun in alternative venues.

Availability was a motivating factor to work in alternative venues for many of the musicians interviewed. "That was the only way I could get a show," Missy Mazzoli explained. "It wasn't like well, I could play at Carnegie Hall or I could play at this old, abandoned firehouse... There was no choice involved," she said. Doug Perkins cited alternative venues as a way that So Percussion could play every night on tour. They booked clubs on nights they were not able to book traditional concerts. Clubs are "much easier to get into. That, to me, is relevant," said Joshua Kohl. He found many popular venues "were really open to whatever. They really didn't care what people were doing," as long as they brought in an audience.

Damien Elwood cited a lack of opportunity for young musicians as a motivation for starting his chapter of Opera on Tap. Elwood is also Opera Manager at the University of Southern California and mentioned that in that job "what's become frustrating to me is I see really talented, hardworking, skilled musicians, both singers and instrumentalists, graduate from music schools and...there's very little out there to support these young musicians." He thought Opera on Tap performances could help to "fill that hole for young musicians," who are still pursuing music after graduation but find that "all of a sudden the opportunities to support that work dry out." Alternative venues offer an important chance for professional musicians to keep their skills sharp. Charith Premawardhana explained that Classical Revolution has always been about "trying to do as much as possible, to be active myself." He also provides a place to perform for hundreds of other musicians. Premawardhana explained that "it creates more opportunities for musicians to play and I think there's a thirst for that."

Many of the early pioneers of classical performance in bars and clubs were fluent in multiple genres and already performed in these venues. Most of the musicians involved in the Young Composer's Collective were also active rock and jazz musicians, familiar with the clubs and their managers. Doug Perkins followed a similar route to alternative venues with So Percussion explaining, "Being a drummer, alternative venues used to just be venues...so we were finding our way into those venues because we had contacts there." Caleb Burhans, a composer and violinist with Alarm Will Sound, also plays guitar, bass, keyboards and percussion. In addition to his classical work, he

performs with Escort, a disco band, and Bleknlok, a techno ensemble.²³⁵ These musicians made the jump from performing popular music in popular venues to performing classical music in these same spots.

Since artists often book their own shows in alternative venues, they retain control over concert programming. In 2000, Matt Haimovitz was an established cello soloist, performing with some of the world's top orchestras. However, he found it difficult to book traditional concert hall performances of the complete Bach Cello Suites in support of his new CD. "I felt very disappointed that I put so much work and thought into this recording and there was really no opportunity to go out and perform it and share all the work that I had done with these pieces," he explained. The inability to play this program in traditional spaces first motivated Haimovitz to book himself into popular music clubs where, he said, "you can play anything you want." Charith Premawardhana likes self-presenting in alternative venues because, "I have more of a voice in what we're doing and how we're doing it and why we're doing it and where we're doing it and who we're doing it for and who we're doing it with." Musicians found greater authority over their artistic projects in alternative venues.

Concerts in alternative venues can be planned and executed much more quickly than in most traditional spaces. Joshua Kohl said, "it's really interesting how flexible and last minute you can be with clubs." This appeals to Matt Haimovitz as well, who books

²³⁵ Allan Kozinn, "A Man of Many Talents, Eager to Use Them All," *New York Times*, October 3, 2008, accessed March 12, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/05/arts/music/05kozi.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

his concert hall performances years in advance. "What's nice is that if something is on your mind, you can make it happen in four to six months or eight months," he mentioned. He finds the timeline of club booking, "incredibly helpful when I have something on my mind. I want to go out and tour it but I don't want to wait three years to get it booked."

The musicians interviewed also felt a freedom to experiment in alternative spaces. "Often you can be much more adventurous in an alternative space. You don't have programmatic overhead," said Lamb. He also said a small alternative space can be "a great opportunity for an artist to try new things." Joshua Kohl found that a lot of artists were doing "all their development work in those clubs because the risk is lower." Artists can try new things with relatively low risk to their budgets and reputations in alternative venues.

During their interviews, several participants mentioned they enjoyed the low-pressure environment of alternative venues, in contrast to the high-stakes atmosphere of the concert hall. "It's just so often that anything that classical musicians do is so high pressure," mentioned Elwood. He tries to provide an antidote through casual bar concerts. At Classical Revolution PDX performances, Mattie Kaiser said, "you can mess up from time to time, where you miss a repeat and it's not the end of the world." Kaiser says a casual performance atmosphere can be "a little bit of therapy" for stressed-out, self-conscious classical musicians. Haimovitz said the expectation for perfection in the concert hall "was actually inhibiting my expression and inhibiting my fulfillment and enjoyment of what I was doing."

Personal enjoyment in performance was a common theme. "I think it can be more fun. I'm going to play a show and hang out with my friends. It can just be an easier going thing,"²³⁶ said Leah Paul. Premawardhana said the motivation behind starting Classical Revolution was to have fun. He found the freedom and intimacy of chamber music at the Revolution Cafe satisfying. In alternative venues, he explained one has the "freedom to express yourself as an individual and...to reach people and communicate your music in an honest and powerful way." Musicians freed from the weight of tradition in the concert hall felt increased ownership of their performances and more personal artistic freedom.

²³⁶ Leah Paul, interview by author, Los Angeles, CA, September 15, 2012.

CHAPTER 6

THE BUSINESS OF ALTERNATIVE VENUES

As classical musicians move into popular music venues, they find they must master a new way of doing business. Clubs, bars and coffee shops are for-profit businesses and host musical events as part of that business model. These organizations have different systems of hiring and paying musicians than those found in traditional venues. Musician fees in alternative venues are generally lower than concert halls because they lack the funding infrastructure of more traditional venues. Navigating this new world, the musicians involved in this study have made a living by combining income from alternative-venue performance with more traditional performances, fundraising and grants or outside work. They have also developed new skills as many find they need to do their own marketing and public relations to build a loyal audience. Benefits to ensembles in terms of building an audience and public relations are often quite high. Long-term, mutually beneficial relationships have been forged in the last ten years between classical music organizations and the popular music venues that host them.

6.1 Funding Systems

The most common system of funding concerts in popular venues among study participants was to charge admission to the audience at the door, known in clubs as a cover charge. Recent cover charges for classical events in clubs were most often cited in the range of \$10 to \$20. The lowest cover charge cited was by Mattie Kaiser at Classical

Revolution PDX, who would charge as low as \$5 and up to \$12. Matt Haimovitz and Missy Mazzoli have charged \$25 or more on some occasions. (Le) Poisson Rouge will charge, according to Ronen Givony, "anywhere from \$10 or \$15 up to \$30, \$35. Not too many of our shows are more than that." As John Pickford Richards points out, high cover prices can be a difficult sell. "I feel like, if I'm going to a bar, where I'm expected to buy drinks and maybe food, for me to also pay \$30 to get in is sort of discouraging," he explained.

All of those interviewed who used a cover charge system divided the income between the musicians and the venue. The percentage received by the artist varied and was usually subject to negotiation between the artist and the club manager or booker.

Matt Haimovitz explained his experience with this system:

You get a percentage of the door and it depends what you negotiate. Early on, I didn't have a whole lot of negotiating strength because the agent I was working with was talking these people into having classical music often for the very first time. So, they didn't know how to market it. They were worried about it. They hadn't heard of me and it was a big risk for them. So, my percentages weren't that great, in terms of what I took from the door. As I developed a reputation for it and we got a review and the radio picked it up and so on, then the percentages got better... If I don't have a track record or I have a bad track record, in terms of attracting audiences then my percentage doesn't get any better.

John Pickford Richards said 70 percent was the usual percentage of a cover charge that JACK Quartet would receive, although they have received as low as 50 percent of the income. Charith Premawardhana, who books clubs around San Francisco for Classical Revolution events said the percentage for the artists was typically "50 to 80 percent; usually it's around 70 percent." At Poisson Rouge "usually somewhere in the neighborhood of 65 to 70 percent of the door goes to performing artists," stated Ronen

Givony. Most clubs will allow artist to sell CDs, which Matt Haimovitz found often equaled his income from the door.

A less common system among those interviewed was one in which clubs would take a set amount of the cover charge income, after which the artists earned money. For example, Mattie Kaiser said she sometimes receives cover charge income "minus \$200 to 400 as the operating cost to the venue but then the rest of the door ticket is mine." This system protects the club's income at the expense of the artist's protection. The onus is placed on the artist to bring a large crowd before they can earn any income on the performance.

In some cases musicians are offered a flat fee, called a guarantee, or percentage of the bar proceeds from a venue. This usually happens when the artist or presenter has developed a reputation for attracting crowds or has a history of well-attended events at that venue. Matt Haimovitz said, "I now often get a guarantee...because I have a track record." Ronen Givony explained that for "some artists we do," offer compensation beyond a cut of the door. The Revolution Cafe offers, 15 percent of the bar proceeds for a three-hour show as well as the opportunity to collect tips. After establishing a consistent crowd for their monthly chamber jam at the Waypost in Portland, Classical Revolution PDX was offered 10 percent of the bar in addition to their collected tips. The system of a flat fee from the venue is usually offered after a relationship develops between artists or presenters and a venue.

Another common system of earning income in popular venues was to offer events free to the audience but solicit donations for the musicians. With this system,

donations go entirely to the artists and are not divided with the venue. However, there is no guaranteed amount for the artist per person attending the performance. A tip jar can be placed by the stage or passed around during and after the performance. Classical Revolution leaves a tip jar by the bar at the Revolution Cafe and passes the container around after each set. Some venues will allow presenters to take suggested donations at the door, for example Classical Revolution Cincinnati uses this system at the Blue Wisp Jazz Club. Often an amount or range is given to the audience for a suggested donation. At Barbès in Brooklyn, a bartender makes an announcement in the performance area during an artist's set that the suggested donation is \$10 and then approaches each audience member with the tip jar. Leah Paul found that with that system "people tend to be honest and pay the \$10 donation." There are occasions, especially where a tip jar is left unattended and no suggested donation is announced, where very little is collected per person from the audience.

6.2 Revenue

Revenue for ensembles and musicians in alternative venues depends on the number of people in the audience and the funding system negotiated with the venue. Except in the rare cases when a musician receives a guaranteed fee from the venue, the number of audience members at an event with a cover charge determines revenue. Attendance is often unpredictable and audience size is limited by venue capacity. Musicians interviewed for this study performed at clubs with capacities ranging from 40 to 700. Audience size ranged from a few people to 700. On average, most musicians

interviewed played in clubs for smaller crowds of around 30 and larger crowds in the low hundreds. Income ranged from zero to several thousand dollars.

For some ensembles, club performances can match their concert hall fees. Sascha Jacobsen said that if the Musical Art Quintet had a well-paid club performance "we get paid 1,500 to 2,000 (dollars and) that's pretty much comparable to a regular concert series." In general he says club and bar performance income "varies a lot but it's pretty comparable, actually" to concert hall and museum series income for the ensemble. Filling a large club venue, which might produce this kind of fee, is not something the quintet can do every week, however. "It's not easy to make what you need for the month by only working in alternative venues," said Premawardhana.

Revenue for individual musicians also depends on the number of performers at an event. A solo cellist can make \$400 during an hour set with a crowd of 40 in the back room of Barbès. Members of a quartet playing for the same crowd in the same space would only earn \$100 each. Events that rely on a large number of performers, like the chamber jams at the Revolution Cafe, provide little or no income to performers in most cases. At the Revolution Cafe, the organization's cut of the bar income generally amounts to around \$100, according to former cafe manager, Joe Lewis.²³⁷ Donations average between \$150 to 300 according to Premawardhana. The resulting \$250 to \$400 is split among the musicians that play over the course of 3 hours, which often includes several chamber groups. Premawardhana said payment is "usually between \$20 and \$40 a player depending on how much they play." At Opera on Tap Los Angeles, per concert

²³⁷ Joe Lewis, interview by author, November 29, 2012.

income ranges from \$120 to 380 and is generally used to pay the accompanist while singers volunteer. Revenue from many Classical Revolution PDX events goes to fund the organization, since splitting the income among the musicians would provide them with only a nominal fee.

6.3 Costs

Another important aspect of the business of new alternative venues to consider is the total cost of presenting an event. Factors that go into this total include use of the space, equipment, artist fees and administration. The use of club and bar venues is generally free to the presenter. None of those interviewed paid for rental of an alternative space. Damien Elwood contrasts this to a large hall where "it costs you \$15,000 just to open the building."

Concert halls are built for classical performance, so they provide equipment for a typical concert. However, the equipment needed to present a chamber music concert is fairly basic. In an alternative venue musicians need to bring music stands and stand lights. These items are low cost and already in the possession of most working musicians. When a piano is required, musicians chose venues that owned one, although a well-maintained piano can be difficult to find. Smaller alternative venues don't require an amplification system. Most of the larger bars and clubs that host popular music have sound systems available to performers. Some clubs may require an outright fee for a sound technician, although no study participants cited such a fee.

The largest cost of performance in alternative venues can be artist fees. If musicians are volunteers this cost is, of course, zero. If musicians are paid as a

percentage of the door or donations, an organization does not need to fund this cost independently. However, Missy Mazzoli finds that she needs "to pay all my players at a rate that they're used to getting from other classical gigs," so that's where "a band model doesn't work... There's a little bit of a disconnect there but it's not insurmountable."

There are also general costs that working musicians and ensembles need to pay on a regular basis regardless of where they are playing. Classical musicians tend to have expensive instruments and equipment. "I play a really nice instrument, so maintaining it is expensive. Insurance is expensive," said Haimovitz. In order to sell CDs at concerts, ensembles need to make a major investment in "production costs. That can be pricey," said Haimovitz. Alarm Will Sound pays "the cost of rental music, the cost of rental equipment and rehearsal space...overhead costs (and) administration for the ensemble," said Gavin Chuck. He explains that, "like most arts organizations, the fee that comes from these and all presentations doesn't cover the full cost of anything. I don't know that it's particularly different for these venues. It's just the nature of the field that the earned income is never enough and you have to find additional income through grants and donations and so on." Direct expenses for concert production at alternative venues can be very low, but the cost of running a classical performance organization can also be very high.

6.4 Subsidized Concerts

Most economically viable classical music organizations that work in alternative venues remain tied to the non-profit model. Generally ensembles pay musicians well for

these performances when they are subsidized directly through the ensemble's funds or through separate performances for non-profit entities. In most cases, presenting organizations like Classical Revolution compensate musicians well only when supported by grants, donations or sponsorships.

Some organizations that present concerts in alternative venues have yearly budgets funded by a combination of performance fees, grants, sponsorships and donations. Money to fund alternative venue events is taken from the yearly budget for the organization. Among organizations that follow this model are Alarm Will Sound, the JACK Quartet, Bang on a Can and the International Contemporary Ensemble. The use of organizational funds allows groups to separate the funding of an alternative venue concert from its revenue. For these ensembles, income from their share of the door at a club falls well below the ensemble's standard concert fee.

Non-profit presenting organizations occasionally offer musicians their standard fee for work in alternative venues. JACK Quartet has been asked to do club concerts by organizations also presenting them in a standard venue. The presenter in those cases offered a flat fee for both performances. Rick Robinson, director of Classical Revolution Detroit and former bassist with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, was asked to produce alternative venue events as part of his duties at the Hot Springs Music Festival in Arkansas.²³⁸ Colleges hosting Matt Haimovitz for residencies will schedule additional performances for him in alternative venues. In these cases, presenters paid musicians for alternative venue events as part of a fee for a larger set of concerts.

²³⁸ Rick Robinson, interview by author, October 29, 2012.

Musicians also fund alternative venue concerts by combining the income for these concerts with higher-paid, traditional venue events. Missy Mazzoli has a standard fee for her ensemble, Victoire, but finds "it's easier to get a higher fee from a more traditional, larger venue." When touring, the group combines shows with lower and higher fees to fund the tour. "The difference can be thousands of dollars between each one, so we just take the lump sum at the end and divide that up," said Mazzoli. The performances that pay Victoire the most tend to be through universities or festivals, and club shows usually pay less. Mazzoli said, "I think every band does that when you tour. You always have gigs that pay you and gigs where you break even that are funded by the other gigs." Some of Mazzoli's alternative venue concerts are funded by commissions from individuals or foundations for works performed during the event. Project Trio, an ensemble that combines the styles of classical, jazz and hip-hop, earned most of their money in recent seasons from educational events in schools. Club or bar shows earn much less and are subsidized by educational events.

Organizations that specialize in performance in alternative venues sometimes receive grants and sponsorships for their work. For example, the Regional Arts and Culture Council, the Multnomah County Culture Coalition and the Oregon Cultural Trust have awarded grants to Classical Revolution PDX.²³⁹ The organization is also sponsored by local businesses. Generally, the organization can pay players standard concert fees only when the project is supported by a grant. Classical Revolution in San Francisco was able to pay a core group of players a set fee to perform at the chamber jams at the

²³⁹ "Classical Revolution PDX," accessed March 13, 2013, <http://www.classicalrevolutionpdx.org/support/>.

Revolution Cafe only during the time a grant was awarded to the organization. At some point, organizations that specialize in alternative venue presentation may be as adept at securing funding as a place like The Kitchen or Roulette is today. For the moment, funding is sparse and unpredictable.

6.5 Marketing and Public Relations

Alternative venue performance is an important opportunity for the classical music industry to raise its profile, and change its image, with the general public. Bar and club events are more likely to garner press coverage, since they are still relatively novel. Also, since revenue at new alternative venues usually depends upon the size of the audience, musicians have a greater incentive to market their events. The responsibility for securing an audience in alternative venues falls largely to ensembles and presenters, rather than venues. They are also a place where new ensembles can build a fan base from the ground up and musicians can make industry connections. Ensembles used several strategies to market their alternative venue events including social media, word of mouth and PR firms.

There has been a significant amount of press coverage on classical musicians in alternative venues in the past five years. From the perspective of journalists, this is a new and interesting development in the world of classical music. Musicians are taking advantage of the opportunity. John Pickford Richards mentioned that JACK Quartet has received "a lot of great New York Times reviews from concerts we've played at Poisson Rouge, so if we come away with \$500 and a great review, or even a terrible review, then it was totally worth it." The International Contemporary Ensemble uses alternative

venues to capture media attention in a new city. Eric Lamb explains it's "the easiest 'in' to a new city. [We] go to Paris and play in the alternative spaces so that critics know ICE is coming. We'll make a little smattering of a presence like we've done before and then come back and play the concert hall."

The system of marketing events in popular venues is different from the mainstream classical business. In the popular music world, musicians are expected to promote their group and take primary responsibility for advertising concerts. "The people who play and the people who produce concerts are totally separate in classical music," said Ronen Givony, "and in the rock world, this sort of thing would never really stand." Peter Seymour explained that "when you play at an alternative venue, you have to put butts in the seats. You are doing the marketing and you're doing the developing." Necessity has created a newfound investment in, and feeling of responsibility for, the public relations and marketing of their ensembles among chamber musicians.

In most cases, venues provide a supporting role in marketing events in their spaces. The amount of work venues put into promotion seems to vary from place to place. (Le) Poisson Rouge advertises their events through "e-mail, Facebook, Twitter, through our website and our newsletter," said Givony. Venues hosting Classical Revolution PDX usually make posters, send announcements to their e-mail lists and make Facebook events, according to Kaiser. However, Joshua Kohl found that most clubs "really don't put much energy into promoting stuff," unless they are hosting a famous act. Most of those interviewed mentioned that an ideal situation is where presenters, ensembles and venues work together to promote events.

A venue's regular clientele can add to the audience for an event. Rick Robinson said some of Classical Revolution Detroit's audience are people who "come to the bar anyway but they didn't know classical was going to be there." Mattie Kaiser said that she likes "to choose venues where people just kind of hang-out anyway." Choosing a venue with an existing clientele can make a concert promoter's job easier, especially in venues without a cover. Playing a combined show with a popular group also can help to expand a chamber ensemble's fan base.

Alternative venues can be an important place for new ensembles to build an audience and for musicians to network with colleagues. Haimovitz suggested that, "for someone starting out, it's a great way to start, just like an indie-rock musician or jazz musician who has to go out there and start playing and build an audience from scratch. I think that's a perfect way to do that within classical, too." Individual musicians can also build relationships within the music industry by performing chamber music in alternative venues. Classical Revolution PDX is "really good for right now for networking and meeting other people and getting other gigs...based on who you meet because you participate in it," according to Mattie Kaiser.

Free online marketing was the most popular tool for promoting alternative venue events among participants. Most of those interviewed rely on a combination of social media, e-mail lists and their own websites. Damien Elwood said Opera on Tap Los Angeles, in addition to creating Facebook events, will "do pictures and comments and links to try and drum-up interest." Twitter and e-mail newsletters were also popular tactics. Many presenters also list their events on local online and newspaper calendars.

Several interviewees mentioned that word of mouth was the single most important factor in building an audience for their events. Since most Americans are bombarded daily with advertisements, a personal recommendation can be much more effective than any other tactic. When the Seattle-based Degenerate Art Ensemble travelled to New York for two performances at the New Museum, they were able to see this effect firsthand. "We had a talk back at the end," explained Kohl, "and we asked the audience: 'Who here came because they saw some press or publicity for the show?' And two hands went up. 'Who came here because they heard about this through the museum?' And one or two hands went up. 'Who came because someone you know...from Seattle got you to come and see the show?' And, boom, all the hands went up." This experience showed Kohl that word of mouth can be more powerful than paid advertising or media coverage. Although building a fan base that can spread the word about performances may be a slow process, many chamber ensembles are finding it is worth doing.

Ensembles who are doing well enough financially to hire a public relations team have taken advantage of this assistance. What ensembles are paying for when they hire a publicist is often the opportunity to get more and better press coverage. Peter Seymour found having a PR team was especially important when touring. "We do concerts all over the world, so if I'm going to Hong Kong, there's nothing I can do on my Facebook" page to promote an event, explained Seymour. Matt Haimovitz, in addition to doing his own marketing "had PR, and that's expensive" but "it's worth it because you really don't want to play for an empty room. It's the worst."

6.6 Venue Partnerships

By its very nature, performance in new alternative venues is a partnership with a for-profit business. These bars and clubs are primarily small businesses that cannot afford to run a deficit for very long. The hundreds of venues that host classical music need to make a profit, otherwise they would have to shut their doors. In general, any act that can fill a club with drinking or eating customers is worth hosting. The long-term feasibility of hosting classical music in clubs and bars can be investigated by looking at three venues that have been doing just that for a number of years: (Le) Poisson Rouge, Barbès and the Revolution Cafe.

(Le) Poisson Rouge was set-up as a for-profit business. "We don't apply for grants. We don't solicit donations," said Givony, because "we wanted to never be in the position where if we lost outside funding, we couldn't do what we want to do." To make a club that hosts classical music sustainable, the founders employed several strategies. First, any group booked by the club needs bring an audience. Givony explained that, "the idea is that shows have to pay for themselves. Shows have to be promoted and they have to bring people in."

The capacity of the main room of the club is 700 standing and 350 seated. Generally classical concerts utilize the seated configuration. With this set up, tables are arranged cabaret-style and patrons are able to order dinner. According to the (Le) Poisson Rouge website, "by purchasing a "Table Seating" ticket you agree to also

purchase a minimum of two food and/or beverage items per person."²⁴⁰ By instituting a minimum purchase with table seating, the club can guarantee a higher return for the night, even with fewer people in the club. The venue divides a negotiated portion of the door with the artists but "80 percent plus," of revenue for the club comes in from food and drink, said Givony. "Food and drink is what keeps the venue open," he explained. Revenue varies significantly from night to night, however. Even within the classical genre some shows attract "older, more affluent audiences" said Givony, "whereas contemporary composers will be a younger, more student-like audience," who might buy fewer food and drink items.

(Le) Poisson Rouge books a wide variety of music at their club, from classical to rock to jazz and more. Givony said the club hosts a classical concert from zero to four times a week, depending "on time of the year and a lot of incidentals." Hosting classical music was a founding principal of (Le) Poisson Rouge. This does prevent the club from making the maximum profit available from the space. "If the owners of the venue wanted to make a lot more money, it would not be difficult," he said. "Every night that we have a string quartet or a solo piano recital, is a night that could very easily be rented out to a company for a party for 700 people with a DJ," said Givony but, "that's not this venue." Although run as a for-profit business, love of music takes precedence at (Le) Poisson Rouge over maximum profit.

²⁴⁰ "le Poisson Rouge." accessed February 16, 2013, http://www.lepoissonrouge.com/lpr_events/candybox-burlesque-feb-16th-2013/.

Giving love of music precedence over maximum profit is also a system employed by Olivier Conan at Barbès. Barbès is a small bar in the Park Slope section of Brooklyn, opened ten years ago "as a performance space. That was the idea," said Conan. The venue hosts music seven nights a week. Conan generally books two acts a night to give each performer a full two-hour concert. The bar hosts world music, jazz and projects that do not fit neatly into a genre. Standard Western classical music is hosted there two to three times a month. However indie-classical and genre-bending classical groups are presented more often. A musician himself, Conan specializes in Latin music. Explaining his motivation in hosting music "that was not necessarily being booked in New York," he said, "I tend to be pretty enthusiastic about music I like...so I want to share it."

When asked if hosting this kind of music makes sense financially, Conan replied, "No. I mean, it doesn't," but "we're still in business." He continued, "It only works because it's small, so we can afford to have some empty shows." The entire shotgun shaped bar has a capacity of around 70, including the small music room at the back. There is no drink minimum or cover but those attending the shows in the back room are solicited for a donation to the performers. Conan likes to invest in shows he thinks have potential even if they have a small following. He thinks of the business model "as a weekly model," he said, "within a week I have to have some stuff that's popular and some stuff that's less popular and kind of average it out."

Since the bar doesn't make any income from a cover, and only makes money through drink sales, hosting classical music can be a particular challenge. "It's even harder to make money with it," explained Conan, "because...people who come to really

listen to music, to have a concert experience, will not spend any money on drinks." He finds that these concerts can be beneficial to the bar "because they'll come back for something else." Conan is able to keep the for-profit Barbès running by funding low-revenue acts like classical performances along with other higher-revenue shows.

At the Revolution Cafe in San Francisco, however, Classical Revolution nights became one of the most profitable nights of the week for the venue. The Revolution Cafe is a small cafe and bar in the heart of the Mission District of San Francisco. According to Joe Lewis, the cafe is "20, 25 feet by 20, 25 feet maybe; very small." The cafe hosts weekly residencies of different styles of music each night of the week. Classical Revolution is at the bar every Monday night. Today the venue has become "so established" as a place to hear music, "it's packed every night now," explained Lewis. The Cafe can boast a packed house partly because it's "perfectly located," said Lewis, they don't charge a cover and it's known as a hang out spot.

When Classical Revolution nights first started, they were the weakest night for revenue at the cafe. Customers there are offered live music for free, and the bar makes money from drink purchases. Lewis said the classical night "was financially the weakest night for quite a while at the Rev, because...there were a lot of non-drinkers, like mineral water types... When we're working a bar, it's not sustainable. People need to drink [higher-priced alcohol] so we can keep supporting this art." Lewis' solution was to give a speech to the audience explaining "the only way that we can keep doing this is to make it sustainable," and ask them to purchase drinks. Lewis said he put in the time and effort to make Classical Revolution nights work financially because "I want Classical

Revolution to be not only artistically something really unique and special but I want it to totally hold court in terms of sales, too... At this point, it's been one of the strongest nights at the Rev for quite a while."

The previous three examples are bar and club venues that have successfully hosted classical music in sustainable ways. The owners or managers of each venue want to host great music. A working, long-term collaboration between classical musicians and venues may require some artistic motivation among those running the venue. However, a specific dedication to classical music does not seem necessary, as long as the acts seem of quality to bookers and bring an audience. Musicians also need to promote their shows, fill the venues and be sure their audiences buy enough food and drinks to make the night profitable for the venue. Maintaining a residency can help build an audience, which benefits both the club and the musicians. When these pieces fall into place, hosting classical music can be part of a club or bar's for-profit business model.

CHAPTER 7

THE AUDIENCE AT ALTERNATIVE VENUES

Most study participants began performing in alternative venues in part to expand the audience for classical music. The majority of today's classical music audience in conventional venues is over fifty, affluent, and conservative in their musical tastes. Based on the observation of participants, the audience at new alternative venues, like bars, clubs and coffee shops, seems to be younger and less affluent. Some of those interviewed found segments of their loyal audience followed them into alternative venues. Most were able to reach new fans and fans of more popular music genres. Overall, alternative-venue performance appears to have broadened the audience for classical music in recent years.

7.1 Demographics

Most of those interviewed saw an average audience age of 20s to 30s at alternative venue concerts. After his first performance in an alternative venue, Matt Haimovitz said he saw "a whole new audience that I'd never reached before." The reason these concerts draw a younger audience may be because these are spaces younger people frequent. These venues may be less attractive to an older age group because they often do not have the comfort, ease of access and safe neighborhood of a large concert hall. "In an alternative venue you have to stand or it's really hot. A lot of

times they're in neighborhoods that are harder to get to or less safe," explained Paul, so they attract "a more adventurous or younger crowd."

The age of the performers in alternative venues seems to have an effect on the age of the audience. Most Classical Revolution chapter directors and performers are themselves in their 20s and 30s. They attract an audience of a similar age. On the other hand, Rick Robinson, a 23-year veteran of the Detroit Symphony, falls into a higher age bracket. He finds "a lot of the regulars that I see at our events are friends of mine from DSO circles. They are older and follow classical music." Ronen Givony has noticed this effect at (Le) Poisson Rouge. He explained that many of their classical shows draw older audiences but the shows featuring young composers often attract audiences in their early 20s.

While alternative venues seem to have a dramatic effect on the age of the average audience there seems to be a less dramatic effect on the racial mix of the audience. Damien Elwood finds that at Opera on Tap Los Angeles "unfortunately we're probably still seeing mainly a white crowd... We certainly have different ethnicities mixed-in because we are in Los Angeles but it's still probably majority white." Charith Premawardhana said he usually sees a crowd at Revolution Cafe that "is mixed racially." On a night at the Revolution Cafe in August 2012, however, the majority of the audience was white. Eric Lamb mentioned that audiences at neighborhood bar concerts usually matched the racial make-up of that neighborhood. It seems that alternative venue concerts have a slightly more diverse audience racially than the concert hall, but the results from this study were not definitive.

A demographic that alternative venue concerts do seem to attract is those with lower incomes. Classical Revolution nights at the Revolution Cafe make classical music "accessible to poor people," said Joe Lewis, which he called "a beautifully powerful concept." Charith Premawardhana explained that, "it's part of our mission to make concerts accessible... I would say that probably 70 to 80 percent of our concerts are free or with suggested donations." Younger audiences with limited means often balk at concert hall prices. Peter Seymour explained "it mainly comes down to money... Older audiences are going to pay \$50 or \$100 to sit and see an orchestra and somebody else who goes to a bar is paying \$5 or \$10." Alternative venue concerts on average cost much less than concert hall tickets, so it is no surprise that they attract audiences with lower incomes.

7.2 New Audiences

Most of the study participants sought a new audience for classical music through their alternative venue performances. Concerts in clubs seemed to Rick Robinson as "an obvious progression for classical music, to try to reach people where they enjoy other music." Damien Elwood decided it was important to "get classical music back out on the streets...out of the temple...[and] accessible to an average person."

Some of those interviewed have fans that attend their concerts in both conventional and unconventional venues. This phenomenon seems most common among classical musicians specializing exclusively in new music. According to Eric Lamb, there is a "new music hard-core audience," that attends concerts both at traditional art spaces in New York City and at (Le) Poisson Rouge. John Pickford Richards finds "a big

overlap between people who go to the concert hall and go to the bar" to see JACK Quartet. Fans of new classical music are devoted and do not seem deterred by venue whether it be concert hall or club.

Alternative venues often provide classical musicians the opportunity to reach fans of other genres of music. Performing in popular music venues, Matt Haimovitz said "it was nice to have jazz music lovers or folk music lovers come and experience classical [often] for the first time." When Missy Mazzoli performs in a place "where people are used to going...to see pop bands or electronic acts," she finds that venue's audience attends her show as well. Venues that specialize in other genres of music can help classical musicians reach a new audience. If they give a compelling performance, they have the opportunity to win new fans.

Popular venues also provide a unique opportunity to share audience with bands from other genres. "One of the biggest things for us in our audience development has just been, who we play with more than where we're playing," explained Joshua Kohl. "Let's say we play with some rock band. It's that rock band's audience...that brings these new people to our music," he said. Eventually Kohl noticed a gradual "straggler effect" on his core audience, from fans of other bands or those that frequent rock venues.

Alternative venue concerts can be more attractive to non-classical fans than concert hall events. When Doug Perkins is selling bar concerts to those "uninitiated" in classical music, he can say, "hey it's in this place and you can get a beer. Come on, let's go. It's great. The food is good." He finds this approach is "more likely to get that person than [to say to] that same person...'okay you're going to pay for a ticket and we're going

to sit in the dark for a while.' That's not going to happen as much." In his experience his non-musician acquaintances "would come out to those [alternative venue] concerts but would not come up to Miller Theater to see us play a regular concert. But they thought it was really cool to come to a place where they could get drinks and hang out and wear their fun clothes." Selling the idea a night out on the town that includes a show at a bar can be a lot easier than selling concert hall tickets.

Finally, if musicians choose a public space as their alternative venue, the audience can be as diverse as the population of an area. The Asphalt Orchestra plays on the street in "neighborhoods and communities where you wouldn't ordinarily find it... Generally, it makes it much more accessible," said Savelson. Alan Pierson said when performing in public spaces "potentially, you're accessing the audience" of that space. If classical musicians want to reach new audiences, public spaces certainly provide an opportunity to do that.

In the experience of the interview participants, alternative venue concerts in bars and clubs attract a young audience that has been largely missing from mainstream classical events. They draw lower to middle-income Americans, another key demographic that rarely appears in the concert hall. Ensembles that perform in alternative venues are rewarded with a larger and more diverse group of fans. Concert hall audiences are aging and not being replaced, but the missing generations can be found in these spaces. Alternative venue performance is a smart investment for any individual or institution interested in the longevity of classical music.

CHAPTER 8

THE EVOLUTION OF CONCERT CULTURE

The presentation of classical music in new alternative venues has created dramatic changes in concert culture. Concerts in bars and clubs tend to be more casual than the concert hall. The audience is invited to eat, drink and often talk between pieces, or even during the music. The noise level in these spaces has changed concert production. Musicians are more likely to use amplification and present the music in a way that captures attention, rather than assumes a captive audience. Many performers have discovered a more engaged and invested audience in the intimate, casual environment of new alternative venues. Increasingly, a casual atmosphere and more lax concert rules are making their way from clubs into concert halls.

Study participants agreed that new alternative venue concerts are more casual than the concert hall, with relaxed rules for the audience and performers. Attending alternative venues concerts, Gavin Chuck enjoys a new freedom to "walk around and physically drift as well as mentally drift in the performance." Kenny Savelson said that in clubs "you can have a drink and you can listen to some music and you can talk amongst your friends in between the pieces...it became more of a participatory and relaxed atmosphere for hearing what can still be very challenging and interesting, sophisticated chamber music. I think in some ways it's liberated the listening experience."

8.1 Stages and Performance Areas

The way an alternative concert space is configured can affect the atmosphere and effectiveness of a concert. Some bars and clubs have a performance space that is separated from the rest of the establishment. At Barbès, Olivier Conan created a performance space out of the back room with a small stage, upright piano and a curtain separating it from the main room of the bar. He also added a speaker in the main room of the bar to broadcast the concerts from the back room. "I think being able to listen to the music in the front room makes it possible for people who want to talk and socialize to still be there and not disrupt the performers," Conan explained. By employing a separate performance room with speakers to the main bar, Conan created a hybrid space where different levels of background noise and audience attention occur separately but simultaneously.

Other alternative venues host performances in the main room. The stage in (Le) Poisson Rouge is on one wall of the main room of the club. The bar is along an adjacent wall. When there is seating for a performance, tables fill most of the room. At Joe's Pub, the stage is set at the bottom of a room shaped like an amphitheater. Each ascending level contains cabaret-style seating and the bar is located at the top. Although these are one-room venues with cabaret seating and bars, the stages are prominent and audience attention is generally directed there. Other spaces are more fluid. For example, the Revolution Cafe is a small, one-room venue with no raised stage. One wall of the room contains an upright piano and performers congregate around the instrument. Tables, standing patrons and performers can all be within inches of each other. Inside the main

room, those listening to the concert and those perceiving the music as background to their conversation all share the same space.

The stage equipment in some alternative venues can make producing classical concerts challenging. Eric Lamb said that in some bars and clubs "there are no music stands. There's no lighting. The piano is out of tune. The guy who sets up the chairs is an alcoholic and he's drunk all the time... If you're not used to that it can be very problematic." Damien Elwood has had similar experiences but "from my standpoint I see that as a plus," he said, because performers need the "confidence and personal fortitude" to perform through difficulties. Less-than-ideal spaces can make a concert less effective, or they can lead to an inspired performance under difficult circumstances.

8.2 Amplification and Acoustics

Many popular music venues were created for amplified music, so the acoustics are fundamentally different than a concert hall. Joshua Kohl explained that, "a lot of those clubs try to make it as dead as possible, so that when they amplify it, it's going to sound like what's coming out of the speakers. They can have full control over how it sounds because the room doesn't have any reverberation, which is the exact opposite of what you want with classical... The instruments will just die in there." To make an acoustic instrument sound good in a room with little reverberation, and to combat a noisy bar, many of the musicians interviewed use amplification.

When classical musicians use amplification in bar and club spaces, they usually use the venue's sound system. Joshua Kohl said that, "in the clubs the sound systems can be so horrible and so good. You don't have a lot of control over that." In recent

years, Missy Mazzoli found that many club sound systems were as good as or superior to concert hall systems. Matt Haimovitz connects his own mic to the existing sound system yielding more control over the quality of the sound. Since the venues Rick Robinson performs in for Classical Revolution Detroit do not have sound systems, Robinson bought his own for around \$2,000. The other musicians interviewed, however, used the amplification systems of their host venues.

Musicians working with amplification also rely heavily on sound engineers to create their musical product. The quality of sound engineers varies tremendously from venue to venue. Sometimes sound engineers that specialize in rock music have difficulty amplifying acoustic classical instruments. However, Mazzoli found that, "in the last couple years, you go into a club and the sound guy is used to working with violins and clarinets and keyboards and double basses because a lot of bands are using these instruments." (Le) Poisson Rouge boasts an exceptional sound system and sound engineers that can achieve a concert hall sound in a club built to be dead acoustically. Few classical chamber ensembles can afford to hire their own sound engineer for concerts. John Pickford Richards said that, "Kronos Quartet always travels with a sound person and it ensures that they will sound the same in any space... That's just a huge financial commitment that most groups can't swallow."

Some smaller alternative venues were created for folk or other acoustic acts and are better suited for unamplified classical instruments. At Barbès, classical performers do not usually require amplification. Charith Premawardhana prefers "to play unamplified as much as possible because the instruments themselves are amplifying

bodies and the rooms themselves are amplifying bodies. So, I like to be able to play with those acoustics as much as possible... That's why mostly we play in smaller rooms."

8.3 Noise Levels

Classical musicians performing in clubs and bars compete with more noise than found in a concert hall. Gavin Chuck recounted a recent concert he attended where "there was a lot of...noise in the bar...beer bottles, and cash registers and that kind of thing." Doug Perkins mentioned that he had dealt with "the frustrations of performing classical music in a place [where] people are serving beer and nachos, sometimes loudly."

Some musicians use amplification that is sufficient to satisfy those who want to concentrate on the music and those who want to talk. "Often times we're amplified, which changes the whole environment in terms of the sound but also the level that people can...chat and talk while the music is playing," said Sascha Jacobsen. There are times when the crowd is expecting the noise level of a rock group and the amplification of a classical ensemble is insufficient. In this case performances can be ineffective. Greg Sandow went to hear a solo classical musician at CBGBs, a punk club in New York City. "CBs is a very long and narrow club... I went back to the bar and there you could barely hear and you certainly couldn't see... I don't think it really worked," he said.

Classical musicians playing in alternative venues often need to change their expectations. "There's this whole movement to get classical music...in these places but then you go to a bar and people are talking and listening...hanging out and drinking. The musicians walk away and [say], 'Those people weren't even listening.' Well, you brought

it to an alternative venue. What do you expect?" said Peter Seymour. Mattie Kaiser adds that at alternative venues, "Sometimes there's noise. If you want your piece to be very serious and very quiet, then you have your option. You can go play in a church."

Some venues are quieter than others, of course, with more of an expectation for the audience to focus on the music. Matt Haimovitz found the venues "that are really successful for me are the ones that already present music and so you're just going in there and bringing classical." At Joe's Pub in New York City the staff close the front door when a show starts, to minimize noise from the lobby and adjacent kitchen. Latecomers are quietly seated during the concert and wait-staff take orders during the performance by whispering. Amplification in the room is sufficient that these activities would not be disruptive to most performances. At Barbès, a waiter comes through and takes orders quietly during performances but the audience tends to be quiet and attentive during a quiet show.

Ronen Givony said the noise level changes from concert to concert at (Le) Poisson Rouge. When JACK Quartet played at (Le) Poisson Rouge, Richards said, "it got pretty rowdy but the music we were playing was pretty rowdy." On a classical night at (Le) Poisson Rouge in January 2013, the atmosphere was very still. People stopped ordering at the bar after the music began and the wait-staff moved around the room quietly taking orders. Generally everyone was working very hard to be a quiet audience. Overall, the level of noise in alternative venues has an extremely wide range depending on the venue, the performers and the audience.

8.4 Attention and Engagement

The quality of audience engagement generally changes in new alternative venues. "In the non-conventional space there is a wider range of ways that you can direct your attention," explained Chuck. An alternative venue can engage the senses in different ways. "There's the fragrances of the food. There's the taste of the beer. There's sounds from the bar," explained Elwood. The audience in a bar or club is exposed to sensory input from multiple sources, including a musical show.

There are also different expected behaviors in alternative venues than in traditional ones. "In a place like LPR, people are much more comfortable talking... The fact that people walk around...and take orders during the concert means the place is saying that talking is okay," said Alan Pierson. "At Revolution Cafe we don't discourage the following behaviors," explained Charith Premawardhana, "drinking...quiet conversation...getting up to use the bathroom" or walking in and out of the bar. Both the venue and the presenters play a role in subtly encouraging certain behaviors among the audience.

A few of the musicians interviewed have performed in alternative venues for an audience that was not engaged with the music. Doug Perkins said, "It's always important to pick the venues wisely and to advertise appropriately" to avoid awkward situations. Eric Lamb has been in the audience at shows where "there were people there who did not like the music. They didn't come to hear music. They didn't want it. They came to talk." To combat this problem at small venues, Lamb said, "you have to invite as many people as you can so that everyone there has come to hear you play." Most of the

musicians interviewed found more success in alternative venues that have a culture for listening to music or by bringing their own audience to a venue.

Many study participants found attentive audiences at alternative venues. "I think that if the listener is into an artist or band, they're going to listen respectfully and intently. I don't buy into this idea that if a rock band is playing that your attention is of a different order than listening to Schubert," said Ronen Givony. Mattie Kaiser found "when you do need people's attention for the really serious quiet works...if you're doing it convincingly, you have them." Kaiser said she achieves this effect by the "playing and the music itself. I never tell people, okay, be quiet now, we're going to play." With the right combination of venue, quality performance and fans, alternative venues can provide a concentrated listening environment.

Alternative venues often allow for more interaction between performers and audience. "In between pieces there's more of a rapport [with] the audience... During the performance they can yell out if they like a certain part. Of course in a classical concert you'd never yell out in the middle of a piece. They'd probably kick you out," said Jacobsen. Mattie Kaiser explained that she became used to reacting to music in an enthusiastic way in alternative venues. "I have a really hard time in the formal concert hall now...especially if it's something...amazing and you just want to [move around]... You can't have that emotional reaction," she said. Eric Lamb said he gets "the most interesting feedback" at alternative venue concerts, "because you finish the concert and you walk off-stage and into the audience... They know that they have to say something, anything to you." Audiences feel much more comfortable interacting with musicians in

small, informal venues. Musicians get feedback on the effectiveness of their performance, and the audience feels more connected to performers.

Musicians and audience are in close proximity in most bar and club spaces. The audience at the Waypost in Portland is "surrounded by the musicians. They're unpacking behind you or their bow is getting in your face, so you're right there in the action," said Kaiser. There is a heightened energy in a performance space when people are packed closely to one another. "No one wants to go to a concert that's empty and nobody wants to play a concert that's empty," said Seymour but, "if you play a packed house in a little teeny room in a bar then that show is probably one of the best shows you went and saw." Doug Perkins described the unique energy of a performance in a club filled to capacity. At a performance at (Le) Poisson Rouge "we were set-up on the floor and everybody would kind of surround us to the point of sitting under the instruments. It was sweaty and packed and that was great, exciting energy," said Perkins. A packed bar or club can add energy, excitement and buzz to a performance that may fall flat in a more empty space.

8.5 Changes in Concert Presentation

New alternative venues provide musicians with unique challenges and opportunities. To create effective performances in these spaces, musicians often change the way they present concerts. Matt Haimovitz said performances in alternative venues "challenge me to re-think my relationship with the audience and...what my role is as a performer [in] engaging an audience and entertaining them." Mattie Kaiser strives to "make a chamber music concert more like a rock concert... I'm always trying to think of

how can it feel more like you're going to see a rock band." Musicians change several aspects of their performances in alternative venues, from dress to speaking-style to stage-presence.

Classical musicians tend to dress in a more casual and more modern manner when they perform in bars and clubs. "We can change the dress from super laid back to moderately stylish," said Sascha Jacobsen about Musical Art Quintet performances in alternative venues. "I don't think we've ever played in tuxedos, thank god. I have no desire to perform in a tuxedo ever again," he continued. Missy Mazzoli said, "We're always playing with the way that we dress and our look for the band." Often, classical musicians performing in a club or bar look like the patrons of that establishment whether it is a trendy club or a dive bar.

Most of the musicians interviewed incorporated little or no lighting effects into their alternative venue shows. Some clubs and bars are equipped with sophisticated lighting systems. Many classical performers at (Le) Poisson Rouge opt for subtle on-stage lighting effects, like a change of color between pieces. Matt Haimovitz said when he performs "I don't mind if they change between pieces. I don't really like too much going on while I'm playing but in between I don't mind the lighting person changing it up, being creative." The use of limited lighting effects is also common among popular musicians in small to medium-sized clubs. Overall, the main lighting concern among musicians interviewed was ensuring sufficient light to read music.

Musicians also tend to present themselves in a less formal way on stage in alternative venues. Mattie Kaiser mentioned that, "musicians are a little more free to be

themselves; show some character on stage... I can have a beer up here with me while I'm playing Shostakovich and that's not taboo." Leah Paul adds that, "I like to feel casual. I like to count us off," at the beginning of a piece. When venues lack a backstage, the ensemble's entrance and exit tends to be more casual, as well. Gavin Chuck said Alarm Will Sound likes "to make an entrance but...often in non-traditional spaces we just have to hang out on-stage."

Speaking from the stage is generally more casual in bars and clubs. At Opera on Tap Los Angeles, Damien Elwood asks performers to introduce themselves in the first person as their character. He said a singer may introduce herself by saying, "so, I've just realized my mother murdered my brother but I'm not upset because I'm sleeping with my step-dad, right?" Rick Robinson also encourages performers at Classical Revolution Detroit to introduce themselves and tell the audience "where they're from; where they play...about their upcoming concerts and obviously introducing the piece and why they like to play it." When musicians speak freely and in a casual manner, audiences tend to feel a more intimate connection with them.

A few of the musicians interviewed work audience participation into their alternative-venue performances. Rick Robinson asks the audience questions and suggests games like "*re-name the classical piece*." In this game, after hearing the piece, the audience gives a descriptive name to a classical piece with a generic name like *Symphony No. 3*. "I've got a couple of compositions that take some cowbell beats and some shaker backbeat and [I] ask a couple audience members up to play them," Robinson said. At Classical Revolution PDX, "We do a lot of jokes. We re-name drinks"

after music, said Kaiser, "so it's really interactive." Those musicians who have incorporated audience participation into their shows seem pleased with the results.

It is, of course, possible to present a concert at an alternative venue that feels very much like a formal concert hall performance. An atmosphere can be created in a bar, club or restaurant where the audience feels uncomfortable moving around and glares at any one making noise. This is generally possible when those familiar with concert hall etiquette dominate an audience. A young woman working the door of (Le) Poisson Rouge in January 2013 said when she works classical shows the audience usually only claps between movements and seem to know the unwritten rules of concert etiquette. "When I'm not sure, I just follow what everyone else does," she explained. Her colleague mentioned how awkward it could be when she starts to clap but no one else does. Musicians contribute to the formality of these concerts by walking on and off stage between pieces, failing to introduce themselves or the music, ignoring the audience if they clap between movements, and bowing formally.

Slowly, alternative venue atmosphere is making its way into the concert hall. Ensembles that develop in alternative venues tend to keep a casual presentation style when they move into more formal spaces. Project Trio brings "the vibe of the club...into the concert hall, [which is possible] because we spent so much time playing in alternative venues," explained Seymour. Occasionally, a major classical venue will host popular and classical music on the same program. For example, in 2010 at the L.A. Philharmonic's Green Umbrella Series, players from the philharmonic, Alarm Will Sound and the rock group, the Dirty Projectors, all shared a program on the main stage of the

Walt Disney Concert Hall.²⁴¹ For the past few years, the New World Symphony has presented its annual *Pulse* concert, which attempts to turn the main hall of the New World Center into a nightclub. Ground floor seating is removed during the concert and the audience is free to move around. D.J. sets alternate with live performances from the stage and around the hall by New World Symphony players.

The 21st-century United States is an informal society and most audiences prefer a casual concert atmosphere. Alternative venues are the most effective means by which classical music can achieve that goal. Intimate, casual venues put the audience's needs and desires back into the equation. Performers get more feedback from the audience in alternative spaces and adjust their performances accordingly. These venues help restore a symbiotic relationship between audience and musicians where the performance is influenced by both sides. Musicians who learn to engage audiences in an alternative setting can be ambassadors to help mainstream classical music connect with a larger public.

²⁴¹ Chris Martins, "Getty's Foundation: Dirty Projectors Play Disney Hall," February 26, 2010, accessed April 6, 2013, <http://www.laweekly.com/2010-02-26/music/getty-s-foundation-dirty-projectors-play-disney-hall/>.

CHAPTER 9

REPERTOIRE AT ALTERNATIVE VENUES

Alternative venues for classical music are shaping the 21st-century classical repertoire. In addition to standard repertoire, musicians can play new music that is difficult to program in concert halls. Drawing on the resources of rock venues, classical musicians perform with amplification, electronics and film. Classical shows in these venues often feature shorter, faster pieces and tend to avoid lengthy, subtle works. Finally, classical musicians are collaborating with, being inspired by, and themselves inspiring popular and jazz musicians that work in the same venues. The increase in classical music with popular influences in the 21st century can be partially traced to artistic comingling in bars and clubs.

Musicians perform everything from early music and romantic standards to new avant-garde works and popular crossover pieces in new alternative venues. (Le) Poisson Rouge hosts classical acts featuring music from the entirety of the repertoire. "Literally in one week we will have a really standard Schubert and Brahms recital and the next night will be a marimba duo and the night after will be a string quartet playing all world premieres... It's really hard to generalize," said Ronen Givony. The Revolution Cafe chamber jams focus on "reading down the standards," of string chamber music, according to Premawardhana. However, the resident ensemble of Classical Revolution in San Francisco, the Musical Art Quintet, often performs salsa and tango chamber music

written by Sascha Jacobsen. It's not difficult to find repertoire from any era in alternative venues today.

9.1 New Music

Many of the musicians interviewed for this study specialize in new music. The International Contemporary Ensemble, JACK Quartet and Alarm Will Sound are all new music ensembles. The Degenerate Art Ensemble performs with original music. Leah Paul and Missy Mazzoli are composer / performers, who perform their own compositions. When these ensembles and performers play in alternative venues or concert halls, they play contemporary works. Missy Mazzoli said Victoire plays the same music in any venue from a concert hall to a punk club in Detroit with "a rat living under the stage." ICE has premiered a work "at (Le) Poisson Rouge...and played it the next week in a concert hall," said Lamb.

Alternative venues provide a performance outlet for new music that would be difficult to program in a concert hall. Mattie Kaiser put it simply that Classical Revolution PDX will "play the stuff no one else will play." For example, she said they recently performed an orchestral suite by Jherek Bischoff. "He's not going to be able to call the Oregon Symphony and be like, hey, I've got this orchestral suite. You should try it out. So, we're able to collaborate with artists that might not have those connections," said Kaiser. Alternative venues are changing classical repertoire, "as far as openness to new music... I think audiences are far more willing to listen to new music than typical programmers give them credit for," explained Kaiser. Alternative spaces provide a setting for music that is new, risky or unknown to be performed. Artists can take a

chance on performing these works in a place with lower stakes and fewer programming gatekeepers than a concert hall.

9.2 Electro-Acoustic and Multi-Media Performances

Many contemporary composers write multi-media and electro-acoustic music. Popular music venues are frequently equipped for performance of these works with sound systems, lighting systems and video screens. "Often these spaces invest a lot of money into being able to produce rock shows and pop shows" so electro-acoustic classical shows can work "much better outside the concert hall," said Lamb. Classical Revolution PDX has produced concerts with slide shows, spoken word and aerialists. They have also performed newly composed soundtracks to old B-movies in collaboration with the organization Film Music. The Musical Art Quintet has performed with dancers, acrobats, poetry readings and video presentations at venues like the Treat Social Club. Rick Robinson has worked with break-dancers and Missy Mazzoli presented her opera for live chamber ensemble and film in alternative spaces. Alternative venues have been a place for many musicians to collaborate with artists from other fields and create shows that combine several different media.

9.3 The Effect of Concert Atmosphere on Repertoire

Many musicians alter their repertoire for alternative venues. Several participants mentioned that loud, fast, attention-grabbing pieces are most effective in a bar or club environment, especially first on a program. In a venue with background noise, Joshua Kohl recommended starting with a piece that will "hit people over the head a little more and maybe save the subtle" music for later in the program. John Pickford Richards found

the Xenakis string quartets work well in a club setting "because there's often a constant sound mass going on. It's loud and abrasive and awe-inspiring" and "grabs an audience's attention." When the quartet performed quiet music that unfolds at a slower pace, it did not work as well in a club environment. It is difficult for slow, subtle, quiet music to compete with the distractions of a bar or club.

Relatively short pieces may be more effective in an alternative venue. "Some of the most successful programs I've given, like Anthem, have been shorter pieces," said Haimovitz. Several musicians separated multi-movement works and treated movements as independent pieces. Concerts with short works, excerpts and individual movements seemed "more suited to that environment where people were having drinks and milling around," said Gavin Chuck. Since attention may be directed in many ways in an alternative venue and the audience is free to come and go throughout a set, brief works work well. They also mimic the length of the popular songs most often performed in these venues.

Matt Haimovitz likes to read the audience during his club performances and alter his set accordingly. "Sometimes you feel like it would be useful to play a little more Bach before you hit them over the head with something contemporary," but other times, "you can feel it, they want to rock out, so you can include the heavier hitting pieces," explained Haimovitz. He said, "If I feel there's a jazz audience then I'll probably want to play certain pieces that would relate to jazz." Changing the program during a performance is more challenging for a chamber group than a solo instrumentalist, however.

9.4 Collaborations with Popular Groups

Classical music in clubs is often placed side-by-side with popular music. Leah Paul, Victoire and the Musical Art Quintet have all shared a bill with rock bands in a club setting. Shows that include both popular and classical acts can be artistically cohesive.

"The distinction between some interesting new chamber piece and a more instrumentally minded rock band that's popular is not so great," said Kenny Savelson.

Greg Sandow attended a night at (Le) Poisson Rouge that featured two sets of ambient pop and one set with Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time*. Sandow felt the night was so successful because the Messiaen and the ambient pop acts had a consistency of mood throughout. Alex Ross wrote "I have seen the future, and it is called Shuffle—the setting on the iPod that skips randomly from one track to another...the little machine often goes crashing through barriers of style in ways that change how I listen."²⁴²

Increasingly, live concerts, especially at alternative venues, mirror the wide variety of genres found on a listener's iPod.

In addition to playing on the same bill, classical musicians also collaborate with musicians from other genres in alternative venues. Doug Perkins has worked with the electronic duo, Matmos, and with Glenn Kotche from the alternative rock band, Wilco. Perkins said these musicians "are people who have great careers in rock music but are bringing an honesty to their work in classical music. They're stretching" themselves

²⁴² Alex Ross, "Listen to this," *New Yorker*, February 16 and 23, 2004, accessed December 6, 2012, http://www.therestisnoise.com/2004/05/more_to_come_6.html.

artistically. Charith Premawardhana performs with a jazz ensemble featured on another night at the Revolution Cafe, the Jazz Mafia. The ensemble of mixed winds and strings, yMusic, has worked with the indie-rock bands Bon Iver and The National.²⁴³ This group even bills themselves as a "ready-made collaborative unit for bands and songwriters."²⁴⁴ Musicians that perform different genres in the same venues often take an interest in each other's work and form collaborations.

9.5 Chamber Music Influenced by Popular Music

Musicians working in alternative venues often write chamber music influenced by popular music. Newspaper articles and musicians in recent years have dubbed this music "alt-classical" or "indie-classical." Primarily, these terms refer to music that combines classical elements with diverse popular influences and can be applied to a wide variety of music. Regardless of the term applied, popular influences on musicians working in alternative venues are abundant. Rick Robinson's compositions combine "grooves [with] standard developmental techniques," he explained. Sascha Jacobsen writes music for the Musical Art Quintet, which combines Western music with "South American, Argentinian [and] Afro-Cuban music," according to Premawardhana. Musicians often develop a repertoire of mixed-genre music through their work in alternative venues. Greg Pattillo of Project Trio created his beatbox flute technique in subway stations and refined it in bar and club performances.

²⁴³ "New Amsterdam Records," accessed March 12, 2013, <http://www.newamsterdamrecords.com/?portfolio=ymusic-beautiful-mechanical>.

²⁴⁴ "Paradigm Agency," accessed March 12, 2013, <http://www.paradigmagency.com/divisions/artist/index/2183>.

Genres are so thoroughly combined in music played by classical players in alternative venues that a single label no longer seems to fit. "The kind of music that I write isn't easily categorized. It doesn't fit into a genre," explained Missy Mazzoli. The composers of Bang on a Can have been crossing these boundaries since the group's inception. Joshua Kohl said there are "a lot of people who know how to write for classical instruments that don't consider themselves to be involved with classical music... There's a whole generation of people who are coming from jazz or rock or just people that consider themselves post-genre and they're making music using these instruments." He explained that, "I think it might kill classical music. I think that this alternative venues thing, honestly in the best scenario, it'll kill it because it will no longer need to be a category of its own. It will be integrated into music that's alive today... Everything is getting blown wide open and it's both the re-birth and the death at the same time."

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSION

Chamber music performance in alternative venues is not unique to the 21st century. Musicians have performed in unconventional spaces for as long as there have been conventional venues. Musicians have used alternative venues to perform music that was not welcome in the main concert venues of their time. Others found greater audience support in alternative spaces. Different styles of music also found a home, or were developed, in these venues. For example, the lighter, simpler style of *Stil Galant* was featured in the Collegium Musicum coffee house concerts of the 18th century, instead of the more complex Baroque style played down the street at St. Thomas. An entire style of intimate music emerged from 19th-century salon concerts. Composers Steve Reich and Philip Glass developed their Minimalist style in the 1970s alternative venues of lofts and art galleries.

Some alternative venues became so intertwined with mainstream classical music that they eventually emerged as traditional venues themselves. For example, salons continued as a mainstay of chamber music performance into the 20th century. Art museum concerts, once a novelty in the 1960s and 1970s, are now standard spaces for classical concerts. Other alternative venues, however, never developed into a conventional space. For example, the coffee house, after the Collegium Musicum events, never became an established venue for concerts.

The reason so many classical performers have moved into new alternative venues in recent years is in part due to the state of mainstream classical music. The audience for classical music has declined and aged considerably in the last 30 years. The model for a 20th-century arts institution is a large organization with a big budget and a staff of administrators. These organizations rely heavily on grants and donations from wealthy patrons to survive. This model creates conservative, unwieldy music institutions that have difficulty adapting to current audience tastes. Today, most U.S. audiences prefer a more casual atmosphere on the whole and tend to dislike the elite image of classical music. Large music institutions also have limited flexibility to deal with a financial downturn or a drop in audience attendance. In addition, college graduates with music performance degrees often can't find sufficient paid work in music and lack outlets for personal creativity.

Around the turn of the 21st-century a number of young musicians from Seattle to Oberlin to Chicago started to perform in bars, clubs, restaurants and coffee shops. Most of these were organized by college students or recent graduates and often featured new music. The same year, the established cello soloist Matt Haimovitz went on his first tour of bars and clubs around the United States. The number of these concerts increased over the next few years and by 2006, two organizations dedicated to classical performance in clubs existed: Classical Revolution and Opera on Tap. Both these organizations spawned chapters, which established themselves in cities around the U.S. and abroad. Contemporary musicians in New York started to gravitate to venues like Joe's Pub and Barbès around this time. In 2008, (Le) Poisson Rouge, a club

dedicated to hosting both popular and classical music, opened its doors. The club has garnered consistent media attention and its current season includes some of the biggest classical acts in the world. Today alternative venues represent a bustling facet of the classical music industry.

Classical musicians began to perform in popular music venues like bars and clubs for a number of reasons. Some of the pioneers of this phenomenon were classical musicians who also played popular music and were already performing in these spaces. Alternative venues can be easier to book and the concerts less expensive to organize. Many musicians were simply looking for more performance opportunities or a place to experiment with new ideas. Alternative venues provided musicians with a feeling of artistic independence and the chance to build their own audience. Finally, most musicians began performing in bars and clubs in part to find new, younger audiences for classical music.

The business world of alternative venues today is less institutionalized than that of big arts organizations. Both fees and expenses are usually much lower than in concert halls. There are few administrators, with musicians often providing their own marketing and public relations. Musicians tend to combine their work in alternative venues with higher-paying performances and teaching. Larger organizations working in alternative spaces use grants and donations to subsidize their work regardless of venue. A for-profit club can host classical music sustainably when acts attract an audience and the crowd is encouraged or required to purchase food and drinks.

The audience at alternative-venue performances is younger than in concert halls in general. The average age at most of the study participant's events in bars and clubs was between 20 and 40. There was some overlap in audience at alternative and standard concert venues for some ensembles, especially those that specialize in new music. Concerts at alternative spaces are usually less expensive than concert hall events and attract audiences with lower incomes. Classical musicians found they could convert fans of other genres into audiences at alternative venue concerts by sharing a program with a popular group or booking in a popular music venue with a regular following. Overall, it appears that alternative venues are expanding the audience for classical music. A large study of audience demographics at classical concerts, that includes alternative venues, is needed for a better understanding of the changes taking place.

Classical concert culture has shifted radically inside new alternative venues. These concerts are informal with the audience often invited to eat, drink and even talk during the performance. Both audience and performers dress in a modern style, fitting the trendy or laid-back ambience of the venue. Interactions between performers and audience are casual, with free discussion before, after and sometimes during the concerts. The noise levels at these spaces are higher than in a concert hall, but often audiences are quiet and attentive during the music, much as they would be for an interesting indie-rock band.

To create successful performances in these venues, musicians often change how and what they present in concert. Performers usually interact more freely with, and speak more casually to, their audience during alternative venue presentations. They

often amplify to overcome additional crowd and ambient noise in these spaces. Many musicians present standard repertoire but there also seems to be an interest in new music among the audiences in these venues. Many performers gravitate towards shorter, more attention-grabbing pieces for concerts in bars and clubs. Often chamber music is performed on the same night with jazz, rock or other popular music.

Collaborations between musicians of different genres are born in these shared venues. Much of the music created by composers that frequent alternative venues is a mixture of classical and popular styles. Many are finding it difficult to neatly categorize their music as entirely classical. The same chamber musicians that frequent alternative venues also perform in concert halls. They are bringing new styles of music and new forms of presentation into the classical concert hall.

It is too early to tell if bars and clubs will one day become a traditional venue for chamber music. They have already had an impact on 21st-century classical music, however. Alternative venues have provided a generation of classical musicians with a place to play, experiment and develop their own style of music. They have offered a space for that same generation of audience to come into contact with live chamber music, often for the first time. The way musicians conduct the business and performance of classical music has been altered by their time in alternative venues. These venues have helped to create a subset of classical music, which is less formal and more open to new, genre-bending music. Mainstream classical music is starting to pay attention. Major arts organizations are experimenting with alternative venue concerts and booking musicians who developed their craft in popular music spaces. Alternative

venues have already redefined classical music and will continue to shape the art form in the future.

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APPENDIX A

LIST OF INTERVIEW SUBJECTS

Gavin Chuck - Managing Director and Composer, Alarm Will Sound

Olivier Conan - Owner, Barbès, Brooklyn, NY

Amanda Davis - Operations and Program Coordinator, Roulette, Brooklyn, New York

Damien Elwood - Opera Manager, University of Southern California; 'Managing Divo,'
Opera on Tap Los Angeles

Ronen Givony - Music Director, (Le) Poisson Rouge, New York, NY; Founder,
Wordless Music Series

Matt Haimovitz - International Cello Soloist; Professor of Cello, McGill University

Sascha Jacobsen - Bandleader, Bassist and Composer, Musical Art Quintet

Mattie Kaiser - Executive Director, Classical Revolution PDX

Joshua Kohl - Co-Artistic Director / Composer / Co-Founder / Conductor, Degenerate Art
Ensemble

Eric Lamb - Flutist, International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE)

Joe Lewis - Former Manager, Revolution Cafe, San Francisco, CA

Missy Mazzoli - Composer; Founder, Victoire

Michael Newman - Owner, The Waypost, Portland, OR

Leah Paul - Composer; Multi-instrumentalist

Doug Perkins - Percussionist, Meehan / Perkins Duo

Alan Pierson - Artistic Director, Alarm Will Sound; Artistic Director,
Brooklyn Philharmonic

Charith Premawardhana - Founder, Classical Revolution; Violist, Musical Art Quintet

John Pickford Richards - Founding Member / Violist, JACK Quartet

Rick Robinson - Director, Classical Revolution Detroit; Former Bassist, Detroit
Symphony Orchestra; Founder, CutTime Ensemble

Greg Sandow - Faculty, The Juilliard School; Author, www.artsjournal.com/sandow

Kenny Savelson - Executive Director, Bang on a Can

Peter Seymour - Bassist / Manager, Project Trio

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: PERFORMERS / ENSEMBLES

1. What venues have you performed in that are not typical concert venues? (For example, clubs, bars, stores, street performance or cafes.)
2. When did you start playing in this kind of venue?
3. How many performances in alternative venues do you give in a typical concert year?
4. What is the range of audience size at these kinds of events?
5. How are the concerts funded?
6. How much income do you earn for a typical performance of this type?
7. Who is responsible for the advertising of these concerts? If you do this, how is advertising funded and where do you advertise?
8. What is generally the cost to the audience? The venue? The performer?
9. How does this kind of concert compare financially, compared to a concert hall performance?
10. Have you performed multi-media shows in an alternative venue?
11. Why were you first inspired to play in alternative venues?
12. What do you see as the function of this kind of concert (audience building, making money, experimenting with new ideas)?
13. How do you feel audience involvement and general atmosphere changes, if at all, in concerts in alternative venues vs. the concert hall?

14. How do you choose repertoire for alternative venues? Does this differ from repertoire for more traditional venues?
15. Do you change any other aspects of your performance in this setting? (For example, amplification, stand lights, speaking during the concert, choreography.)
16. What are the advantages of concerts in alternative venues? Drawbacks?
17. Do you see any difference in audience demographics at alternative venues?
18. How do you plan to incorporate alternative venues in the future, if at all?
19. How do you envision alternative venues affecting the future of your ensemble in particular and classical music in general?

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: PRESENTERS

1. What kind of venues have you presented concerts in that are not typical concert venues? (For example, clubs, bars, stores, street performance or cafes.)
2. When did you start presenting in this kind of venue?
3. How many of these performances do you host in a typical concert year?
4. Is there a regular group that performs at your presented events? If so, what is their name, instrumentation and style of music?
5. What other groups have you presented?
6. Do you host open mic nights / jam sessions for classical musicians?
7. What is the range of audience size at these kinds of events?
8. How are the concerts funded? What is the financial arrangement between you, the venue and the ensembles?
9. How much income does your organization and the ensemble earn for a typical performance of this type?
10. What is generally the cost to the audience? The venue? The ensemble?
11. Who is responsible for the advertising of these concerts? If you advertise, how is advertising funded and where do you advertise?
12. Have you performed multi-media shows in an alternative venue?
13. Why were you first inspired to present concerts in alternative venues?

14. Did you see any previous concert series as a model for yours?
15. Are you a musician yourself?
16. What do you see as the function of this kind of concert (audience building for other types of concerts, making money, experimenting with new ideas)?
17. How do you feel audience involvement and general atmosphere changes, if at all, in concerts in alternative venues vs. the concert hall?
18. Do the groups you host play a certain type of repertoire? Do they tend to be a certain size?
19. How do you find new groups to host?
20. Are you involved in choosing repertoire for these concerts? If so, does the chosen repertoire differ from repertoire for more traditional venues?
21. Do you change any other aspects of concert production for alternative venues? (For example, amplification, stand lights, speaking during the concert, choreography.)
22. What are the advantages of concerts in alternative venues? Drawbacks?
23. Do you see any difference in audience demographics at alternative venues?
24. How do you envision alternative venues affecting the future of classical music?

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: VENUES

1. What styles of music does your venue host?
2. How often do classical / contemporary musicians perform at your venue?
3. When was the first concert of this type at your venue? How many do you host in a typical month?
4. Do you host open mic nights / jam sessions for classical musicians?
5. What is the range of audience size at these kinds of events? How does this compare to other styles of music?
6. Is there a cover charge or ticket price for the audience? How is this money split?
7. What is the price of the cover charge?
8. If there is no cover or ticket price, do the musicians collect tips? How much does an ensemble generally take in in tips a night?
9. Do the musicians pay your venue? Does your venue pay the musicians?
10. Who is responsible for the advertising of these concerts? If you advertise, how is advertising funded and where do you advertise?
11. Do classical groups use amplification in your venue?
12. How large is your stage?
13. Please describe our sound, video and light equipment. Do classical groups tend to use this equipment?

14. How large is the rest of the establishment? What is your maximum capacity?
15. Do you serve food and drinks during the concerts?
16. What % of revenue on these nights is related to food and drink?
17. Is there an increase in revenue on classical concert nights?
18. How did you become interested in hosting classical / new music concerts at your venue?
19. Did you see any previous venue as a model for yours?
20. Are you a musician yourself?
21. Do the groups you host play a certain type of repertoire? Do they tend to be a certain size?
22. How do you find new groups to host?
23. Are you involved in choosing repertoire for these concerts? If so, is the repertoire specifically suited to your venue? How?
24. Does hosting classical or contemporary musicians make sense financially? Do you have other reasons for continuing these concerts?
25. Is the audience and general atmosphere on a classical music night different from a night with other performing groups? What is the typical age range?
26. What are the advantages of hosting classical / new music? Drawbacks?
27. Do you plan to continue hosting classical / new music concerts in the future? Why?