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## Programming influences in major U.S. symphony orchestras

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# **Programming Influences on Major U.S. Symphony Orchestras**

Junior/Senior Honors Project

By: Kim R. Campbell

May 2006

## **Foreword**

*Programming Influences on Major U.S. Symphony Orchestras* has been a work in progress for two full semesters. A majority of the goals this project set out to achieve have been achieved. However, along the way there have been a variety of obstacles and interruptions which have caused me to slightly stray away from certain aspects of my original proposal.

### *Methodology*

The major obstacle that I faced with this project was being able to access and analyze the programs of the four case studies over the last fifty years. None of the orchestras have a digital archive of their programs, leaving a physical visit to the orchestra as the only option to view these archives. This proved to be a major disappointment in my research methodology since it was impossible for me to travel to two of the orchestras to access their records and create solid statistical data. I was also unable to find a data set which contained information on the composers and compositions that have been performed in major symphony orchestras in the U.S. over the last 50 years. The American Symphony League has a data set of this information on their website which covers orchestral programming in the U.S. and Canada over the last four seasons. I used this information to show programming trends in the twenty-first century.

Another key component to this research project was to interview orchestral personnel about influences on programming at their orchestras. I was unable to reach the music directors of any of the orchestras, but I was able to email and call a variety of other orchestral personnel who were willing and able to answer some questions about programming within in orchestra.

The information that I gained from this research method was mostly used as a basis to encourage alternative thoughts and ideas.

### *Topic Direction*

As I began my research, I realized that the New York Philharmonic and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra do not have an abundance of articles written about their programming methods, especially in regards to their programming in the twenty-first century. At the time of my research proposal, James Levine was hired to conduct the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Levine's appointment and programming style was swiftly pointed out and became a national sensation, on par with the San Francisco Symphony, an equally innovative orchestra. Research materials on these two topics were abundant. This discovery led me to more clearly focus the majority of my project on not only those two orchestras, but also the role of contemporary music in orchestras today. I also added a section to my analysis to include the influences that the structural organization of an orchestra has on their programming decisions.

## **Introduction**

This paper addresses programming influences on major U.S. symphony orchestras. It examines how and why symphony orchestras program certain types of music. Effective programming in major U.S. symphony orchestras is essential to the growth of the symphony orchestra. Major symphony orchestras are currently facing the challenge of balancing the musical needs of the audience and musicians with the financial and social missions of the organization. There are multiple influences on orchestral programs each year, such as attendance, the mission of an organization, funding, organizational structure, and creative programming. This project will show how these influences affect the programming choices of four major U.S. symphony orchestras, the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the New York Philharmonic, the San Francisco Symphony and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. It will also determine an optimal programming mix that will help symphony orchestras attain their desired goal of maximum audience attendance.

## **Theories**

Symphony orchestras have a social responsibility that they must accordingly adhere to. Each orchestra examined must present music that maintains the highest quality of music performance, while increasing the respect, interest and diversity of audience members. The mission and the social goals of symphony orchestras shape the programming choices made by music directors and conductors. Furthermore, programming choices are often placed within an historical, philanthropic, and social context. How these influences affect a music director's choice of music to meet the multifaceted demands placed on orchestras today will be examined.

The second influence is financial issues facing symphony orchestras from all aspects- from money to program certain music, to money made from certain programming choices. This project will determine if money limits the type and number of pieces that are performed in symphony orchestras. It will examine the influence of money on programming certain pieces that require a soloist or an additional ensemble, such as a chorus. It will also study how programming choices affect revenue and whether certain pieces are performed because they insure audience attendance and thus income. I will determine the roles fiscal matters play in music programming.

Ultimately, the audience plays a major role in orchestral programming since they are the ones who benefit from the symphony orchestra. I intend to prove exactly how their opinions and demands influence programming decisions in symphony orchestras. I will analyze their responsiveness to contemporary compositions and to the various orchestral seasons by comparing programs with ticket sales. I will look at an orchestra's audience response in regards to many different areas and collectively determine how to factor in this response when making programming decisions in symphony orchestras.

I will examine the role of contemporary compositions in today's programming. Adding contemporary works to a program is often called "creative programming." I believe that contemporary works are not being programmed frequently in major U.S. symphony orchestras today. This may be due to audience tastes, which affects ticket sales. This project intends to show exactly what role contemporary compositions play in today's symphony orchestras and how it affects an orchestra's audience.

Most major symphonic orchestras have two seasons: the regular season and the summer season. It often seems that during the summer season orchestras are given the opportunity to

program pieces that normally are not performed in the regular season. This idea of “creative programming” is often associated with summer programs. A part of this “creative programming” is thematic programming. I will determine if creative programming creates an increase in audience response. I also intend to show if there is a noticeable difference in the composition of the audiences who attend these contrasting seasons and if there is a correlation between the different audiences and the music that is programmed. I will study the reasons behind the varied repertoire chosen for each of these seasons and if the audience is the main influence in these programming decisions.

Lastly, this paper will examine the structure of orchestras to see what roles, if any; the actual orchestra plays in programming decisions. Most orchestras are organized in a similar fashion and experience similar operations within the orchestra. Communication within the orchestras is one of the structural issues this paper will address, to determine any influences on programming decisions.

### **Case Studies**

The Boston Symphony Orchestra, the New York Philharmonic, the San Francisco Symphony, and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra are four of the most influential and important orchestras in the U.S. These four orchestras have been chosen to be the case studies of this project because their programming decisions represent four different types of programming in the U.S., ranging from extremely innovative programming to more traditional programming. These four orchestras should provide a broad sample of the types of programming decisions that are being made across the country.

Henry Lee Higginson founded the Boston Symphony Orchestra (BSO) in 1881. The BSO has been directed by many great conductors from Serge Koussevitzky to Seiji Ozawa and the current music director, James Levine throughout its history. In 1937, the BSO began their summer residency at Tanglewood, and three years later, established a music school there as well. During Ozawa's tenure, he committed the BSO to the commission of new works and maintained the orchestra's worldwide reputation. In less than two years, Levine has completely revolutionized the BSO. "His wide-ranging programs balance great orchestral, operatic, and choral classics with equally significant music of the 20th and 21st centuries" (BSO Online). The legacy of the BSO is greatly attributed to its legacy of superb music directors who have not been afraid to reshape and reinvent the orchestra, thusly maintaining a youthful vitality to the orchestra.

The Chicago Symphony Orchestra (CSO) was founded in 1891 by Theodore Thomas with the help of Norman Fay, a businessman. Not only did Thomas help create the CSO, he also played a vital role in the development of orchestras and conductors in America. He was the first great American conductor and placed himself at the center of the CSO, creating the format that would be followed by all other future conductors in America. In 1919, the CSO added the Chicago Civic Orchestra, the first training orchestra in the United States. By 1971, the CSO had firmly established itself as one of the world's finest orchestras, with its first international tours to Australia and Japan. Since 1989, Daniel Barenboim has served as the music director of the CSO. The CSO is especially known for its brilliant recordings. It was the first American orchestra to record with its regular conductor. Since 1916, the CSO has recorded over 900 albums. The CSO's long history, dedication to great music, numerous international tours, and recording history has made the CSO one of the leading orchestras in the country.

The New York Philharmonic (NYPhil) is one of the oldest symphonies in the not only America, but the world. It was founded in 1842 by Ureli Corelli Hill with help from a group of musicians. The NYPhil has been known for its premiere performances of new musical compositions. This ensemble has a long history of touring- it has performed in 416 cities, in 57 countries since its first tour in 1882. The NYPhil is also known for its recording history- it has recorded over 2,000 albums, was the first to perform via a coast-to-coast radio broadcast, and was the first orchestra to give a live performance at the Grammy Awards. Lorin Maazel has served as the music director of the NYPhil since 2002. As of December 2004, the NYPhil has well over 14,000 concerts under its belt, making it the most active orchestra in the world. Its great fame is due to the legacy of composers and conductors who have worked with the NYPhil, its role as a pioneer in every field from premiere performances of works to technological firsts, and its dedication to music.

In 1911, the San Francisco Symphony (SFS) was founded. From its earliest days, the SFS has been known as an orchestra that enhances the cultural life of its home city by combining both the classics and new music through their performances. Michael Tilson Thomas is the SFS's current music director. His partnership with the SFS has been "hailed as one of the most inspiring and adventurous in the country" (SFS Online). Thomas has led the SFS in its most creative programming ever during the last eleven years. The SFS is also known for its own record label, which is currently working on a project to record all of Mahler's symphonies over a period of five years. Another key component to the success of the SFS is its *Adventures in Music* (AIM) program. AIM is a community educational program that was established in 1988 to expose children to music from around the world. The program reaches out to 25,000 students

each season. The success of the SFS is greatly attributed to its dedication to its community and its innovative programming that resembles no other orchestra in America.

### **History of Programming**

In the early days of music composition, works were created primarily for religious or courtly reasons. Any secular music that was composed was usually created for a very specific occasion and very specific musicians. When music was performed during these rare occasions, this was often the only performance of that composition. The expensive nature of orchestras and the limited production capabilities of music prevented regular concerts and audiences from hearing compositions on multiple occasions. Therefore, during this time period, it can be said that concerts programmed "new" or "contemporary" works. Programming decisions were made based predominately on the demands of the church and royal court.

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, these traditions began to change. A public audience for music performance emerged with the industrial revolution and the rise of the middle class, and was encouraged by the development of keyboard instruments effective in large halls (Caves 357). This transition set the stage for the possible accumulation of musical works and thusly a musical heritage from which program decisions could be made from. The repertoire was still limited in the nineteenth century, but public performance opportunities encouraged more composers. The second half of this century saw an increase in nationalism in many countries around the world. These nationalistic feelings created a demand for works by national composers. Programming decisions of the nineteenth century were influenced by the abundance of works proliferating throughout the century.

Programming in the twentieth century was conservative for most of its history. The Neo-classical era developed in response to atonal and modern music. There was a major push in orchestras during this century to convert back to the "classics." Audience reception of atonal and modern music ranged widely, with the largest disinterest found in the traditional orchestra going audience. Orchestras of this era responded to audience tastes and made conservative programming choices. For over one hundred years, American programming was driven by German and Austrian repertoire. New music that was programmed during this century predominately came from local and regional composers.

Each year, the American Symphony Orchestra League publishes an Orchestra repertoire report, which contains statistics on the number of professional orchestras performing each season, not including educational performances or "pops" performances. I have taken the information provided in the reports available (2001-2005 seasons) and analyzed them (see Appendix). For these four seasons Beethoven has been the composer most frequently programmed, followed by Mozart. None of the top ten most frequently performed composers have been born during the twentieth century. During the 2003-2004 season these top ten composers have made up 36% of all performances. This number increased to 41% during the 2004-2005 season. The top ten most frequently performed compositions change from year to year, but during these four seasons, Beethoven has been in the top three most frequently performed works. For the 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 seasons, information about modern compositions was available. For the 2003-2004 season, 9.6% of all compositions performed were compositions written after 1978. During the 2004-2005 season, this number decreased to 9.1%. This data set implies that the majority of programming in the U.S. has been centered on

traditional classical music and that there has been a slight decrease in the number of contemporary works that are being performed.

The twenty-first century has brought up many questions in regards to programming. How programming decisions will be made during this century is yet to be determined. What is clear however, is that the role of programming is constantly evolving and it is time for programming to take another turn in its evolution to meet the high demands of orchestras and audiences in the twenty-first century. Achieving the balance of audience needs and orchestra needs is proving to be controversial in today's orchestras. Orchestras such as the BSO, directed by James Levine and the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, directed by Michael Tilson Thomas are taking new approaches to programming repertoire, while other major orchestras such as the New York Philharmonic and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra are stuck somewhere between programming trends of the twentieth century and the sojourners of Levine and Thomas.

### **Mission Statement & Social Objectives**

The mission statements of the four case studies are very similar and fairly vague in regards to programming choices. What is clear through their mission statements is that all of the orchestras aspire to maintain the highest quality of musicianship possible and to have a direct relationship with their communities. These orchestras aim to serve their communities and educate their communities as much as possible. Programming choices such as whether or not to perform mostly traditional music or new music cannot be inferred from these mission statements. However, these statements make it clear that audience opinion is a key factor in determining if an orchestra is upholding their mission statement responsibilities.

Orchestras must also uphold different social objectives. Many orchestras are founded for a particular reason. The NYPhil has a legacy of having a large number of world and U.S. premieres and aspires to uphold this tradition today. The CSO has a long history of recording and programming has played a significant role in the repertoire that the CSO has chosen to be recorded, including during their most recent project to record all of Mahler's symphonies. Social objectives play a guiding role in orchestras' programming decisions.

### **Audience Response**

The response of an audience to an orchestra is one of the most surefire ways to analyze how successful an orchestra is. Orchestras exist to provide music to their communities and therefore must meet the programming demands of these communities. Ideally, the type or style of music an individual orchestra plays should be based on the tastes of the community and the institution's core values as established by all constituencies: board, staff, musicians, volunteers, and audience members, with the direct involvement of the music director (Toeplitz 135). The question then becomes, what should be programmed and how frequently to meet the expectations of the orchestra's community?

The debate often centers on programming new music and modern music versus programming traditional classical music. Essentially, there are the traditionalists versus the modernists. The traditionalists want to preserve the programming model of the twentieth century and focus on traditional classical music. The modernists promote change in programming and yearn for new compositions and compositions of the past that have been deemed "too modern." When Peter Brooke, previous BSO board chairman, was asked about Levine's innovative programming, he perfectly stated the responses of both sides, "My intellectual friends are

absolutely enthralled by these new challenges," says Brooke. "The sort of people who like to go for comfort and not be challenged have a problem" (Edgers, "Cost" N1). Both sides of the debate have very strong opinions to support their point of view.

The traditionalists have little desire to hear new compositions or modern works. There are many theories why traditionalists feel this way, but the exact cause is indefinable. The biggest cause for dislike among traditionalists is based on the actual sound of modern music. Traditionalists often refer to modern music as "noise," with little or no harmonic basis. This theory is especially true in regards to composers such as Schoenberg.

Other traditionalists feel that modern compositions and new works require too much intellectual thought to understand them. Traditionalists supporting this theory believe that either music should not have an intellectual component or that they will not be able to understand the meaning of the piece. We live in a time when the arts are undervalued and underestimated by the masses. Art music, whose chief value is the quality of its thought, is overwhelmed by the bombastic rituals of pop culture and their commercial exploitation (Thomas, Part 1). Many audiences look to orchestras for relaxation and thusly do not want to be tied down by intellectually stimulating music.

Audiences who prefer the traditional repertoire are not afraid of speaking up. According to the Boston Globe, 745 tickets for the four all-Schoenberg performances at the BSO during the 2005-2006 were traded in by subscribers (Edgers, "Imperative" N1). Schoenberg compositions have yet to find a permanent place in the orchestral repertoire. The cause for the public's resistance has more to do with the ways in which Schoenberg altered the language than with lack of adequate exposure. In the creed of most listeners, music must include a clear trace of melody,

and must keep the devil dissonance in check (Smith, N2). Traditionalists want to hear the music that they know and they are comfortable with.

Modernists thrive on the fresh air created by performing both new compositions and modern music. Modernists are open to new types of music and to be challenging intellectually. The modernist segment is mostly composed of students, academia, and professional musicians, a significantly younger segment of orchestral audience members. Since Levine joined the BSO, the average audience age has decreased by two years. Their age is most likely one of the contributing factors to the receptiveness of contemporary compositions. Paavo Jarvi, music director of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra thinks, “It is so mind-boggling that Schoenberg at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is somehow considered un-programmable or difficult to present to audiences. Certainly there is a challenge, but at the same time it is something for which somebody has to take a leadership role” (Edgers, “Imperative N1). These audience members have been waiting decades, sometimes even a century, for orchestra to actively program modern works. There is no reason for such works to be ignored for these long periods of time if there is a segment of the audience willing to listen to them.

Another major complaint by modernists is that programming, as it exists today, is boring and unoriginal. Gideon Toeplitz, former managing director of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra feels that “there is a lot of copying going on out there” (Winzenried 37). Audiences have been listening to Mozart, Beethoven, Mahler, and Brahms over one hundred years. Modernists are exhausted and ready for something new. This sector of the audience wants to be exposed to as many different types of music and composers as possible.

## *Creative Programming*

Creative programming is the term that is most commonly associated with programs that are centered on modern music or new compositions. Most orchestras in the U.S. leave the majority of their creative programming decisions to their “Pops” ensembles. Pops ensembles typically perform during the off-season of the regular orchestra. All three of the ensembles are different in instrumentation, performance location, and musical styles. There are two major exceptions to this, the BSO under the direction of Levine and the SFS under the direction of Thomas. Both of these music directors focus a significant amount of their programs each season to creative programming. Starting in 1995, Tilson Thomas and company [have been] bucking an anxious trend [in programming] (Rosenberg J2). Creative programming within these two orchestras has ranged from a semi-staged production of Stravinsky’s *Oedipus Rex & The Nightingale* at the SFS to all Schoenberg programs at the BSO during the 2005-2006 season.

Pop orchestras realize that not everyone loves "serious" classical music and have tailored themselves to appeal to a broader audience. These audiences are typically significantly younger than the average orchestra concertgoer and usually are not subscription holders. Pops orchestras attract a larger number of attendees than traditional orchestras. To attract these different audiences, orchestra personnel choose repertoire that will create a buzz. Pops programs can range from a night of Gershwin music to a night of Beatles music to guest artists such as LeAnne Rimes. These buzz concerts, especially the ones featuring guest artists, ensure ticket sales for orchestras. Many orchestras are dependent on the ticket sales of their pop orchestras to financially sustain the orchestra during their regular season. This financial dependency significantly influences an orchestra’s choice of creative programming for pops orchestras.

As the baby-boomer generation is approaching their 60s, which is the target market for traditional orchestras, orchestras are realizing that pops programming isn't a one-size-fits-all proposition anymore (Winzenried 36). As this generation ages, the audience age range increases and the number of different tastes increases, pops programming is becoming increasingly more difficult.

**[This] leaves orchestra programmers in a quandary: Classical subscription series are driven by the artistic mission, but pops programs are driven by audience tastes. How does an orchestra go about scheduling pops programs - by their very definition concerts of popular music - when even music industry insiders can't get a handle on what pop culture means today? Is it even possible for pops programs to attract general audiences in a segmented entertainment world?" (Winzenried 36).**

We live in a world where even Billboard Magazine uses twenty different charts to categorize music. Choosing repertoire that can address all of these various sectors of music is virtually impossible. The question pops orchestras must deal with is which types of pop music should be performed and which should not?

### **Financial Influences**

All productions come at a cost. When orchestras make programming decisions, they must account for financial considerations. Most orchestras do not have money allocated specifically to use towards programming. Each season's programming choices must be approved by a number of different personnel in various departments ranging from marketing to human resources to subscriptions and sales. Depending on the repertoire in question, there can be numerous financial costs attached to the production of the work.

Works that require a soloist, additional orchestral members, or additional ensembles such as a chorus can have hefty price tags associated with them that must be considered. Depending

on the work being performed, the associated cost may be worth it. A production of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, which requires a chorus, is usually guaranteed to be a sold out show, and thusly well worth the costs incurred from the addition of musicians. Other types of musical works that have additional expenses may not guarantee ticket sales. Unless an orchestra has good reasoning to support a composition that most likely will not create a profit, the work is usually abandoned for other pieces.

Since Levine joined the BSO, it has seen an increase in operating costs. "Levine's penchant for mammoth productions Mahler's Eight Symphony and Wagner's 'The Flying Dutchman' last season, Beethoven's 'Missa Solemnis' and Schoenberg's 'Gurrelieder' this season cuts into the BSO's profits" (Edgars, N1). These large-scale productions usually require the hiring of additional musicians. Levine is well known for his taste for big-name musicians, who have high artistic fees. In addition to the costs of these musicians, these larger ensembles can often cause the need to stage extensions to hold all of the musicians, which means that the profitable prime, front row seats are lost. Lastly, another significant cost that Levine has caused the BSO is the cost of traveling for high-profile performances by the BSO. "Volpe says that it costs approximately \$1.5 million more each year to run the BSO than it did before Levine arrived" (Edgars N1). Ensemble and production size plays a huge role in programming.

Another factor to consider financially is the amount of rehearsal time that will be required for the orchestra to learn a piece of music. Most orchestral musicians are already familiar with the classic repertoire, and thusly these pieces require less practice time as an ensemble. Pieces that are new to musicians or that may be challenging to put together may need additional rehearsal time, thusly creating another financial factor that needs to be considered.

Changing the image of the BSO has come with a hefty price tag. First of all, BSO orchestra members have negotiated what is called the "Levine Premium." The "Levine Premium" gives each player an additional \$220 for each of the music conductor's twelve weeks. For the entire season, this additional \$220 per player adds up to approximately \$278,000. The programming of compositions that are more demanding and difficult increases the amount of rehearsal time that is needed. According to Mark Volpe, "We're rehearsing longer. We're rehearsing more. And in the time we're using, it's really intense work" (Edgers, N1). The additional rehearsal hours justify the "Levine Premium," but it is an additional cost the orchestra must bare if they take on demanding programming.

Another financial influence orchestras have to keep in mind is ticket sales. The BSO 2005-2006 subscription tickets went down from 84 to 80 percent. Despite this decrease, there has been a seven percent increase in single ticket sales compared to last year. Volpe says that the BSO needs "to keep our financial equilibrium. But we're not driven by having to pay dividends to shareholders. The dividends are, hopefully, artistic." (Edgars N1). A large number of these single ticket sales are being bought by students, young adults, members of academia and professional musicians from composers to musicologists to performers. This group of audience members typically has not attended traditional programming concerts in previous seasons on a regular basis. Financially, this increase in single ticket sales is promising. Orchestras can aspire to turn these new audience members into subscription subscribers.

The BSO has embarked on a truly innovative concept in regards to funding this season, called the *Artistic Initiative Fund*. This fund is an endowment set up to pay exclusively for Levine's programming decisions. "It's a challenge to support all of James Levine's initiatives, and not inexpensive," says Brooke. Brooke told the Boston Globe that the BSO has already

fundraised more than half of the \$40 million goal for the Artistic Initiative Fund. Henry Fogel says that this revolutionary concept "tells [him] that the BSO is extremely well focused on its mission and not afraid to encourage its artistic director to take risks" (Edgers, "Cost" N1).

### **Structural Analysis**

In 1998, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation organized an orchestra forum to discuss the current state of symphony orchestras. The topics of the forum were centered on *Leadership*, *The Role of Musicians*, *Changing Community Expectations*, and *Programming*. Even though three areas of the discussion were not focused on the issue of programming, concerns within these areas have a direct reflection on programming. These discussions brought up a number of factors on why certain programming decisions end up being made, often times as a result of the way that an orchestra is organized, not based on influences that inherently need to be considered.

One of the biggest leadership problems discussed was the absence of the music director for periods of time throughout the year. These absences often leave the orchestra with artistic problems and rarely is someone within the orchestra assigned to scholarly programming research. Another leadership issue affecting programming decisions is a lack of multi-year programming strategies. Many orchestras only focus on programming decisions for the season in question and do not think of the overall programming of the orchestra. Lastly, a number of orchestras feel that too many of the programming decisions are left with the music director and are not artistic goals that the group as a whole can pledge to.

During the *Role of the Musicians* discussion, it was stated that musicians have little control over their working environment and thus experience alienation, frustration, low morale, and hostility (Wichterman 7). These types of feelings can significantly affect the quality of

music being performed by each orchestra. Often times, musicians have not been considered as a resource in programming. If musicians were able to use their talent and training to help make programming decisions, not only would it boost moral among the musicians, it would also inspire the ensemble to perform more works that are enjoyed by the collective whole, thusly improving the quality of performances. Musicians are an untapped resource and could have a positive influence on programming decisions within their orchestra.

The community expectations discussion mirrors the audience discussion already presented. Orchestras are concerned with how they can balance their artistic needs with community expectations. The group discussion believes that orchestras need to be accessible to everyone in the community, which means presenting a wider variety of programming to meet the interests of the community. Our society is not at a point where the community can sustain and support the artistic needs of the orchestra; therefore the orchestra must sustain and support the needs of the community through their programming choices.

In the programming discussion, a number of issues were brought up. The main issue that was discussed is that programming is too predictable and has weakened the individuality of orchestras. There are a number of factors, which have contributed to this homogenization of programming within orchestras. The first is that no one is really asking audience members what types of music they want to hear. When surveys are created, audiences are asked about the facilities, the food, the ticket prices, marketing plans, but rarely are they asked about what types of music they want to hear. Another contributing factor is that orchestras just do not know how to present a wide range of works in an enlightening context. Orchestras do not have a significant amount of trust from audiences to allow them to take bold steps in programming. This adds to their dilemma of how to present works in an appropriate fashion.

Weak marketing is another programming problem. Marketing plans and programming plans are made completely independent of each other. When an ensemble tries to present an exciting new piece of repertoire, often times the promotional materials surrounding that concert are ineffective. When new repertoire is programmed, it needs to be marketed appropriately so that doesn't create confusion among audiences and so that it shows audiences that the orchestra is making a commitment to a variety of musical styles to broaden and enhance the community.

Lastly, orchestras tend to have limited relationships with composers. The lack of relationships between composers and orchestras does nothing to encourage composers to write music outside of commissioned works. If composers had a positive environment in orchestras, it would give orchestras a larger plethora of compositions to choose from each season. Another contributing factor is that new works are often only performed once. These isolated performances keep works from being assimilated into the orchestral repertoire. If music directors fostered relationships with composers, there would be more works being composed and music directors could advocate repeated performances of new works. Both of these actions would have a significant effect on programming.

### **The Optimal Programming Mix**

Orchestras need to develop a consistent approach to programming that balances both artistic creativity and market share. Music directors James Levine and Michael Tilson Thomas are creating a new model for orchestral programming and for developing an orchestra's relationship with its public (Dyer, "Strides" N4), that does just this. The leaps music directors such as Levine and Thomas are making in programming is being watched very carefully by conductors, music directors, and orchestral personnel across the country. Orchestras across

America should try and learn from the BSO & SFS's innovative programming ideas. It is clear that orchestras cannot please everyone all of the time. However, orchestras that do choose to break from the traditional model by including modern works and new compositions are experiencing an increase in a different audience segment. An increase in audience members means that orchestras need to appeal to more types of music. This raises the question of balance. How exactly does an orchestra balance various types of music?

Traditional classical music will most likely maintain its strong hold on orchestras for many years to come. After all, it is the basis of music. Ticket sales and audience response has showed that a large number of subscription subscribers are less interested in contemporary works than the classics. Since subscribers make up a majority of the income of orchestras, it is necessary that orchestras do not alienate their subscribers. However, increased single ticket sales for contemporary performances show that there is a strong interest among the public for innovative programming. Orchestras must experiment while balancing standard repertoire with pieces by living composers who add stimulation to their concert life (Rosenberg J2). Compromise is often the best solution.

Levine realizes that not everyone likes contemporary music and that some audience members are tired of hearing the same old pieces time and time again. In an attempt to please as many audience members as possible, Levine takes a creative approach to his programming style. Since Levine came to the BSO, he has juxtaposed the new with the old. His rejuvenation of the BSO's repertoire has been so interesting to follow that it's sometimes easy to forget how brilliantly he helps us rethink music we've heard over and over again (Medrek, "Standard" EDG). This juxtaposition brings concert appeal to both traditionalists and modernists at the same time. And hopefully, audience members who are unfamiliar with one type of music will

benefit from being exposed to both types of music and will possibly become interested in, or at least develop an appreciation for a new style of music. Orchestras need to try to stretch the tastes and knowledge of the audience through exposure and education.

For those who prefer traditional repertoire, some orchestras are taking steps to address their concerns. During the 2005-2006 BSO season, Levine and the BSO management decided to address the concerns surrounding creative programming and sent BSO subscribers a free CD containing excerpts from this season's repertoire. The majority of the excerpts were samples of twentieth century music. Levine and the managers of the BSO hope that the CD will familiarize subscribers with twentieth century works that may be less familiar to them. In addition to stereotypes that atonal music has an unpleasant sound; many people think composers such as Schoenberg are too cerebral and that the audience is incapable of understanding the music. Hopefully the CD will help breakdown these stereotypes and stop listeners from being intimidated by twentieth century works.

Another step the BSO is taking to ease traditionalists into creative programming is having Levine present at the pre-concert talks. This allows Levine to give personal anecdotes about the pieces being performed and to help the audience understand why he has chosen these particular pieces. Levine hopes that the information he can provide during these talks will make audiences more receptive to the repertoire and have a better appreciation for the music.

Orchestras need to increase their communication with their audiences. Surveys could be conducted to get a broader idea of the types of music that their subscribers and other community members are interested in. Orchestras can also initiate ideas such as the BSO's excerpt CD to communicate with their audience why the orchestra believes that programming various types of music is an important mission of the orchestra. Orchestras should also work with their marketing

departments to determine an effective way of promoting their programming decisions to engage audience members no matter what their preferred style of music is.

Orchestras also need address the structural issues that were brought up in this discussion. The most effective decision orchestras could make is create multi-year programming. This would give both the organization and the audience a sense of direction in programming decisions. Orchestras need to outline their goals in programming as an organization. This could effectively been done by creating a defined mission statement that outlines the artistic aims of the orchestra. Such an outline would actively engage the whole orchestra and set guidelines for the music director to follow. Additionally, orchestras also need to set up a clear line of communication about programming. Inter-department communication about programming needs to be established. A chain of command needs to exist if music directors are going to be absent for periods of time, so that programming decisions can be made effectively and efficiently. Orchestral structural organization would prevent last minute and uneducated decisions and would set up an overall programming goal for the organization.

## **Conclusion**

In America, there are over 1,800 orchestras that reach 15-20% of households according to a 2002 survey done by the American Symphony Orchestra League, equaling approximately 28 million listeners nationwide (Music Matters! 3). With this many audience members, it is critical that orchestras do everything within their means to satisfy these audience members, even while trying to embrace new audience members. No matter what measures orchestras decide to take in their programming decisions, orchestras need to remain true to their mission statement and artistic goals, meet the needs of their audiences and maintain their financial obligations. In the

words of Levine, “the most important thing of all [is to] listen, don’t fight” (Edgers, “Imperative” N1).

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## **Personal Qualifications:**

I feel that I am very qualified for this project. First, I have taken an array of music courses which have prepared me for addressing this topic, including:

- MUS U201, U202, U303, U304- Music Theory 1-4, which has prepared me to make decisions on the music integrity of compositions.
- MUS U230 & U231- Music Industry 1 & 2, which addresses the business side of the music industry and included topics on arts administration.
- MUS U330- Arts Administration, which introduces music management including the structure of nonprofit organizations (such as symphony orchestras) and examines financial management, funding, and audience development
- MUS U209- Conducting, which in addition to teaching conducting techniques, addressed programming issues as a conductor of ensembles, such as a symphony orchestra.

Second, in addition to my classes at Northeastern University, I have served on the councils of the NU Orchestra and the NU Concert Band, where I have had the opportunity to participate in making programming decisions. Programming in major symphony orchestras is possible career goal for me, and therefore I have strived to learn as much about the sector of symphonic orchestras as possible on my own.

## 2001-2002 Season Orchestra Report

### Composers with Most Works Scheduled

Composer	Number of Performances:
Beethoven, Ludwig Van	566
Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus	540
Brahms, Johannes	394
Tchaikovsky, Piotr Ilyich	321
Strauss, Richard	262
Mahler, Gustav	227
Ravel, Maurice	204
Haydn, Franz Joseph	203
Schostakovich, Dmitri	187
Prokofiev, Sergi	183

### Most Frequently Performed Works

Composer & Composition	Year Composed
Tchaikovsky- Symphony No. 6	1893
Brahms- Symphony No. 1	1876
Beethoven- Symphony No. 3	1806
Beethoven- Symphony No. 7	1816
Mahler- Symphony No. 5	1902
Tchaikovsky- Concerto in D Major for Violin	1878
Ravel- La Valse	1919-20
Mussorgsky- Pictures at an Exhibition	1874
Debussy- Apres-midi d'un faune	1891-94
Debussy- La Mer	1903-05

### 2001-2002 Season Overalls:

3432 Performances  
1737 Compositions  
475 Composers  
111 Orchestras  
83 World Premieres

## 2002-2003 Season Orchestra Report

### Composers with Most Works Scheduled

Composer	Number of Performances:
Beethoven, Ludwig Van	648
Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus	634
Tchaikovsky, Piotr Ilyich	376
Brahms, Johannes	356
Strauss, Richard	298
Ravel, Maurice	258
Dvorak, Antonin	237
Bach, Johann Sebastian	228
Haydn, Franz Joseph	226
Prokofiev, Sergi	205

### Most Frequently Performed Works

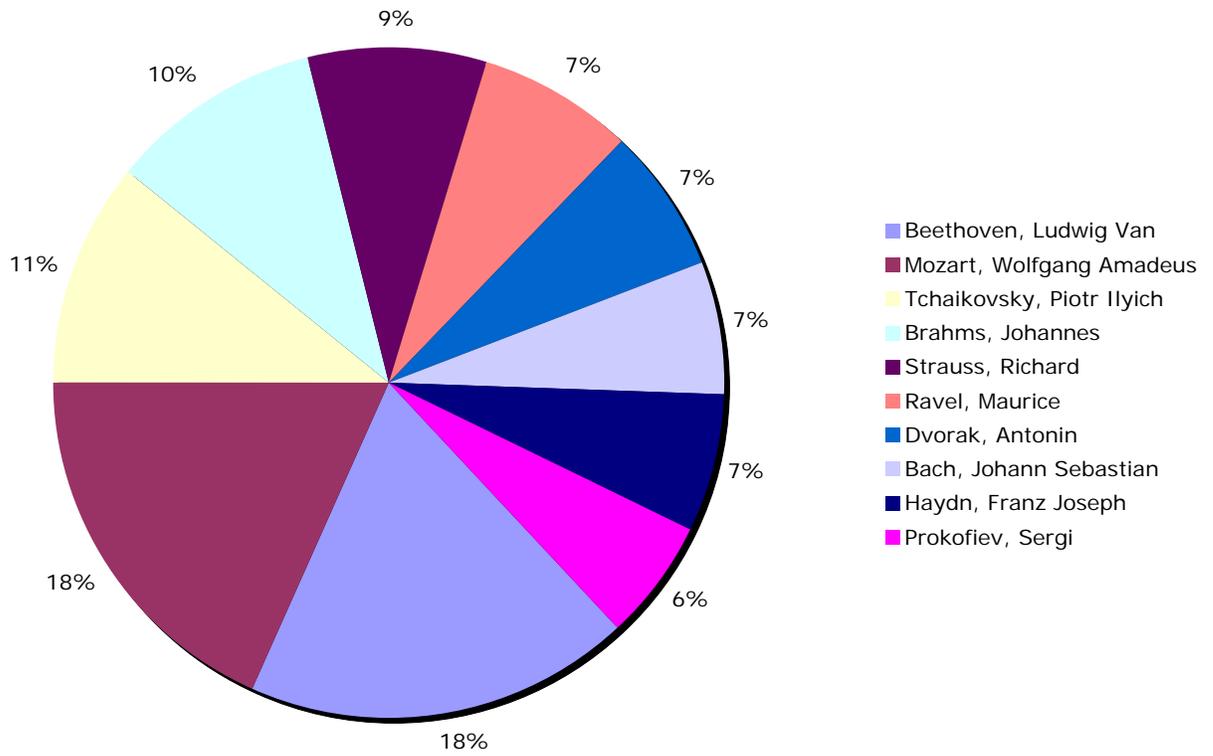
Composer & Composition	Year Composed
Tchaikovsky- Symphony No. 5	1888
Beethoven- Symphony No. 5	1807-8
Beethoven- Symphony No. 9	1822-4
Sibelius, Jean- Concerto in D Minor for Violin	1903
Mendelssohn, Felix- Violin Concerto in E Minor	1844
Brahms- Symphony No. 2	1877
Brahms- Symphony No. 4	1885
Brahms- Violin Concerto in D Major	1879
Beethoven- Piano Concerto No. 5	1809
Beethoven- Symphony No. 6	1809

### 2002-2003 Season Overalls:

104 Total Orchestras

104 World Premieres

### 2002-2003 Composers with Most Works Scheduled



## 2003-2004 Season Orchestra Report

### Composers with Most Works Scheduled

Composer	Number of Performances:
Beethoven, Ludwig Van	684
Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus	672
Brahms, Johannes	356
Tchaikovsky, Piotr Ilyich	332
Dvorak, Antonin	309
Berlioz, Hector	276
Prokofiev, Sergi	254
Ravel, Maurice	236
Strauss, Richard	227
Rachmaninoff, Sergi	224
468 Other Composers	6244

### Most Frequently Performed Works

Composer & Composition	Year Composed
Beethoven- Symphony No. 5	1807-8
*Berlioz- Symphonie Fantastique	1830
Rimsky-Korsakov- Scheherezade	1888
Brahms- Violin Concerto in D Major	1879
Beethoven- Symphony No. 6	1809
Tchaikovsky- Symphony No. 6	1893
Beethoven- Piano Concerto No. 4	1804-6/7
Beethoven- Symphony No. 9	1822-4
Handel- Messiah	1741
Beethoven- Violin Concerto No. 3	1806

### 2003-2004 Season Overalls:

3288 Concert Performances

9814 Performances of Individual Works

1752 Compositions

478 Composers

104 Orchestras

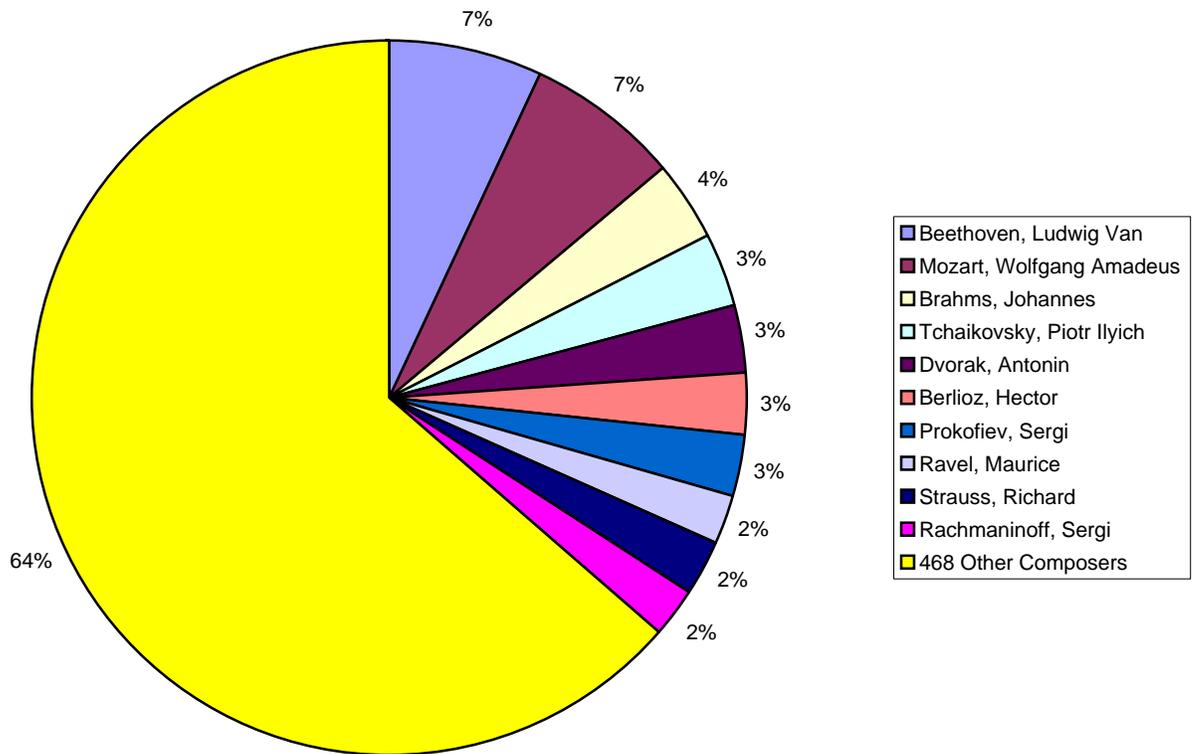
109 World Premieres

942 performances of individual works composed after 1978.

(9.6% of Total Performance of Individual Works)

\*I attribute this high number of compositions to the fact that 2003 was Berlioz' 200th Birthday.

### 2003-2004 Composers with Most Works Scheduled



## 2004-2005 Season Orchestra Report

### Composers with Most Works Scheduled

Composer	Number of Performances:
Beethoven, Ludwig Van	677
Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus	647
Tchaikovsky, Piotr Ilyich	390
Brahms, Johannes	362
Dvorak, Antonin	349
Strauss, Richard	273
Haydn, Franz Joseph	268
Ravel, Maurice	242
Prokofiev, Sergi	221
Ravel, Maurice	236
Mendelssohn, Felix	205
Shostakovich, Dmitri	204
451 Other Composers	5885

### Most Frequently Performed Works

Composer & Composition	Year Composed
Dvorak- Symphony No. 9	1893
Tchaikovsky- Violin Concerto in D Major	1878
Beethoven- Piano Concerto No. 5	1809
Beethoven- Symphony No. 7	1816
Grieg- Piano Concerto No. 5	1868
Beethoven- Violin Concerto in D Major	1806
Brahms- Symphony No. 4	1885
Beethoven- Symphony No. 3	1806
Tchaikovsky- Piano Concerto No. 1	1874
Dvorak- Violin Concerto in A Minor	1879

### 2004-2005 Season Overalls:

3305 Concert Performances

9937 Performances of Individual Works

1660 Compositions

461 Composers

103 Orchestras

79 World Premieres

914 Performances of Individual Works composed after 1978

(9.1% of Total Performance of Individual Works)

### 2004-2005 Composers with Most Works Scheduled

