Guildhall School of Music & Drama

Research Portal

Document Version

Peer-reviewed version

Citation for published version (MLA):

Sloboda, John, Biranda Ford and A.F. Correra, ed. *"Classical music borrowing from other arts: new strategies for audience building through performance"* *In Music, Speech, and Mind* Brazilian Association of Cognition and Musical Arts. 2019.

Citing this paper
Please note that where the full text provided on GSMD's Research Portal is the Author Accepted Manuscript or Post-Print version this may differ from the final Published version. If citing, it is advised that you check and use the publisher's definitive version for pagination, volume/issue, and date of publication details. And where the final published version is provided on the Research Portal, if citing you are again advised to check the publisher's website for any subsequent corrections.

General rights
Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the Research Portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognize and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the Research Portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain.
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the Research Portal.

Take down policy
If you believe that this document breaches copyright, please contact pure@gsmd.ac.uk, providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Submitted for “Music, Sound, and Mind”, August 2018
Pre-publication copy, do not cite without permission

Classical musicians borrowing from other arts: new strategies for audience building through performance[1]

John Sloboda and Biranda Ford
Guildhall School of Music & Drama, Silk Street, London EC2A 8LT, UK[2]

We aim to address six questions:

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?

1) Why do classical musicians need to build audiences?

Attendance at live classical music events has declined, both in absolute terms and relative to other arts. Two survey sources of evidence, one from the USA and one from the UK support this assertion. 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. Table 1 below presents some figures taken from the 2008 report. They show the percentage of US adults reporting attending different arts events at least once in the twelve months preceding the survey. We have 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.

---

[1] This is a substantially updated version of a working paper first published in April 2012 at https://www.gsmd.ac.uk/fileadmin/user_upload/files/Research/Sloboda-Ford_working__paper_2_01.pdf

[2] contact details: johns.sloboda@gsmd.ac.uk, biranda.ford@gsmd.ac.uk

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. Sandow (2007) 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.’

Table 1

U.S. adults attending an activity at least once in past 12 months
Source: 1982, 1992, 2002 and 2008 Surveys of Public Participation in the Arts.

Percent of adults attending/visiting/reading

	1982	1992	2002	2008	Decline
Performing arts					
Jazz*	9.6	10.6	10.8	7.8	19%
Classical music*	13.0	12.5	11.6	9.3	**29%**
Opera*	3.0	3.3	3.2	2.1	**30%**
Musical plays*	18.6	17.4	17.1	16.7	11%
Non-musical plays*	11.9	13.5	12.3	9.4	21%
Ballet*	4.2	4.7	3.9	2.9	**30%**
Other dance	NA	7.1	6.3	5.2	**27%**
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%

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

----

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 (Sigurjonsson, 2005). 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 London’s 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.

2) What do audiences seek by engaging with a live event?

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 research study by Dobson (2010). 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[4]. 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. (Dobson, 2010)

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? 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, 2010)

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.

3) How are classical music events different from other arts events?

Our third question asks what dimensions do live events vary on, and where does classical music lie within this? We propose 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 are 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 in cities such as London, have a very high proportion of new work alongside the established. Even art galleries that build their reputation on established work and work of dead artists, tend to have major exhibitions of relatively recent work or work not exhibited before.

The second dimension is *predictable versus unpredictable*. This is determined by such factors 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 -audiences go to see a named play, but elements of the production are often highly unpredictable, for example operas and plays restaged to contemporary settings, with contemporary ad libs. For example, in The Globe Shakespeare plays, actors have been seen to use mobile phones – to general audience approval. Other productions vary 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 from 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 strict performer roles, or step outside 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 e.g. projection of emotional and other qualities through such things as body movement, facial expressions, or 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.

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, predicable, 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.

How can more of what audiences seek be added to live events? We'd like to argue that one way to do this is by shifting the event along one or more of the dimensions identified above. Two examples of classical music concerts which are particularly successful at building and maintaining audiences, which include younger audiences: are the BBC Proms (Promenade Concerts, the UK's largest annual classical music festival) and the previously mentioned Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment's Night Shift.

Why do the Proms work so well? There are several things that 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 these factors provide an added extra.

Inspired by Dobson's research, one of us sampled a Night Shift performance in an action research mode. 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 9pm, the venue was packed with several hundred people. There were 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 made of movements from works by G F 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 microphone 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, and 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. One was able to feel that one had not only met Handel and a wonderful performance of his works but that one had met the performers and their enthusiasms alongisde fellow audience members in a quite unique way.

When engaging the audience in this way one might ask how much of this is the responsibility of the musician? The received conservatoire view of the earlier-mid 20th century perhaps, is that the musician's job is to play to his or her best ability; all the surrounding arrangements are done by someone else. Which someone else? How trained? How in communication with the musicians or audience? These are interesting questions, whose traditional answers place this responsibility at the door of the impresario, the producer, the venue manager, the orchestral manager, the public relations person, the critic, and 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 arrive at the venue, get their instruments out of their cases and play. Based on our investigations, we suggest 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.

5) Why are classical musicians not as focused on audiences as they might be?

We argue that classical musicians today are not as focused on audiences because of changes that took place in the nineteenth century in how we think about and perform music that are still in effect today. These changes saw music go from something that musicians brought fully into being in front of an audience, to something that existed in its own right, regardless of whether it was performed or not. This in turn affected the dynamics between performers, audience and composers, and where performers directed their attention in performance.

In the eighteenth century, when musicians performed at occasions both sacred and secular, the expectation of listeners was that music would be newly composed or customized for the occasion. Bach's 200 or so surviving cantatas were written to service the Lutheran church calendar (Wolff, 2000), and Vivaldi's 500-plus concerti were primarily for use by the students in one of four institutions in Venice that gave orphans a vocational training in music (Taruskin, 2005). Whilst these familiar names were prolific even by standards of the day, there were other ways that performers could satisfy a public need to hear something different without relying on newly composed music. In some traditions, particularly Italian music, the score was treated as more of a skeleton outline that could be melodically embellished by the performer. A comparison of the published versions of Corelli's op. 5 no. 9 sonata that attempt to capture the various ways well-known performers ornamented the same melody show the difference that a musician's individual taste could have on the performance of the same work (see Stowell, 2001). Arrangements were common and performers would write what amounted to 'cover versions' of popular works. Another example from Corelli - his *La Folia* variations (op. 5 no. 12) – consisting of a set of variations on an already familiar ground bass (a form that provided a vehicle for performers to showcase their inventiveness around a repeating bass line) was rearranged by fellow composer-violinist Geminiani to capitalize on the popularity of a good tune and to showcase his own flashy virtuosity. Conventions in notation aided the rapid writing of music, in that composers combined the written note with a system of shorthand signs, such as figured bass and ornamentation knowing that performers could be relied upon to decipher according to a combination of local custom and practice, and personal judgement and taste. Playing 'the notes on the page' and no more would have bewildered and disappointed many audiences, particularly in Italy, at this time.

What effects did these practices have on the dynamics between performers, composers and audience? If one was asked to put these groups of people into a hierarchy, one could say that the audience, of noble patrons and ticket paying middle classes commanded the most authority. Popular performers – the very best with superstar status – held a fair amount of power, followed lastly by composers (Taruskin, 2005). With music being written, realized, arranged or improvised for specific audiences and occasions, the reactions of the audience were at the forefront of both composers' and performers' minds. Audiences were also much more distractible and demonstrative in their reactions than today. Accounts of *opera seria* audiences border on the anarchic, with servants preparing dinner, people milling around playing cards, widespread chatting and general inattention the norm until a favoured singer appeared onstage to sing an aria. For instrumental music, Richard Taruskin has speculatively likened Vivaldi's audiences for his concerti to those of modern day rock concerts in his description of ‘a house full of shouting, clapping, stamping listeners’ (2005, 223). Though composers could incorporate their knowledge of the audience’s reactions at speed into their next compositions, even more immediate was the feedback loop set in motion between performers and their audiences. Charismatic performers could use their greater powers of musical autonomy to play to the floor.

If these practices emphasized the centrality of the performing musician in front of an audience to bring music to life, during the nineteenth century when the desire for new music was replaced by a mania for old music, performers assumed a very different role (Taruskin, 2005). As the idea of a canon of music deemed to be ‘classic’ because of its perceived quality became the norm, performers were asked to perform the same works over and again (Weber, 2008). The practices that had enabled musicians to respond flexibly in the moment to their audiences to endlessly vary and showcase their inventiveness and technique were replaced by careful preparation of detailed notated scores that were seen to be if not wholly equivalent to ‘the music itself’, to hold the key to an ideal-type of performance as sanctioned by ‘the composer’s intentions’. Though this music could be performed in front of an audience, it also existed in its own right as a work, regardless of whether it was performed or not (Goehr, 1992). Dressed in black or concealed in a pit, performers came to be faceless mediators between the composer, now elevated to the status of a creative genius, and a silently reverential audience eager to enjoy a quasi-spiritual experience – a far cry from the demonstrative rowdiness of earlier audiences (Cook, 1998).

If audiences now came to hear the masterworks of composers rather than performances of particular musicians, the hierarchy of authority of the eighteenth century between composers and performers was turned on its head. At first, audiences were still important in an age where noble patronage was on the decline and public concerts came of age; the concert societies that sprung up in Paris, Vienna and London dedicated to the new middleclass passion for Beethoven relied upon audience revenue and approval (Weber, 2008). But as the nineteenth century progressed, the idea that audiences might have to work to understand the offerings of great composers became the norm. Public reception of Beethoven’s late works show how at the time of composition, some were written off as incomprehensible, but then later re-cast as great works from a genius who was ahead of his time (Knittel, 1998).

This recasting of audiences as unable to comprehend great art became entrenched in the twentieth century as abstract and difficult art became the norm. When Schoenberg adventured into atonality, he was fuelled by a desire to enter the canon of great composers by being original, not by being popular. When the conservative general public of Vienna didn't know what to make of his music, he sidestepped them by presenting his new works to small member-only societies of new music enthusiasts (Taruskin, 2005). Adorno characterized audiences for music that had a wide public appeal such as jazz as having the worst kind of taste, symptomatic of the commodification of culture (Paddisson, 1997). Under twentieth century modernism, audience taste could not be taken as a barometer of value.

Music education too reflected the differences in the dynamic between performers, composers and audience (Ford, 2011). When performers' primary roles were to entertain audiences or provide music for social or religion occasions, musicians were taught a range of skills. The music orphanage of Venice over which Vivaldi presided taught performance on multiple instruments, singing, composition, arrangement and improvisation (Baldauf-Berdes, 1993). But later when composers held both performers and audiences in something of a didactic relationship, education changed too. The Paris Conservatoire, which opened in 1795, not only embodied and institutionalized these changes in the nineteenth century, but also provided the model for how we train musicians today (Ford, 2011).

As the role of performers changed from those who were expected to make their own mark on a performance to one of faithful interpretation, specialism on a single instrument or vocal type became the norm. This was accompanied by the pursuit of a virtuosic technique, to be able to accurately realise the 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 the most important marker of success, now standards were being established and maintained by adherence to official standards as monitored through exams and prizes (Ford, 2011). By the end of the nineteenth century, rather than being seen as a 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.

This training produced well-disciplined performers for audiences who were familiar with the canon of western classical music (Leech-Wilkinson, 2016); it worked in an age when the authority of the canon as high art went unquestioned. However, the majority of today's younger audiences, as discussed above, want something different. In the absence of deference for these cherished works and composers, once again, they are seeking a relationship with the performer. Rather than wanting to know more about the work through a pre-concert lecture, audiences now would prefer to meet the performers themselves after the concert. The emphasis it seems has shifted back from the composer to the performer.

But as music students prepare for the professional world, do we encourage them to think about their audiences as well as the composer or the notional work? Does our current advanced education, still largely following a nineteenth century model, prepare them for this? This is a question that some at the Guildhall School have been applying their minds to.

6. How can conservatoire training be enriched to equip musicians with more audience awareness?

Since 2009, a number of projects have been initiated at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama to explore how the musician-audience relationship may be enhanced or rebalanced. We briefly describe three of these project, which all have in common that they involve collaborations between artistic pedagogues (who are generally international-level artists in their own right) and career researchers. The aim of the collaborations has been to support, document, and evaluate innovations in musician-audience relationships.

6.1 Music and drama students working alongside each other

One approach being tried at the Guildhall, capitalising on its status as both a music and drama school, is to involve musicians in projects where they work alongside drama students. Before we present the outcomes of some empirical research based on interviews with students involved in these collaborative projects, we will outline some of the findings from a literature review comparison of values in music and drama (Ford & Sloboda, 2012).[3] We found that drama had completely different attitudes towards audience and their equivalent of the score, the text, than musicians. Firstly, performance to an audience is thought of as being an inseparable part of theatre, whereas in music it is possible to play in private for your own personal enjoyment. 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 theatre. So let's compare the differences this brings about.

We have already discussed conventions of audience behaviour. 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.

This anecdote forms a bridge to our next point, that music and drama differ in whether they see the audience as an integral part of the performance, or as something separate or incidental. In the acting and theatre studies literature there are multiple references to an active feedback loop between audience and performers. For instance, Merlin writes 'It's about listening to the audience and the subtle exchanges with them.... If you can listen to the audience and the energy they feed you... then it won't be hard to know what to do in the given circumstances of any particular piece' (2018, 4). There isn't a notion of an ideal type performance existing in the text or somewhere out there that the performers are trying to realise, but rather, the performance comes into being in front of an audience (Freshwater, 2009). This contrasts with both the literature about and the practice of music performance, where the audience is seen as separate from the process of performance, often described as an 'extramusical' element (see for instance, McPherson & Schubert, 2004, p.70). Musicians talk about performing as if they are reproducing something that already exists (Ford, 2013); analysis of recordings of the same repertoire over a period of time can show successive performances to be similar to the point of being near identical, prompting the question of where the creativity in performance lies (Leech-Wilkinson, 2011). While the performance is happening 'over here', the audience are seen as 'out there', an incidental rather than integral part of the experience of live performance.

---

[3] Ford and Sloboda, 2012 'Learning from artistic and pedagogical differences between musicians' and actors' traditions through collaborative processes' in H. Gaunt and H. Westerland *Collaborative Learning in Higher Music Education: Why, What and How?*, (Ashgate).

Developments in twentieth century avant-garde theatre and music have taken these two different ways of thinking about the audience in opposite directions. Site-specific and interactive theatre are just some examples of ever-more engaged forms of audience participation. For instance, performances by the London theatre company Punchdrunk have audiences free to roam throughout the site of the production, thus viewers have a high degree of autonomy to construct their own experience of the production. In interactive theatre 'You Me Bum Bum Train' (again showing in London, since 2010), audiences promenade through a series of scenes as spectators, but also at points find themselves as impromptu actors as they are enlisted to take part in the show's action. Though these experiences can be disorientating as well as empowering for audience members, they signal a clear desire on the part of theatre-makers to create new relationships between audience and performers (Freshwater, 2009). It is hard to find an equivalent in music; whilst mainstream pop music culture embraces fans' vocal or physical participation, avant-garde 'art' music, by and large presumes a traditional seated, silent audience. The number of contemporary classical compositions where the audience are given significant roles has been very small, even though - in the only case where this has been systematically documented (Toelle & Sloboda, in press) - audience members find the experience highly motivating and engaging.

It appears that these different artistic attitudes to audience are reproduced in professional training as well. Whilst musicians are taught through the principal study system in one-to-one lessons and are then expected to engage in individual solo practice to improve and learn repertoire, actors train in groups. Though music students do rehearse in ensembles, the majority of their practice time is spent alone, so the experience of performing to others often feels unfamiliar. Although actors are expected to do some voice work and learn their lines on an individual basis, the bulk of their learning, skill acquisition and rehearsal of repertoire takes place in groups. Thus throughout their training, they have a sense of performing to an audience, even if it is just the company of actors in the room (Ford, 2013).

The Guildhall School projects which brought together music and acting students collaboratively lead to some new discoveries for the musicians taking part. The distinctive element of all these projects was the onstage interaction of musicians and actors. Rather than sitting hidden or offstage, the musicians, as well as performing music, took part in the stage action, becoming part of the actors' ensemble. Actors either took part in the musical performance through song or vocal soundscapes and it was a creative challenge to see how music, musicians and their instruments could be incorporated into the dramatic action. Rehearsals took place together, intensively, as a single company over a period of several weeks. This contrasts with other more traditional models of collaboration for opera or musicals where actors prepare separately from the orchestra and are then joined by musicians at a late stage, often, because of economic or timetabling constraints, for the first time just in the dress rehearsal.

The different kinds of actor/musician collaboration that took place at the Guildhall and that the empirical data was gathered from ranged from text-based, that is realising a play with a musical score and a text, to fully devised work, so performers through improvisation workshops devised either the play or the music, or sometimes both. This devised work has also included input from a composer and dramaturge to guide improvisation workshops or to knit improvisatory fragments into a larger structure to come up with the final work to be performed. Research was undertaken on these collaborations so that musicians and actors were interviewed both before and after the projects began, and we draw 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, and we use the earlier outlined categories 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.

We first look at the "established versus new" dimension. From a *modus operandi* of performing off-stage using a score, musicians had to revise their roles. For example, a cellist who was playing onstage throughout a song became implicated as a character from the drama. Whilst providing the musical backdrop, she also became the character the actor was singing about and by the end of the song she became part of the action. With the devised projects, there was a further departure from the established norm of performing canonical repertoire, which was cast aside as musicians adopted roles of improviser-composer, making them think about the role of music in relation to the narrative or stage action. Musicians reported finding ways to be creative as improvisers which felt like they were exercising different creative muscles because they weren't thinking solely in terms of interpretation.

Our next category: predictable versus unpredictable. Music students reported discovering a sense of spontaneity in their performance, through both improvisation and being in contact with actors. They contrasted this against their mainstream studies where they said that the goal was perfection; as one student said 'in classical performance, perfection is everything'.[4] When interpreting works, a student described his experience of 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 […], everything has been prepared and practiced for many, many hours.”

However, through improvised performance, students reported a renewed sense of spontaneity. In this, they were also influenced by the actors' attitudes towards risk-taking and creative play in rehearsal. In opposition to the classical music quest for perfection, the director of one project said 'for actors it’s fundamental to their process to accept that they must fail and fail again' (Sloboda, 2011).

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 onstage he remembered the spirit of risk-taking and playfulness of what he’d done with the actors and tried to recapture it in classical performance. Another student who had reported being profoundly affected by collaborative work also said his teacher had noticed a difference of her students who were taking part in the project and asked ‘what are you […] doing there?’

Thirdly, impersonal to personal: this manifested itself in how music students were thinking about their audiences. Music students said that they found actors' warm up routines, where all students were in a circle doing exercises to connect with each other embedded the notion of preparing for public performance into their regular practice. 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 or not at all, students said they were more inclined to think about their audiences, and how to project their ideas across to them during their regular practice.

---

[4] See also Ford (2011), for a discussion of the aesthetic and pedagogical drivers behind perfection as a cherished musical value.

Musicians also found another way of communicating with an audience, a regular concern of actors, through physical 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.

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.

Finally passive versus 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 report noting 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 was extremely small so that the audience was in close proximity, but the musicians said that they actually noticed the audience reactions during the performance - for some musicians they declared this was the first time they'd actually felt a relationship with the audience during a performance. A student remarked: '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.'

6.2 Obtaining artist-directed feedback from live audiences.

Classical musicians generally have rather limited means of obtaining direct and detailed feedback from their live audiences. This is often restricted to applause at the end of the piece and the somewhat intangible “the feel of the room”. This is in contrast to some other genres of music, where through movement, clapping, or vocalizing, performance conventions allow audience members to respond in real time to the music-making unfolding on stage (Small, 1998).

Many research studies exist which collect detailed evaluative responses from music listeners. But these have mostly been carried out without reference to the specific concerns or interests of the musicians involved, even when the event is a live performance. In fact, in the vast bulk of existing music perception research, the musicians involved in making the music don’t even know that the research on their music is taking place.

Our research approach looks at the potentials that can be realised when musicians themselves take a lead in the formulation of the research questions that are posed to the audience, and are centrally involved in the review of the data so obtained.

We have now worked across five different artistic projects in a process which involves (a) discovering artistically relevant questions which can be validly posed to audience members, (b) collaboratively devising appropriate means of collecting this data (always a post-performance discussion, augmented in two cases by a questionnaire), (c) jointly reviewing the outcomes of the event, and the audience data, (d) obtaining reflective feedback from those involved regarding the value of being involved in the exercise.

Here, we propose to focus in on what this process has yielded in more detail by looking at one of these events (some of the other events are described in more detail elsewhere, see Sloboda & Dobson (2012) and Dobson & Sloboda (2013).

The event in question was a new staging of Kurt Weill’s Ballet Chante, the “Seven Deadly Sins”. Our collaborators were the directors, the actor/singers, and the conductor of the orchestra.

“Seven Deadly Sins” is a satirical sung ballet, composed to words by Bertholt Brecht, and first performed in 1933. The plot depicts the fortunes of two American sisters in the Great Depression who set out from their family in Louisiana to earn enough money to send home to allow the family to build a little house on the Mississippi. The work is primarily a critical commentary on the way in which capitalism dehumanizes people and commodifies personal relationships.

The creative team consisted of a student artistic director, a student musical director/conductor, and two staff members acting as project advisors.

A member of the research team (JS) met with the creative team 6 months ahead to discuss collaboration. Thereafter one of the staff members in the team (BF) acted as performer-researcher liaison, and took primary responsibility for generating and passing on a set of agreed questions from the creative team.

The questions for post-performance discussion generated by creative team

> - What do you think the message of the work that you have just seen is?
> Is the message still relevant today?
>
> - Does Weill’s music contribute to this message?
>
> - What were some of the effects of this work and how we staged it on you the audience?
>
> - How did you experience these? (for instance, did it bring the message out, or did it alienate/patronize you)?
>
> - Do we still believe that theatre has the capacity to provoke political change amongst its audiences – or is it just another cultural commodity?

The creative team decided to invite a well-known classical performer/teacher to chair a post-performance discussion as the means of obtaining audience feedback. A member of the research team (JS) held two pre-event briefing meetings with the chair.

The post-performance discussion took place in the performance space immediately after the performance, and involved, in addition to the chair, three members of the creative team, and two of the singer/actors. It lasted about 30 minutes. Over half the audience remained for the discussion, which was pre-announced at the start of the performance.

A few weeks afterwards, post-event feedback was elicited from the artist participants in the discussion, four of whom attended a one-hour recorded meeting with the researchers, one of who sent in written comments by email. Thematic analysis of this feedback was undertaken.

Our treatment of results here focuses on the social factors that were seen as facilitating or inhibiting the process for the people involved.

Firstly, focusing the creative team on formulating research questions, which were known to the cast during rehearsals, sharpened the rehearsal process itself, and made it more goal-directed and self-reflective. (Conductor) "But it was good though… because once we had those questions, it enabled us to shape the performance as well. So it gave us a direction for this and a direction for the performance." And: (Singer/Actor) "It enabled us to make much clearer choices in the setting and things like that, yeah, certainly*"*

Secondly, participating in the post-performance discussion changed the power relationships between performers and audience, reducing the disparity, which was experienced as both positive but also anxiety provoking and challenging.

> it's a strange headspace to be in, suddenly conducting, and turn around and open your mouth. And I must admit, I was really nervous actually. But it was good. What I really like about it is that you get the immediacy of the people's reactions (Conductor)

> It was just odd. I had never experienced it before. It was almost as if instead of walking through the stage door after the performance, you walked through the audience door…It detracted from the post-performance high ... To be completely honest it took away from my ego. (Singer/actor)

Additionally, the process involved transacting new power relations between researchers, performers, and curator/chair.

> I did ask a question of the audience. I think I wouldn't have been comfortable to keep on coming up with more audience questions. Because then the question is, am I trying to take over [the chair's] job. So I think there was a sort of thing…I suppose, [he] was

> chairing it, but he wasn't actually… he hadn't really been involved in the work. (Staff project advisor).

Thirdly and finally, prior knowledge of the post-performance element sharpened and focused the instrumentality of some audience members, facilitating a valued transition from "passive recipient" to "consultant".

> I think, from my experience with my friends that came along, they changed… it changed the way that they approached the piece. They didn't go out to be entertained. They went out to have some input. And it wasn't in a negative way. They were ready for a post-performance, but it wasn't like they were getting dressed up to go to the West End. It was that they were getting dressed up to go to a School and have an after-show production talk, which changed the way they approached it. (Singer/Actor)

This project, as well as other studies in the set, show that when you empower your audience it can raise the game for everyone.

6.3 Classical improvisation as a means of enhancing performer-audience engagement.

Classical improvisation represents a very important attempt to challenge the core of the prevailing conservatoire culture. Pedagogy in this area is a major contribution of the Guildhall School. Such pedagogy encourages students to radically challenge the notion that faithfulness to the score is a core or abiding value. This work is based on the historical fact that until the late 19th Century, improvisation was considered to be a core attribute of live performance. Mozart and Beethoven would have been astonished with the contemporary reverence accorded to their scores. They expected performers to take liberties with the score, as they did themselves in performance (Dolan, Sloboda, Crutz & Jeldtoft-Jensen, 2013).

It could be argued that historically authentic performance of much classical repertoire requires (rather than invites) an improvisatory approach, which may be defined as a spontaneous, in the moment, musically informed variation in expressive parameters of timing, loudness, and timbre, along with actual new notes.

Not only is such an approach more historically authentic, it does, it can be argued, have the power to provide a more intense experience for all concerned in live performance. This is because improvised performances are newer, more unpredictable, more personal, and – arguably – invite more audience engagement.

The basic pedagogical method developed at Guildhall School involves teaching students how to do Schenkerian reductions on the music they are playing, and then reconstruct performances that share the same reduction. All this is done practically, through hearing and playing, with textual backup, but the main mode is experiential.

We evaluated the impact of such an improvisatory approach in a series of experiments exploring the hypothesis was that improvisation, and improvisational state of mind during performance is associated with heightened musical experience in terms of both performers' engagement and audience response (Dolan et al 2013, Dolan, Jeldoft Jensen, Mediano, Molina-Solana, Rosas & Sloboda, 2018).

Our specific predictions were for (a) increased (more varied) and more "risky" use of performance related parameters (Timings/tempi/rhythms, dynamics timbre and actual extemporized notes) by the musicians; (b) increased ratings for judgments of "innovative", "emotionally engaging" and "musically convincing" from audience members; and finally (c) increased activation of certain brain areas in both performers and audience and increased synchronization in brain activity between performers and listeners.

We will here focus on a live concert by the "Trio Anima". In that concert, five pieces were each performed twice in two modes: 'strict' and 'letting go' (improvisatory state). The order of two modes was switched around from piece to piece and was unknown to audience and any co-author other than the furst.

Questionnaires were administered to all audience members, who filled in a number of responses after each pair of performances. We also took
Brain measurements (EEG) from performers and two audience members

Our results confirmed all three specific predictions.

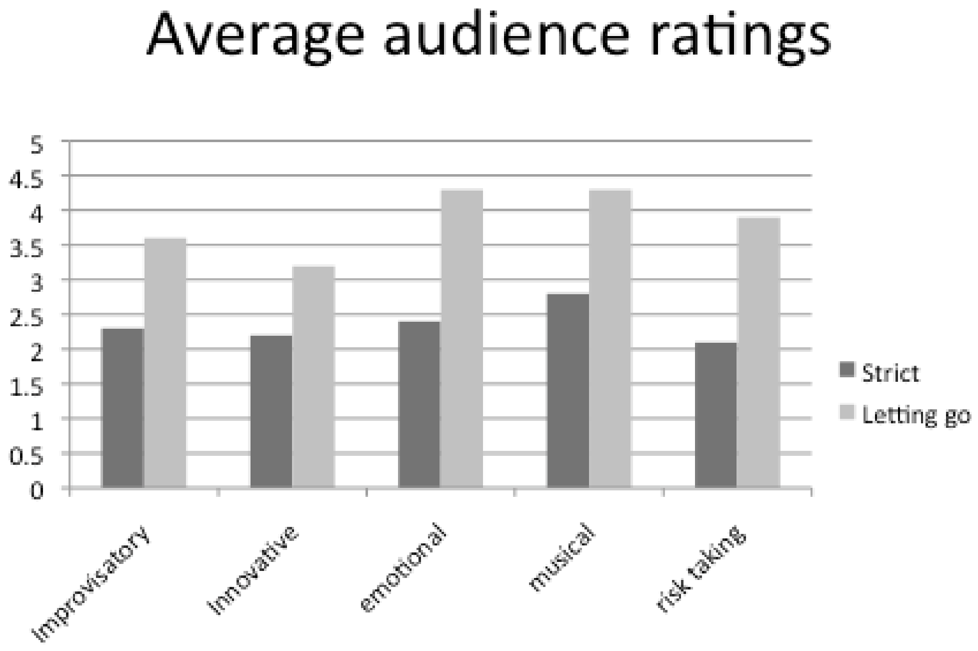

Figure 1

First, the performances had clear objective differences. We found greater expressive variation in the ‘letting go’ version than the strict version, and also embellishments of the score.

Audience reactions were obtained by asking each audience member to rate each performance on five separate dimensions, Improvisatory in character, Innovative in approach, Emotionally engaging, Musically convincing, and Risk taking. On all these dimensions the improvised pieces scored substantially higher (see Figure 1).

The ratings were supported by numerous written comments; of which these are two which exemplify the very different feel of the two types of performance. *Strict:* “Pleasantly played, though tame and conventional”. *Letting-go:* “It was very intense. Musically a lot happened. The musicians were really making music and telling a story together”

Finally, the EEG data also showed numerous differences between strict and improvised performances, for both performers and listeners. One particularly striking finding was a contrast between performers, whose brain centres for focused attention were less active during improvisation, and listeners, who showed more activity in these areas (signaling a greater attentive involvement).

A second finding was that improvisation yielded greater activation in areas of motor control for both performers and listeners, even though listeners remained very still. It seems as if listeners mirrored the movements of the musicians in their imagination.

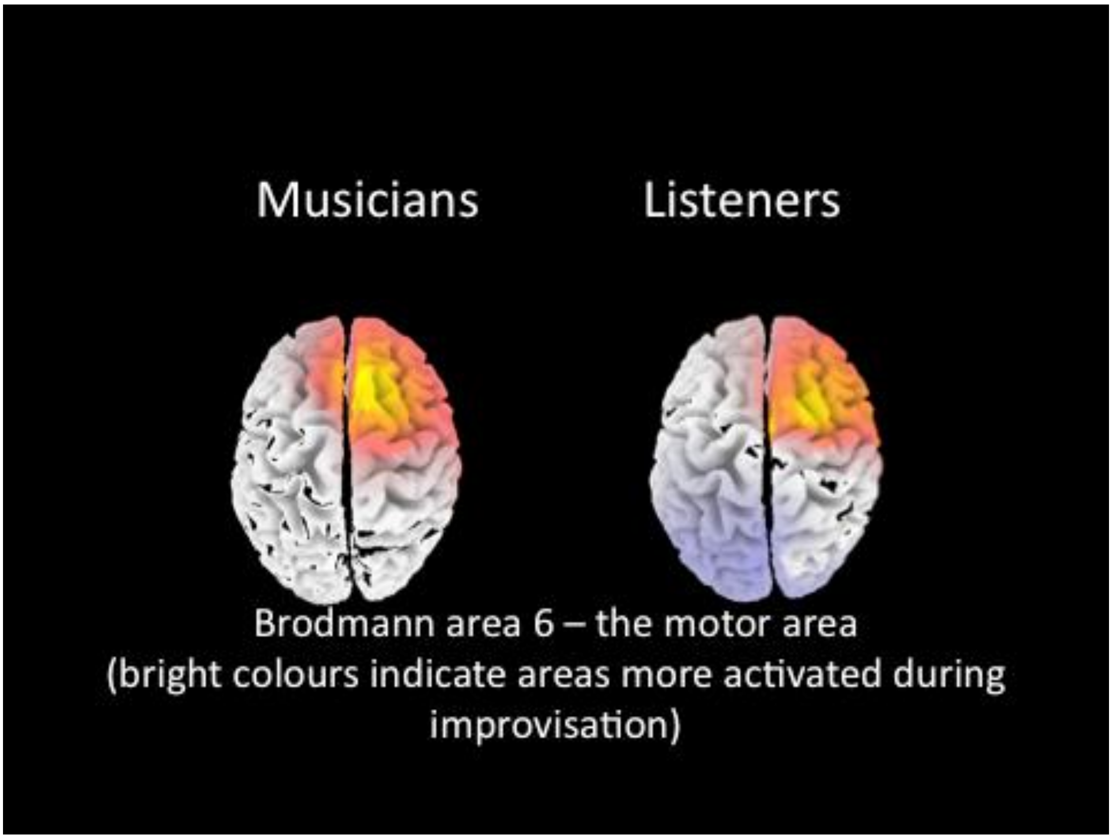
Musicians
Listeners
Brodmann area 6 – the motor area
(bright colours indicate areas more activated during improvisation)

Figure 2

In conclusion, we have found consistent evidence that improvised classical performances are experienced as significantly different by participants, as indicated through both conscious verbal and unconscious brain responses, as well as the musical features of the performances. This is the first study to demonstrate this combination of effects and in a live concert situation.

7. Conclusions

In conclusion, we 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. We've presented some of the historical background of why musicians aren't focused on their audiences, and by outlining some of the projects that have been happening at the Guildhall school, we have suggested how musicians can 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 we hope to have provided a few pointers.

References

Baldauf-Berdes, J. L. (1993). *Women Musicians of Venice: Musical Foundations*, *1525-1855*. Oxford: Clarendon.

Cook, N. (1998*). Music: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dolan, D., Sloboda, J.A., Crutz, B, & Jeldtoft-Jensen, H. (2013) The improvisatory approach to classical music performance: an empirical investigation into its characteristics and impact. *Music Performance Research, 6*, 1-38 (http://mpr-online.net/Issues/Volume%206%20%5B2013%5D/MPR0073.pdf)

Dolan, D., Jeldoft Jensen, H., Mediano, P.A., Molina-Solana, M. Rosas, F, & Sloboda, J. A. (2018). The improvisational state of mind: a multidisciplinary study of an improvisatory approach in a live classical concert. Frontiers in Psychology, X.x DOI: 10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01341

Dobson, M.C. (2010). 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.

Dobson, M. & Sloboda, J.A. (2014). Staying behind: Explorations in post-performance musician–audience dialogue. In K. Burland & S.E. Pitts (eds*.), Coughing and Clapping: Investigating Audience Experience.* Ashgate/SEMPRE Studies in the Psychology of Music series.

Ford, B. (2011). *What are Conservatoires for?* Phd thesis, IOE, University of London.

Ford, B. (2013). Approaches to performance: A comparison of music and acting students' concepts of preparation, audience and performance. *Music Performance Research, 6,* 152-169.

Ford, B. & Sloboda, J. A. (2012) Learning from artistic and pedagogical differences between musicians' and actors' traditions through collaborative processes. in H. Gaunt and H. Westerland (Eds.) *Collaborative Learning in Higher Music Education: Why, What and How?*, Farnham: Ashgate.

Freshwater, H. (2009) *Theatre and Audience*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

Goehr, L. *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works; an Essay in the Philosophy of Music*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Knittel, K.M. (1998). Wagner, Deafness, and the Reception of Beethoven's Late Style. *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, *51(1),* 49-82.

Leech-Wilkinson, D. (2011). Making music with Alfred Cortot: ontology, data, analysis. In H. Loesch and S. Weinzierl (Eds.), *Gemessene Interpretation – Computergestützte Aufführungsanalyse im Kreuzverhör der Disziplinen* (pp. 129-44). (Klang und Begriff 4). Mainz: Schott.

Leech-Wilkinson, D. (2016). Classical music as enforced Utopia. *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education. 15(3-4)*, 325-336.

McPherson, G., & Schubert, E. (2004). Measuring performance enhancement in music. In A. Williamon (Ed.), *Musical excellence: Strategies and techniques for enhancing performance* (pp. 61-84). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Merlin, B. (2018). *Acting, the Basics.* Abingdon: Routledge.

Paddison, M. (1997). *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music Paperback*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sandow, G. (2007*) Rebirth:The Future of Classical Music.* Chapter 2 – Dire Data*.* http://www.artsjournal.com/sandow/2007/01/rebirth.html

Sigurjonsson, N. (2005). Young Audience Development and Aesthetics: John Dewey's Pragmatist Philosophy and its Implications for Orchestra Management . *http://neumann.hec.ca/aimac2005/PDF_Text/Sigurjonsson_Niordur.pdf*

Sloboda, J. A. (2011), What do musicians and actors learn by working together? 'The Last Five Years': A Case Study. Guildhall School of Music & Drama, Research Working Paper, 11/01, p. 5. http://www.gsmd.ac.uk/understandingaudiences)..

Sloboda, J. A. (2013) How does it strike you? Obtaining artist-directed feedback from the audience at a site-specific performance of a Monteverdi opera *Paper presented to the CMPCP Performance Studies Network 2nd Conference, Cambridge, UK. April 2013. http://www.cmpcp.ac.uk/PSN2/PSN2013_Sloboda.pdf*

Sloboda, J.A. & Dobson, M. (2012) How was it for you? Obtaining artist-directed feedback from audiences at live musical events. Paper presented to the 12th International Conference on Music Perception and Cognition, Thessaloniki, Greece, July 2012.

Stowell, R. (2001). *The Early Violin and Viola: a Practical Guide*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Taruskin, R. (2005). *The Oxford History of Western Music: the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Toelle, J. & Sloboda, J. A. (2019) The audience as artist? The audience's experience of participatory music. *Journal of Research in New Music.* (in press)

Weber, W. (2008). *The Great Transformation of Musical Taste: Concert Programming from Haydn to Brahms*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wolff, C (2000). *Johann Sebastian Bach: the Learned Musician.* New York: Norton.