

# Why Music? Is Music Different from the Other Arts?

Institute of Neurology, Queen Square

7<sup>th</sup> October 2011

## TRANSCRIPTS

### What Classical Musicians Can Learn from Other Arts on Building Audiences

*Professor John Sloboda and Dr Biranda Ford*

**Michael Trimble:** We are now moving onto a duet, although I'm not entirely sure of the order of running, so I'm going to leave it to Prospero with his Miranda, but it's actually Biranda. John Sloboda has written hugely about psychology and its relationship to music, and the kind of music which is most inspirational and which people most like. Both of them are from the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. So over to John and Biranda.

**John Sloboda:** It's a great pleasure to be invited to address this very interesting and varied event. We aim to address six questions, and I'm going to rattle through the first four. It's a little bit of an aperitif because the main course really comes with questions five and six, where Biranda will share some of our recent research results. But first of all, the six questions are:

- 1) Why do classical musicians need to build audiences?
- 2) What do audiences seek by engaging with a live event?
- 3) How are classical music events different from other arts events?
- 4) How can more of what audiences seek be added to live events?
- 5) Why are classical musicians, and those who promote them, not as focused on audiences as some may argue they might be?
- 6) How can conservatoire training be enriched to equip musicians with more audience awareness?

So let's go straight into the first question. Attendance at live classical music events has declined, both in absolute terms and relative to other arts. Now, this is not the place for an exhaustive review of the evidence but we shall just mention two sources of evidence, one from the USA and one from the UK. The US National Endowment for the Arts undertakes periodic surveys of public participation in the arts, and it has done this in 1982, 1992, 2002 and 2008. This provides a unique picture of comparative trends. Here are some figures taken from the 2008 report<sup>1</sup>. They show the percentage of US adults reporting attending different arts events at least once in

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*1 From National Endowment of the Arts, 2008 survey of public participation in the Arts. <http://www.arts.gov/research/2008-SPPA.pdf>*

the twelve months preceding the survey. I've added a final column on the right, which is the percentage decline from 1982 to 2008. As you can see, attendance at classical concerts, opera and ballet has declined by around 30% over the period. There has also been a decline for drama attendance, but considerably less, with musicals holding up particularly well. Attendance at museums and galleries has not declined at all.

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**Figure 1-3**

U.S. adults attending an activity at least once in past 12 months: 1982, 1992, 2002, and 2008

Source: 1982, 1992, 2002 and 2008 Surveys of Public Participation in the Arts.

Percent of adults attending/  
visiting/reading

Millions  
of adults

	1982	1992	2002	2008	Decline
Performing arts					
Jazz*	9.6 %	10.6 %	10.8 %	7.8 %	19%
<b>Classical music*</b>	13.0	12.5	11.6	9.3	<b>29%</b>
<b>Opera*</b>	3.0	3.3	3.2	2.1	<b>30%</b>
Musical plays*	18.6 %	17.4 %	17.1 %	16.7 %	11%
Non-musical plays*	11.9	13.5	12.3	9.4	21%
<b>Ballet*</b>	4.2 %	4.7 %	3.9 %	2.9 %	<b>30%</b>
<b>Other dance</b>	NA	7.1	6.3	5.2	<b>27%</b>
Art museums/ galleries*	22.1 %	26.7 %	26.5 %	22.7 %	0
Art/craft fairs and festivals	39.0	40.7	33.4	24.5	38%

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The NEA survey also looks at demographics. One of the most striking contributors to this decline is the changing age profile of audiences. The average classical audience is getting older. Greg Sandow, a US based composer and music critic, has been commenting on this phenomenon through lecturing, writing and a widely read blog, and in chapter two in his book in progress entitled *Rebirth: the Future of Classical Music* he comments on the NEA data as follows:

‘In 1992 the largest age group in the classical music audience was 35-44. In 2002 the largest age group was 45-54. The same people, in other words, who were the largest age group in 1992 have now grown ten years older.’<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> From *Rebirth: The Future of Classical Music* by Greg Sandow. Chapter 2 – Dire Data. <http://www.artsjournal.com/sandow/2007/01/rebirth.html>

This age profile is reproduced in the UK. Data from the Office for National Statistics showed that while 16% of the 55-64 age group had attended a classical concert, the figure for under 35s was around 5%. This compares with 90% attendance from that same cohort for films and pop concerts<sup>3</sup>. One of the most public consequences of audience decline is the increasing diversification of art forms in flagship classical venues. More and more frequently, non-classical events are held in the Royal Festival Hall, the Barbican Concert Hall and the Royal Albert Hall. There are just not the audiences to sustain the frequency of classical concerts that these venues were once able to mount.

So, the second question: what is it that people seek from live events? How do we find out? What does the research tell us? If you seek answers to these questions from regular attendees to concerts you're likely to get a confirmation of the status quo; these are the people who are happy with things just the way they are. What is needed is information from people who don't go regularly to concerts, and this is harder to obtain. One of the most interesting attempts to do this is a recent research study by Melissa Dobson who now also works alongside Biranda and myself at the Guildhall. She recruited nine culturally aware 25-34 year olds who were regular attendees at arts events but had not attended any classical concerts recently. She persuaded them to attend three classical concerts and then interviewed them afterwards about their experiences and reactions<sup>4</sup>. Two of these concerts were rather traditional symphony concerts, one with the London Symphony Orchestra at the Barbican and one with the London Chamber Orchestra at St John's Smith Square. The final concert was the Night Shift series of the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. Dobson describes the Night Shift thus:

'It is promoted as an informal event. Audience members are informed that they can talk, drink, move around the auditorium while the concert is in progress and that they can applaud whenever they wish. Verbal provision of information is key to the Night Shift's concept. Audience members are provided with a free programme sheet, rather than full programme notes, but a significant proportion of the concert's running time is devoted to discussion by the performers, facilitated by a presenter.'

Here is a typical response from one of the participants comparing the LSO concert to the OAE one:

"I did like yesterday (OAE) a lot. The fact that, I don't know, in the Barbican (LSO) it was like they were playing, and the feeling was like, if we were not there it would have been exactly the same - yeah?"

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<sup>3</sup> *Young Audience Development and Aesthetics: John Dewey's Pragmatist Philosophy and its Implications for Orchestra Management*. Njordur Sigurjonsson  
[http://neumann.hec.ca/aimac2005/PDF\\_Text/Sigurjonsson\\_Njordur.pdf](http://neumann.hec.ca/aimac2005/PDF_Text/Sigurjonsson_Njordur.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> *New audiences for classical music: the experiences of non-attenders at live orchestral concerts: Journal of New Music Research, Special Issue: Understanding Audience Experience, 39(2), 111-124 (2010)*

Whereas yesterday, it's like we were all in one thing - it's like we were a part, and were completely a part of it. And I did, really did, like that feeling. It was like he was really talking to us, and telling us: 'This how it is, this is how it will be, this is how I'm going to do it, and I hope you like it'. I don't know, it was like, yeah, making us *part* of that, and I did love it, absolutely, it was great."

Dobson argues that this strongly emphasises the points of inclusion and participation, and we could draw from such studies a working hypothesis; that the potential audiences for live events want something special from their attendance. They want to be part of a unique event, an encounter. It's not enough to know that some people rate this work, or this performer highly, they want to know what going to this concert in this room on this night will bring them that they can't get by staying at home and listening to the same work on CD. They want to meet the performers and each other, as well as the work.

Third question: what dimensions do live events vary on, and where does classical music lie within this? Here are some key dimensions noticeable in live events, and some comments on where classical music events tend to lie on these dimensions in relation to other arts. They're not the only dimensions, neither do we claim any particular originality in their formulation, but they do seem to us to encapsulate major distinctions that pervade both informal experience and scholarly thought.

The first dimension is *established work versus new work*, and in what proportion. Established work means work in repertoire of tried and tested value, often by authors or composers no longer alive. In general the programmes of major classical venues concentrate on established work. Indeed, a festival like The Proms takes pride in the pedigree of each work performed and will list in the programme for a particular year how many previous years it was performed in. In contrast, programmes of major theatres, for example The National and many of the West End venues, have a very high proportion of new work alongside the established. Even art galleries that major on established work and work of dead artists, such as London's National Gallery, tend to have major exhibitions of relatively recent work or work not exhibited before.

The second dimension is *predictable versus unpredictable*. We're talking here about such facts as the nature and order of the programme, whether known in advance or not, and the level of improvisatory or ad-libbing moments to be found. Very often there is no advance programme at a pop, folk or jazz concert. Plays tend to be highly predictable; you go to see a named play, but elements of the production are often highly unpredictable, for example operas and plays restaged to contemporary settings, contemporary ad libs. For example, in The Globe Shakespeare plays, I've seen actors using mobiles - the audience loves it - different sets, lighting, costume. Classical concerts by contrast, are often highly predictable. The programme specifies exactly what will be played, in what order, and the degrees of freedom for the performers are quite limited. What they play, how they are arranged on the stage, how they behave, what they wear, is very similar from event to event. Ad libs are minimal and often squeezed to the margins, as in encores, which in some ways could be seen as the acknowledgement of the performers, that the main event failed to meet some important audience need. The more predictable, the less easy it is to generate the sense of an event – something special. In an art gallery there is a real sense in which

you can create your own special event every time you go, by the choice of exhibits you decide to visit and the order in which you do so. No visit is like any other.

The third dimension is *personal versus impersonal*. This relates to the level of personal engagement of the projection of performers and also to the level of engagement of audience members with each other. There are considerable differences across performances regarding how far performers stay in performer roles, or set out from the role and project themselves as people. One kind of projection is talking directly to the audience either from the stage, or more informally, before or after the performance. Another kind of projection relates to the degree of self-conscious acting eg. projection of emotional and other qualities through such things as body movement, facial expressions, vocalisations. In classical music this is often restrained or idiosyncratic. Either performers try to be neutral and invisible, or, as in the case of some well-known soloists, they engage in exaggerated gestures, which are often highly similar across different performances – a kind of gestural personal signature. In opera and theatre these things are generally highly consciously managed as part of the stagecraft.

So far we've been talking about personal projection of the performer but there are also variations in the degree to which personal projection of audience members is allowed and encouraged. In theatre and cinema for instance, vocalisations such as laughter are not only allowed, they are expected. This not only communicates to the performers, but also is a form of audience-to-audience interaction, and a form of emotional contagion - a responsive audience that laughs a lot can usually enhance the experience of drama. In contrast, the average symphony concert encourages impersonalisation. The general rule is: ignore your neighbour and don't draw attention to yourself. Concentrate on the event.

Fourthly, *active versus passive*, which is about the level of audience behaviour and communication. Live arts vary considerably in what is permitted or expected of the audience in terms of active engagement. In some events active behaviour is allowed, or encouraged. In some forms, such as pop, opera or jazz, it is perfectly acceptable to clap or cheer at points where you feel someone has done something particularly excellent or moving. In classical concerts you generally wait until the end of a work, even if the work has multiple movements. Then there are the so-called promenade events where it is permitted or encouraged to move, be it dancing, moving in one's seat, or actually moving around the space. In this sense, art galleries are permanent promenade venues and provide a lot of autonomy and agency to the visitor, but many performance contexts discourage any movement or indeed sound. There are issues of authority, which impinge upon many venues and events. A lot of art places audiences in the position of a humble viewer, coming into the presence of greatness. In this mode, the audience may feel it has nothing to give, only to receive.

It wouldn't be unfair to say that classical music events are, in general, established, predictable, impersonal and passive, by modern standards, in comparison to what else people can pay to go to. Audience inclusion and participation is more likely to occur at events, which contain elements of the new, the unpredictable, the personal and the active. This means that classical events struggle to give many types of audience the experience which they want and seek.

So the question now is how can more of what audiences seek be added to live events? The answer is: by shifting the event along one or more of the dimensions identified. Let's take two examples of classical music, which are successful at building and maintaining audiences, which include younger audiences: the BBC Proms and the previously mentioned Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment's Night

Shift. Why do the Proms work so well? There are several things which are very consciously supported and maintained: to build inclusion and participation beginning with the sociability of the queue outside, continuing in the promenade spaces where the absence of seats encourages a democratic and fluid sense of being part of something larger than yourself; the ability to sit or lie also increases the sense of informality or connectedness to others. Then there is the power one draws from one's sense of being at the centre of a globally broadcast event in real time and the presenters have a strong role in connecting the audience and the performers in the hall to the outside world; also, the knowledge that you might be on camera or be interviewed. All this presupposes top quality performances of well-chosen works, but this is the added extra.

Inspired by Melissa Dobson's research, I recently took myself to a Night Shift performance for a bit of action research. This was part of the Spitalfields Festival, which is held in a trendy nightclub in Hoxton. The classical element of the evening was a one hour concert running from 9-10pm. However, one's £8 entry ticket bought one the whole evening in the club, from when the doors opened at 8, right through to the small hours, and there was only one hour that classical music took place in. By the time I had arrived, just before 9pm, the venue was packed with several hundred people. No seats at all, so people were either sitting on the floor, or standing around the walls, already most with beer or wine in hand. Almost everyone in the room was under 35. The programme was Handel, concerti grossi and operatic arias. The twelve-piece orchestra stood on the small stage. The entire programme was compéred by a very informal and engaging presenter with a radio mic who went among the performers between each piece interviewing them about their instruments, the challenges of playing in period style or of these pieces, and eliciting their sense of engagement with, and enthusiasm for, this music. There was lots of potential for audience response, laughter, conversations with neighbours, freedom to move around the space. There was very much a party atmosphere. The playing and singing were first rate and it was noticeable that during the playing and singing there was pretty much absolute silence. The applause was frequent, vocal and enthusiastic, and was clearly buoying the performers up as well as the whole room. I felt I'd not only met Handel and a wonderful performance of his works but I had met the performers and their enthusiasms and I had met my fellow audience members in a quite unique way.

Now, engaging the audience in this way - how much of this is the responsibility of the musician? The received conservatoire view of the earlier-mid 20<sup>th</sup> century perhaps, is that the musician's job is to play to his or her best ability; all the other stuff is done by someone else. Which someone else? How trained? How in communication with the musicians or audience? Interesting questions. We're talking about the impresario, the producer, the venue manager, the orchestral manager, the public relations person, the critic, the programme note writer. On a traditional model, all, or most of those will have had little or no contact with the musicians as such, who just show up, get their instruments out of their cases and play. Our perspective is that the musician needs to be a part of this team: receptive to what is being asked of them and in some contexts, playing a more engaged role. And at this point I'll hand over to Biranda who will tell you about some of the things we've been doing at the Guildhall.

**Biranda Ford:** Hello. I'm going to argue that it's not part of the values or discourse around classical music to focus on the audience. The audience is not the most important issue in classical music. Well, what is? The work. John's been talking about the relationship between the performer and the audience, but more important

than that to classical music is another relationship, namely the performers' relationship, or sense of duty if you like, to the composer and the work. It is apparent, through even a brief engagement with musicians, their practices and academic literature, that the score is regarded as an authority, and through scrutinizing the score, performers aim to access the composer's intentions. This concern of musicians for the composer's intentions as manifested through the score was part of a shift in musical values, which came to full force in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Music went from being used primarily as an accompaniment to something else – church ceremonies, theatre, dancing, social occasions – to be revered in, and of itself, an art for art's sake. With this, music became an object to be reproduced, rather than an ephemeral practice. During the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century improvisation went out and interpretation came in.

The fate of improvisation is an interesting one here, which I will develop, as it illustrates a point about the relationship between performer and the audience. Up to Mozart's time, performers were expected to improvise as a mark of their musicianship. John was talking about making music more of an event, and this is a historical example of just that, as audiences in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century came to hear the improvisational prowess of performers rather than a particular work or composer. But as musical values changed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was not so much the performers that the audiences came to hear, but the works of particular composers. Both performer and audiences came to concerts primarily not to have a relationship with each other but to realise a relationship with the composer and his great works. The performer became a medium, the conduit for the voice of the composer. Even today, Mick Cook points out, that performers are said to have given good performances if they have effaced themselves and brought out the composer's intentions.

At its most polarised, this view is put forward by Stravinsky when he distinguished between performers, who are 'executors' and those who are 'interpreters', cautioning that interpreters subject to 'criminal assault' the 'faithful transmission of the composer's will', 'sinning against the spirit of the work'. If this was a caution about a performer exercising too much charisma, Stravinsky's great modernist rival Schoenberg also had his suspicions about paying too much attention to audience response. Schoenberg took to sidestepping the conservative general public of Vienna, who greeted his works with incomprehension, instead preferring to present new works to small member only societies. Through the writings of Adorno, audiences were characterised by having the worst kind of popular taste, symptomatic of the co modification of culture. They couldn't be relied upon to know what was good for them. If the audience failed to recognise great music when they heard it, then what could musicians do? So, by the 20<sup>th</sup> century, composers could be seen as separating themselves off, both from performers and audiences. The performers' mission came to be a medium for the composer's voice, and the audience, which was not to be trusted, was kept at arm's length.

These values, a duty to the composer's score rather than the audience, were reproduced and institutionalised in education. The Paris Conservatoire opened in 1795 and its continued development reflected embodied changes in musical values, providing the model for how we train musicians. The curriculum they used then is still familiar to us today. Getting the composer's score right was a hallmark of the new conservatoire education which also saw the shift from performers as ornamenters or improvisers or composers, to being faithful interpreters of other people's music. This was encouraged through an emphasis on specialism in a single instrument or

vocal type, a pursuit of virtuosic technique, to be able to accurately realise a composer's score, and a standardisation of musical performance. One method of standardisation was that acclaimed professors at the Paris Conservatoire were required to publish their teaching manuals. This meant that all students in the school could use the same teaching materials. So, where previously the teacher's individual artistry and idiosyncrasy would have driven lessons and the musician's ability to do a job or please an audience would have been arbitrary standards, now standards were being established and maintained by adherence to official standards as monitored through exams and prizes. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, rather than being seen as professional training school, or a route to employment, conservatoires, which had mushroomed in every European country, America, Russia and beyond, were seen as protectors of certain musical standards, both of technique and in interpretation.

But in the 19<sup>th</sup> century audiences were happy to receive canonical works from great composers via technically accomplished performers acting as mediators, according to the relatively narrow parameters of accepted interpretation. The majority of today's younger audiences, as we've heard from John, want something different. In the absence of deference for these cherished works and composers they are seeking a relationship with the performer. One example, further to the ones that John's mentioned, are the LSO's events designed to meet the performer. These have become extremely popular. So from wanting to know more about the work through a pre-concert lecture, audiences now would prefer to meet the performers themselves. The emphasis it seems has shifted back from the composer to the performer. But as music students prepare for this we need emphasis on the performer rather than the composer or the work. Does our current education model, still largely following a mostly 19<sup>th</sup> century model, prepare them for this? This is a question that some at the Guildhall have been applying their minds to. How can conservatoire training be enriched to equip musicians with more audience awareness? So, one answer being tried at the Guildhall, because it is after all a music and drama school, is to involve musicians in projects where they work alongside drama students. I did a comparison recently of values in music and drama as a background to some empirical research on various collaborative projects between music and drama students at the Guildhall School. I found that actors had completely different attitudes towards their audience and their equivalent of the score, the text, than musicians. Firstly, the audience is thought of as being integral to the experience of theatre, whereas in music you can play to yourself. There are whole genres of keyboard music or chamber pieces, designed to be played only for the benefit of the people in the room. Theatre, practitioners tell us, unlike reading, requires an audience to be at the theatre. So let's compare the differences this brings about.

John has talked a bit about conventions of audience behaviour. Well, theatre audiences it seems, never lost permission to show appreciation or response while the performance is taking place. By contrast, audience members at classical music concerts are regarded as backward if they start clapping between movements of sonatas or symphonies, let alone during the middle of a performance. I ran part of this talk past my students yesterday and I got them to discuss the main questions and I heard someone saying 'yeah, you know at concerts when those really stupid people start clapping between movements', so that's the kind of feeling there is if an audience member wants to show their appreciation.

My next two categories, 'audience as collaborator' and 'integral or extra musical', are basically part of the same point. When looking into the acting and theatre studies literature I kept coming across the concept of the audience as being a

collaborator in a performance. There wasn't an idea of an ideal type of performance existing in the text or somewhere out there that the performers were trying to realise but rather it seems that the audience finished off the process of theatre. They were seen as being integral to the performance. This contrasted with what I'd both experienced and read about music performance and the audience, where the audience is very much seen as separate from the process of performance, so the performance is already fully formed in terms of the musicians working out their interpretation and then it's presented to the audience who are seen as this extra musical element. They're sort of out there and the performance is happening over here. The audience isn't actually seen as part of the experience of actually performing live.

It's interesting also that developments in 20<sup>th</sup> century avant-garde theatre and music have taken these two different concepts of audience in opposite directions, so theatre is concerned with ever more active forms of audience participation, where in some instances the audience actually becomes the subject. I've heard of avant-garde theatre projects where the curtain opens and there's just a set of mirrors so the audience is looking at the reflection of themselves looking at the stage; so that's an extreme version of the audience as the subject of the play. Whereas if you look at avant-garde music, its controversial experiments can arguably be seen as exercises in audience alienation.

Back to education. Watching how actors are trained. I did my observations on some projects at the Guildhall School. So, acting training on its own happens in groups, with students working as a company in training, and when working on productions. They always have a sense of performing to each other, of always performing to an audience, even if it is just the company of actors in the room. Although they're expected to do some voice work and learn their lines on an individual basis, the bulk of their practice, coming towards interpretation in their learning, actually takes place in the context of being in the group. When they are training, coming towards an interpretation, risk taking is encouraged in forming these interpretations, and students are told that they are allowed to fail in lessons. There isn't this idea of the perfect rendition or of trying to get at what the composer would have wanted. So this idea of imaginative play is fore-grounded over technically correct performances.

Various projects were mounted in which music and drama students came together to bring about a production. So, what happened? First of all I'll give you a description of these projects so that you can understand how these collaborations were different from say, opera or music theatre. The distinctive element of these projects is the onstage interaction of musicians and actors. Rather than sitting in a pit or an offstage area, the musicians, as well as performing music, take part in the stage action, becoming part of the actors' ensemble. Actors either take part in the musical performance through song or vocal soundscapes or a challenge to see how we can integrate music, musicians and their instruments into the dramatic action. As musicians and actors work together as a single company, rehearsals take place together, intensively, over a period of several weeks. This contrasts with other, more traditional models of collaboration. Traditionally in opera and musicals, actors prepare separately from the band or orchestra and then the musicians just come in at a later stage, often for the first time just in the dress rehearsal.

Of the different kinds of actor/musician collaboration that took place at the Guildhall, the first category was text based, that is realising a play with a musical score and a text. And the other category was devised work, so, either the play or the music, or sometimes both, were devised by performers through improvisation

workshops. This devised work has also included improvisations of workshops being taken and worked on to be given a larger structure by a composer or dramaturg to come up with the final work to be performed. Research was undertaken on these projects so that musicians and actors were interviewed both before and after the projects began, and I drew on data from three projects here. One was text based and the other two were devised. There were both artistic and educational benefits recorded from these musician-actor collaborations, but I shall return to John's categories here of established versus new, predictable versus unpredictable, impersonal versus personal and inactive versus active, to discuss the results of what the musicians reported working alongside actors.

So, the first category: established versus new. From working on established canonical repertoire music students were asked to radically revise their roles instead of playing from a score. So for instance, a cellist who was playing on stage throughout a song became implicated as a character from the drama. So not only was she providing the musical backdrop to the singer who was singing, but she actually also became a character in the drama, she became part of the action. And devising material, which was going to be performed also put musicians into the role of improviser-composer, making them think about the role of music in relation to the narrative or stage action. Musicians reported exercising new imaginative muscles in terms of expressing their musicality because they weren't expressing it solely in terms of interpretation, but then being asked to improvise or compose on the hoof was a new thing.

So, predictable to unpredictable: music students reported discovering a sense of spontaneity in their performance, particularly in projects, which involved improvisation. They contrasted this against their mainstream studies where they said that the goal was technical perfection. I was quite interested in the frequency that the word 'perfection' came up. When I asked how is this different from what you normally do, they kept on saying 'well, we're required to be perfect, whereas when we do this it's more about what we bring to it or about if we actually connect with the actors at the time the performance is taking place.'

So they said that they'd felt like they'd lost some of the fun of playing music through having to practice pieces over and over again and it had eroded the sense of risk taking and fun in performance. One student described his mainstream classical performance as:

'You have been working on a piece and then you have to go and deliver it. There is no interaction from different people and everything is quiet. You go in there and you play, and it's quite different actually because you have to go on and do something, but everything has been prepared and practiced for many, many hours.'

In the two projects where the music was devised, students said that the fact that the audience didn't know what the score was beforehand had a very freeing effect on their performance and they felt less anxious about performing. So it was a case of 'I'm not going on and performing this particularly iconic Beethoven sonata where everyone in the audience is comparing it to the fifty different times that they've heard it', they're going on saying 'I'm presenting something that's fresh and new, nobody knows what the script is and I can really let go here'.

Some students said that they'd managed to carry the spirit of spontaneity back across to their mainstream classical repertoire, so after they'd had these experiences

with actors they felt that they'd reconnected with that initial impulse of fun that they'd had when they were younger. There was one student in particular who said that just before he went on he remembered what he'd done with the actors and thought 'you know, I've practiced this as much as I possibly can, now I'm going on, what the hell, I'm just going to give this performance', and that this made a real difference, rather than going on and thinking, it's got to be correct, it's got to be careful. Some students even said that their teachers have noticed quite a marked difference and have said to them 'what have you been doing?', because obviously their instrumental teachers weren't taking part in these drama collaborations.

So, the third category, impersonal to personal: Here I'm going to talk about music students thinking about their audiences. Music students said that they found the act of warm up routines, where you get everyone in a circle doing exercises and trying to make connections to each other, they said that this had embedded the notion of preparing for public performance into their regular practice. So instead of preparing their interpretation of a work in a practice room in an abstract sense and only thinking about the audience near to the time of the concert, students said they were more inclined to think about their audiences, and how to project their ideas across to them during their regular practice.

Another way of communicating with an audience was through a favourite concern of actors, the concept of presence. A music student commented on this saying that in collaborative work:

'...presence was much more important here, and we were incredibly aware of our bodies and how we act with our bodies as well. Whereas in a classical concert you are just here as a violinist, you're incredibly focused on what you're doing up here, and in performance you don't really think about the rest of you, whereas with actors I'm really aware of where I am in the space and how I'm projecting outwards.'

So this had an impact on how musicians thought of, not just the sound that was coming out, but also the physical motions that they used to convey that message.

Then with passive to active, music students reported feeling closer to the audience as the theatre audiences were more immediately responsive. Speaking at the outset of collaboration, some said they had no way of knowing what audience members felt in classical concerts until they clapped at the end, and some said that even the clapping at the end they felt to be quite uniform and perfunctory from concert to concert. So students were saying 'well, I turn up and I play, and audiences just clap as they're scripted to do'. They didn't seem to notice a difference between audiences' response in a good performance or a bad performance. However, with taking part in collaborative work, music students noticed a difference in audience reaction. This might have been because the performance space they were performing in was extremely small and the audience was almost on top of the performers but what the musicians said was that they actually noticed the audience was really responsive, and noticing this somebody said, directly after the performance, talking of mainstream classical performance: 'you're used to sitting on a platform and it all gets very serious and very professional, so it was great to actually feel a closer relationship with the audience.' Some musicians actually said that they felt that this was the first time they'd actually felt a relationship with the audience during a performance.

So, with our presentation, John and I have attempted to look at difference facets of how classical music can be said to differ from other arts in respect to musicians' relationships to audiences and audiences' relationships to classical music events. I've gone through some of the historical background of why musicians aren't really focused on their audiences, and I'm hoping that by outlining some of the projects that have been happening at the Guildhall school, we can show you how musicians can actually learn different ways to be onstage and different ways to communicate with audiences. What musicians can do to bring classical music to new audiences is admittedly going to be a complex task but I hope today we have provided a few pointers. Thank you.

**Michael Trimble:** Thank you very much. Now, we have on our panel, two distinguished composers, and I'm going to ask them, in a few minutes, for a few sentences each. I'll give you a moment to think about it, but when you're composing, are you thinking of your audience? And in what kinds of way are you trying to interact with them? But before that, any general questions?

**Question:** You make no comment on what I've always regarded as an oxymoron, that term that is so common, known as music competitions, and the role that music competitions and the entire industry and the process of a group of people deciding on who is best for a performance and then using that person for say three years to sell a bunch of CDs, how that perhaps eliminates the process of creativity and originality in performers? I'd be grateful for a comment on that.

**B.F.:** I suppose I'm speaking personally here, but I wonder how much that's actually going to be sustainable, particularly with the record of people winning competitions, and nobody hears of them two years later. I do agree that it is sort of endemic in the system, to want this kind of perfection and then that also CDs and recordings actually require that as well, so I think it's almost something where I think that there is a tension between the requirements of live performance and the requirements of these competitions and recordings as well.

**Question:** It seems to me that the psychology of empathy, kinesthetic empathy, is central to your very interesting presentations. I was wondering whether the more informal way in which performers declare themselves, either in the notes or through conversation encourages that empathic process? For example the bow, when performers come in and bow in a rather ritualistic way, maybe there is some other way of introducing themselves to the audience and vice versa. Have these things been researched and looked at?

**J.S.:** We are exploring these kinds of things, not yet in formal research, but in conversations and explorations but it's very clear that, particularly in the smaller venues, it's a bit difficult to manage it in orchestral situations, but if you're thinking about chamber music, they way that the whole atmosphere in a room changes when one of the members of the chamber ensemble stands up and even just says 'it's lovely to be here', everything kind of relaxes at that point. So it's just about making those human connections.

**Question:** One of the other areas where this is very apparent, it seems to me, if you did your interviews with the performing arts course at university, because the

interviews that we do there, are with people who have been increasingly fed up with the Associated Board exam, and you ask them why they've come to study the performing arts, it is because they want no more of it. And this dissatisfaction is apparent not only in the audiences but in the people who are being trained. Some of the commissions I've had for the Southern Sinfonia for example, is for an orchestra that has got fed up with sitting in places, and said, "June you make us move around, you allow us to improvise". So that dissatisfaction is not only in conservatoires but manifest in students coming through, and indeed orchestral musicians who have been imprisoned by tradition. So you need to look a bit wider than the conservatoire. You'd find examples wider than that, of people who are experiencing this dissatisfaction, and putting in place things to deal with it.

**Question:** I can't help feeling that this is putting the cart before the horse. It's clear that these interactive habits that are so popular now are being derived from the experience of young people at jazz concerts and pop concerts where informality is the rule. What I don't see anywhere, in the education of the young, is a systematic accustoming to listen quietly to serious music. When I was a youth, the BBC ran programmes for prep schools, which included music by Berlioz and Purcell and Ravel. None of that is automatically given to the young now, who are only immersed in pop culture. That's where it all begins.

**Question:** Just the fact that classical music comes from, I suppose, a pastoral background of where we're all living, and the way that people have been industrialised and moved to the cities, what do you think about the neuroimaging aspect of the fact that the sounds you hear in the city are more like pop music than they are the pastoral sounds of classical music? And therefore the decline in people coming to classical concerts is purely because they are more used to these sounds and the neuroimaging is what they are more accustomed to. So in other words, do people like classical music enough? Are you trying to...and it's probably heresy to say this, are you trying to convince people to like things that they maybe don't like?

**B.F:** I think classical music has been in cities for quite a few centuries, so I'd be cautious about agreeing with that distinction to start with.

**J.S:** I think they are different cultures, and I don't want to make value judgments. I am part of the culture which shares, with the gentleman at the back, the joy of sitting in absolute silent concentration in a room in which everyone else is doing that, and I'm absolutely not saying that we want to get rid of that, or dilute it, but what the reality is, is that conservatoires are churning out highly qualified young musicians who can't get any work, because there aren't enough audiences for them. So they need to diversify, and I think all we would be saying is they need to increase their toolbox, not to get rid of the wonderful things we already have.

**M.T:** So, Nigel, who are you writing for when you're composing, and if nobody turns up how do you feel about it?

**Nigel Osborne:** Thanks for your presentation, and also just a chance to thank John for his inspiring work in music psychology and human rights. Yes, very humble is the first thing, and scared. I don't see why and by what right I have to be composing these things from my imagination or, as it were, presenting them to other

people. That's the first thing, and so it's with awe and respect. The second thing, that I'm writing for, trying to create something, humbly, is for everyone I've ever known, everything I know about human beings. So it's for everybody, it's not for a particular gallery. Yes, I'll do that on occasions, let's do a tune for this show, yes of course, but I try to do my best to get to somewhere where I'm communicating the sum of everything I know.

The final thought about musicians and drama; I teach music to drama students, which I love, because they love it, and what's really interesting is the other side, the ying of this yang, which is how much drama students appreciate the care of the microcosm of the moment - let's do that again and let's make it deeper. Let's go further into this. There comes a point in dealing with the public where you don't have to say hi folks, let's enjoy ourselves but...please come and join me in something very special that I want to offer you.

**M.T:** I'd just like to ask Roger Scruton about his composing experiences, and maybe he might say a bit about opera there, modern opera, and why they don't attract the audiences that traditional opera does.

**Roger Scruton:** Well, unlike Nigel, I am a very amateur composer but I have to say that, like him, I couldn't do it if I didn't think of it as a form of communication. By communicating something, you come to know what it is, so it's also something you're doing for yourself. I think all art is like that. It's an exercise in self-realisation as much as anything else. I have written two operas around particular things, which concerned me and I wanted to get them clear, and getting them clear involved music. Some things when sung, prove their reality, which they wouldn't do when they're spoken.

I started work on a third opera, to take place in a railway station, partly because of these concerns that Biranda and John have been putting before us. A railway station is a place in which urban people are all in motion, carrying their individual anxieties. We're all so tremendously aware that this is the normal human condition in the world in which we live; people milling around, not quite relating, but saturated with inner anxiety, and sometimes there's a moment of calm in a railway station where people recognise this. Especially in a railway station properly built with classical details, so I thought Paddington was the ideal place. Every Friday evening the Great Western Railway Region Band assembles in Paddington station and plays a selection of old numbers by Suppé or Strauss, so there you have it, you've got the orchestra, you've got the chorus, you've got the dancers and you also have the possibility of their using the one device which opera has always needed, which is the mobile telephone, whereby people can sing to themselves. So if Nigel, who is a much more important composer, could take this up, I will give him the libretto.

**Question:** I wanted to say that I'm one of the people that you're talking about; I'm one of the people who barely ever goes to classical music concerts, even though I do like classical music. As the daughter of one of the organisers of today's event, I can assure you I was most definitely taught to sit quietly as a child and listen to concerts. Because I do like classical music, I never really had an explanation as to why it is that I don't find myself going to events, classical music concerts, unless it's as a favour to my mother. And actually this last hour has explained to me beautifully why that is. I'm married to a performer who performs popular music and comedy, so I do go to a lot of live arts events but I think the thing that puts me off going to classical

music, despite the fact that I do enjoy it when I do go, is the knowledge that I'm going to feel quite self-consciously that I have to make myself as non-existent as possible during the actual performance, just sit quietly, try not to breath too loudly, not look about, just try to make myself as invisible and as non-existent as possible for the duration, and that the only way in which there are going to be any surprises is if something goes wrong.

**Question:** Thank you for your presentations first of all, they were fabulous. I just have two questions in my mind. One is whether we're not talking about it as an academic exercise but a business model, in that we just really want to make classical musicians have more work, and you need to make live classical music more marketable to people because they're choosing other things. I've done some work looking at different art forms and film is the most popular, with popular music – those would be the top cultural activities that people want to attend. Then as someone who programs arts music programmes in hospitals, I find then that I'm going to ask people what they want to hear. The other question I have is this elitism that we all have created. I am a classical musician myself, and this elitism and this niche...perhaps classical music just needs to stay in that place, and that people want other things. Why should we say to them, if only, like a religious fervor, if only you found this you'd be happier and a more enriched person. I think they wouldn't be, and I think there's something a bit patronising around that, not around myself, but around the room, that people should be listening to classical music. Maybe they shouldn't be?

**J.S:** I would encourage you to go to Greg Sandow's wonderful website, where all his writing and blogging and so on is there. One of the things he does is he works with students of the Julliard School in New York, and his description, I hope I haven't got this wrong, but it's something like, his students walk into his classes with this kind of assumption that just because they can play Beethoven darn well, the world owes them attention. And then he asks them the question, do any of your friends come to your concerts? And they say, 'oh no'. And so that's the challenge. If you can't even persuade your own friends to go and hear you play Beethoven, then what's missing? And I think that's the thing, it's simply encouraging people who are committed to playing classical music, as our conservatoire students are, and saying to them, 'well you've got to sell it. You can't just assume that people will show up'.