ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT: AN ARTIST-RESEARCHER'S APPROACH TO MEANINGFUL CONCERT EXPERIENCES

Madeleine Jansen, Doctor of Musical Arts, 2023

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As classical music concert attendance wanes, much attention has been given to improving and sustaining audience engagement. This doctoral dissertation investigates audience experience at classical music performances from the perspective of the performer. Using a mixed-methodology of arts-based research and qualitative research, I organized and performed seven violin and piano recitals in which I experimented with different types of venues, repertoire, and modes of communication. Data results based on written surveys from 81 concert attendees, as well as semi-structured interviews with numerous other attendees, revealed that audience members engaged better with performances when concert conditions promoted feelings of inclusivity. This finding is consistent with other literature in audience research, but this study contributes a more nuanced discussion from the perspective of the performer of venue choice, programming, and verbal contextualization of the music.

AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT: AN ARTIST-RESEARCHER'S APPROACH TO MEANINGFUL CONCERT EXPERIENCES

by

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1 Background

One does not need to be a classical music enthusiast to be aware of the challenges the genre faces to maintain cultural relevancy in an increasingly uninterested society. Open a newspaper published in any major American city and you will encounter headlines such as "*Classical Music Attracts Older Audiences. Good."*[1], or "*Baltimore Symphony Orchestra cancels 10 concerts for the 2022-23 season as it seeks to fill seats at the Meyerhoff Symphony Hall."*[2] Against the backdrop of the public's declining interest in classical music, arts organizations are constantly struggling to attract new audience members to concerts. A 2009 study conducted by a research team from McKinsey & Company on behalf of the League of American Orchestras reported that overall classical music attendance rates declined between 1982 to 2008, from 12.9% to 9.3%.[3] Furthermore, between 2002 and 2008, new audience members for classical music performances declined by 13%, or 3.3 million people.[4]

While most large-scale research that gathers statistics on classical music audience attendance focuses on orchestra concerts, chamber music series evidently grapple with similar struggles. This has been most recently exacerbated by the global COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in deleterious effects on audiences when organizations were forced to cancel

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[1] Anthony Tommasini, "Classical Music Attracts Older Audiences. Good." *New York Times*, August 6, 2020. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/06/arts/music/classical-music-opera-older-audiences.html

[2] Mary Carole McCauley, "BSO cancels 10 concerts for the 2022-23 season as it seeks to fill seats at the Meyerhoff Symphony Hall," *The Baltimore Sun,* July 7, 2022. https://www.baltimoresun.com/entertainment/bs-fe-bso-cancels-ten-meyerhoff-concerts-20220707-6lrl77rw7rgxrmdnauy3hxrjxe-story.html

[3] League of American Orchestras, *Audience Demographic Research Review*, (New York, NY: League of American Orchestras, 2009), https://americanorchestras.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Audience_Demographic_Review.pdf.

[4] League of American Orchestras, *Audience Demographic Research Review*.

performances in the interest of public health. In June 2020, Chamber Music America published results from a survey that was conducted in partnership with the Wallace Foundation's "Building Audiences for the Arts" initiative, which summarized the impact of COVID-19 on the small ensemble music field. In this report, 73.9% of ensembles surveyed and 64.6% of organizations surveyed shared that they cancelled or planned to cancel in-person performances for that year's concert season.[5] Most music organizations have since returned to offering in-person performances as quarantine and social distancing restrictions have eased, and it is too early to draw definitive conclusions about the long-term effects the pandemic has had on classical music concert attendance. Nonetheless, many classical music organizations, large and small, continue to struggle to define their cultural relevancy while contending with new challenges created by the global pandemic.

Recent years have seen classical music organizations, musicians, and presenters increase their efforts towards sustainable audience-building, embracing community engagement as a way of bringing music to people who may not regularly seek out classical music events in hopes that these efforts will in turn bring fresh fans to the concert hall. Unsurprisingly, the conversation surrounding audience-building has turned out to be more nuanced than this: despite an increase in classical music "outreach" events, many people are still hesitant to attend formal concerts in traditional music halls, citing feelings of alienation or exclusion from a perceived elitist culture.[6]

As a professional violinist myself, I am not ignorant to the realities the classical music industry faces. Nonetheless, I firmly believe that live classical music performance serves as a

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[5] Chamber Music America, *CMA Survey Summary: The impact of COVID-19 on the Small Ensemble Music Field (*New York: Chamber Music America, 2020), https://www.chamber-music.org/pdf/CMA_Survey_Summary_June_2020.pdf

[6] Anahi Ravagnani, "Listening to Audiences: A Critical Analysis of Participation in Classical Music Education and Outreach Projects" (PhD diss., The University of Leeds, 2020), 17.

powerful vehicle to educate, entertain, and inspire. Over the years, I have performed many types of concerts – for audiences large and small, in venues formal and informal, and in solo and ensemble configurations. While I certainly know the disappointment of looking out into a nearly empty concert hall, I have also felt the exhilaration of forging meaningful connections with audience members through a shared live musical experience. I know firsthand that if musicians approach their concert planning with intentional programming and delivery, classical music concerts can be enjoyed even by audience members who might not regularly attend these types of events. As a violinist, I am passionate about organizing my own performances and experimenting with programming and presentation concepts. This enthusiasm for creating meaningful concert experiences was the catalyst that inspired me to design a doctoral research study that explores audience perception and impact. It is my hope that by investigating this topic as part of a formal academic study, I will help other classical musicians discover ways to forge deeper connections with audiences, as well as model a process for reflective artist-led research.

1.2 Project Summary

The overarching mission of this doctoral research project is to use my dual perspective as both a practicing artist and researcher to explore the unique, symbiotic dynamic that arises between performers and attendees at live events, and then use these findings to draw impactful conclusions about how classical musicians can better engage with audiences. To achieve this, I curated and performed multiple violin recitals over the course of a year and a half and immediately followed each performance by collecting information from the audience about their experience. For this study I employed a mixed methodology of arts-based research combined with qualitative research methods, which I explain in greater detail in Chapter 3.

People often cite various reasons for feeling unmotivated to attend classical music performances, such as the formality of the concert hall[7], the performers' limited spoken communication with the audience[8], and their own perceived inability to comprehend complex, non-verbal music.[9] In order to address this, I varied the types of venues in which I performed, between traditional and nontraditional and formal versus informal, as well as the mode of delivery, for example, in-person versus streamed online. Additionally, for each concert, I prepared spoken commentary about the musical repertoire I performed but varied the content and approach of my verbal communication between the different programs. Repertoire was selected with audience enjoyment in mind, and each subsequent program's repertoire decisions were informed by the research gathered from earlier concerts.

The factors listed above formed the basis of my investigation. Throughout the study, I aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. *How do factors such as programming, venue, mode of communication, and presentation affect an audience member's experience at a classical music concert?*
2. *How can I better understand what makes a concert interesting or enjoyable for people with varying levels of experience with classical music?*
3. *What is the responsibility of the artist to ensure that an audience member is actively engaged at a live classical music performance?*

[7] Stephanie E. Pitts and Christopher P. Spencer, "Loyalty and Longevity in Audience Listening: Investigating Experiences of Attendance at a Chamber Music Festival," *Music and Letters* 89, no. 2 (2008): 229.

[8] Melissa Dobson, New Audiences for Classical Music: The Experiences of Non-attenders at Live Orchestral Concerts," *Journal of New Music Research* 39, no. 2 (2010): 113.

[9] Dobson, "New Audiences," 117.

Admittedly, this study is limited in its scope, as it only investigates the medium of violin and piano concerts, and all data responses have been sourced from participants who voluntarily attended the classical music concerts that were a part of this study, as opposed to attempting to recruit participants who actively declined to attend this type of performance. Nonetheless, it is my hope that the research I have gathered, with a unique narrative that centers on the perspective of the performer, will contribute to a growing body of knowledge surrounding audience engagement and provide insight to other performing classical musicians who wish to better connect with audiences.

1.3 Dissertation Structure

In Chapter 2, I provide a literature review of the current state of research in classical music audience engagement. This chapter summarizes some of the most relevant studies on the topic while also highlighting the gaps in the current research that this doctoral study attempts to address. In Chapter 3, I describe my methodology and provide my rationale for choosing a mixed methods study that combines an arts-based research and qualitative research approach. This chapter describes how I designed the study, recruited participants, and collected data. In Chapter 4, I present my research findings and offer analyses and interpretations of the data. Finally, in Chapter 5, I summarize results and conclusions of this study, and offer suggestions for future research studies in this area.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

2.1 Audience Studies as an Academic Discipline

Evidence-based practice, defined as the appropriate application of research knowledge to practice, has been used since the 1970s in fields such as health and social care to inform and guide professionals in their decisions and approaches.[10] In these fields, it is inappropriate to rely solely on tradition or past experience when important decisions must be made.[11] Contrastingly, classical music is an industry in which tradition is venerated, and decisions about repertoire, composition commissions, performances, and venues have historically been relegated to those in positions of power.[12] As concert attendance wanes, musicians and organizations must reevaluate conventions if they are committed to presenting performances that engage modern audiences. Evidence-based practice can be used to produce a body of knowledge about what appeals to classical music audiences and, in recent years, many researchers have taken up the task of systematically exploring this. The past few decades have seen the emergence of audience studies as a formal academic discipline.[13]

Audience studies can be an overwhelmingly broad topic, and are challenging to research not only due to the great variety in types of performance disciplines that can be examined, but also due to the impermanent nature of audiences.[14] Although Pitts and Price (who both have backgrounds in music) make a compelling case to approach audience studies in an

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[10] Helen Aveyard, *Doing a Literature Review in Health and Social Care: A Practical Guide,* 4th ed. (London: Open University Press, 2019), 8.

[11] Aveyard 9.

[12] Ravagnani, "Listening to Audiences," 17.

[13] Stephanie Pitts, *My Essential Reads: Understanding Audiences* (Leeds*:* Centre for Cultural Value, 2020), 4.

[14] Pitts and Sarah M. Price, "Understanding Audiences, Research Methods and Approaches" in *Understanding Audiences in the Contemporary Arts* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021), 13-14.

interdisciplinary manner across all of the contemporary arts, for the sake of brevity I have elected to focus this literature review primarily on studies which involve classical music[15]. Additionally, my own area of expertise has led me to narrow the focus of my research study to violin recitals, so I have chosen to contain the literature review to studies involving classical music for ease of comparison and analysis in relation to my own findings. From the literature, I have derived several themes and methodologies which inform the nature of inquiry in my own research design.

2.2 Survey of Existing Audience Research in Classical Music

As stated above, the formal study of classical music audiences and their experiences is a relatively new discipline, having only been taken up in earnest by researchers since the early 2000s. Though they vary in approach, these researchers are united by their attempts to provide arts organizations and practitioners with concrete evidence of both what works in terms of engaging classical music audiences, as well as what does not. From the literature on classical music audience engagement, a few overlapping topics have emerged. These include a person's motivation for attendance; such as extrinsic versus intrinsic factors, the concert organizer's presentation choices; such as venue, programming, and communication with the audience, and personal background of the attendees, such as an individual's previous experience with classical music.

Pitts's study from 2005 examines the listeners' experience at the 2003 Music in the Round chamber music festival in Sheffield, U.K., and offers insight into audience experience using the framework of the themes listed above. By gathering data from long-time, recurring festival attendees via questionnaires, interviews, and written responses, Pitts establishes a correlation

[15] Pitts and Price, *"*Understanding Audiences, Research Methods and Approaches," 14.

between social enjoyment and musical enjoyment at these concerts.[16] Many participants cited the unique features of the festival's venue, an intimate "in-the-round" setup surrounding the performers, as an effective means of breaking down barriers between musical and social spaces and facilitating a greater connection between performers and audience members.[17] Interactions between audience members were also significant: since many attendees were longtime supporters of the festival, several reported in their survey responses an "easy companionship" that arose from recognizing other recurring concertgoers which contributed to fostering a sense of community at the festival.[18] Audience reactions to the festival's repertoire brought up excitement at the notion of participation as well as a desire to learn something new. Many reported a positive response to that year's "audience choice" programming initiative,[19] noting that the participatory design of the series made them feel that their presence was "significant."[20] However, others reported that they preferred the in-depth, themed programming of previous years, which allowed them to be "challenged and developed as well as entertained."[21] Spoken introductions given by the musicians were well-received: many attendees commented that these introductions served to deepen their understanding of the musical works while also cultivating a friendly rapport with the performers.[22]

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[16]Pitts, "What Makes an Audience? Investigating the Roles and Experiences of Listeners at a Chamber Music Festival," *Music and Letters* 86, 2 (2005), 2.
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[17] Pitts, "What Makes an Audience?" 4.

[18] Pitts, "What Makes an Audience?" 8.

[19] Pitts, "What Makes an Audience?" 9-10.

[20] Pitts 15.

[21] Pitts 10.

[22] Pitts 10-11.

Pitts herself admits that this study is somewhat limited since the majority of responses were collected from individuals who were enthusiastic, long-term fans of the festival, and thus their responses to various aspects of the event such as the performers and repertoire were disproportionately positive.[23] Interestingly, in Pitts and Spencer's 2006 follow-up study with the same long-term audience members at Music in the Round, many survey respondents observed that while they preferred to attend the more traditional classical music programs presented by the event, they believed the festival's inclusion of other genres such as jazz, folk, and world music was "outside their own engagement" but "necessary to bring in the next generation."[24] Though these two studies mainly source responses from a population that is already actively engaged with classical music, they nonetheless lay the groundwork for examining classical music audiences with a focus on understanding the perceptions and experiences of individuals over demographics.[25]

Unlike Pitts' Music in the Round case study which focuses primarily on long-term classical music enthusiasts, Dobson investigates the experience of non-regular classical concertgoers.[26] While she is not the first researcher to focus on populations less experienced with classical music (Kolb's 2000 study examines the responses of a group of college students who attend a single classical music event for the first time[27]), Dobson's approach is unique in that she tracks the

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[23] Pitts 15.

[24] Pitts and Christopher Spencer, "Loyalty and Longevity in Audience Listening: Investigating Experiences of Attendance at a Chamber Music Festival," *Music and Letters* 89, 2 (2008): 231.
[25] Pitts, "What Makes an Audience?" 17.

[26] Melissa Dobson, "New Audiences for Classical Music: The Experiences of Non-attenders at Live Orchestral Concerts," *Journal of New Music Research,* 39, 2 (2010): 111-124.

[27] Bonita Kolb, "You Call This Fun? Reactions of Young First-time Attendees to a Classical Concert," *MEIEA Journal,* 1, 1 (2000).

responses of infrequent classical music attendees across multiple events. In her 2010 study, nine participants who self-identified as non-attenders of classical music events attended three orchestral concerts at well-known London venues including the Barbican Hall, St. John's Smith Square, and the Southbank Centre.[28] Following the performances, feedback was gathered from the participants via focus groups as well as individual interviews.

Compared to the long-time classical music attendees in Pitts's study, the participants in Dobson's study reported more challenges and adverse reactions to the concerts. This was specifically shaped by their belief that they did not understand classical music, which contributed to a perceived impression of exclusion from the more experienced audience members in attendance.[29] While feeling estranged from the rest of the audience generated negative reactions amongst the study participants to the Barbican Hall and St. John's Smith Square concerts, impressions of inclusivity and participation at the Southbank Centre concert conversely served to enhance their overall enjoyment. This performance, marketed as an informal event in which attendees could move freely through the hall while enjoying food and beverages, featured a significant amount of spoken dialogue, which allowed several of the study participants to feel acknowledged by the performing musicians.[30] This spoken dialogue throughout the concert, which Dobson labels "embedded information," facilitated a deeper understanding of the music for the non-regular concertgoers and fostered greater enjoyment overall at this event in comparison to the other two performances.[31] Intriguingly, the Barbican Hall and St. John's Smith

[28] Dobson, "New Audiences for Classical Music," 114.

[29] Dobson, "New Audiences for Classical Music," 116.

[30] Dobson, "New Audiences for Classical Music," 120.

[31] Dobson 120.

Square performances both featured some spoken introductions, but the study participants did not all respond as positively to these concerts' commentaries or experience the same impression of rapport with the performers.[32] This implies that speaking from the stage at classical music concerts is not in itself enough to ensure listeners' engagement: the artist must take some responsibility for the tone, content, and delivery of their speech in order to successfully connect with audiences.

Roose utilizes a different approach from the qualitative studies of Pitts and Dobson, relying instead on quantitative research methods to sample a significantly broader population of concertgoers across five classical music institutions in Belgium.[33] Though Roose's collection of questionnaire responses from 2,465 study participants does not yield the same nuanced results as Pitts and Dobson's in-depth interactions with concertgoers, the largescale scope of his study enables broader trends to emerge. Roose categorizes his sample population into three distinct groups based on their frequency of classical music concert attendance: 1) passers-by, 2) participants, and 3) inner circle.[34] Amongst the three groups, some key differences in motivation for attendance emerge, indicating that audiences are not uniform. To be sure, all three groups of respondents ranked musical factors (which Roose labels "intrinsic motives"), such as interest in particular repertoire or performers, as the number one reason for why they chose to attend an event.[35] However, while the "inner circle" attendees, who in general were older, more educated, and wealthier, were not significantly motivated to attend concerts for social reasons, the

[32] Dobson 120.

[33] Henk Roose, "Many Voiced or Unisono? An Inquiry into Motives for Attendance and Aesthetic Dispositions of the Audience Attending Classical Concerts," *Acta Sociologica,* 51, 3 (2008): 237-253.
[34] Roose, "Many Voiced or Unisono?" 240-241.

[35] Roose, "Many Voiced or Unisono?" 244-245.

"participants" and especially "passers-by" respondents (who mostly consisted of the youngest study participants) reported that they were much more likely to attend classical concerts if they were invited or saw the event as an opportunity to get together with friends.[36] Roose's study provides a good framework for researchers to explore the intersection of audience members' prior experience, social status, and other demographic information with their motivations for attending classical music performances.

Though Brown and Novak-Leonard's research encompasses audience experience beyond just classical music events, their 2013 paper "Measuring the intrinsic impact of arts attendance" provides a structured methodology for evaluating the effects of artistic performances on individuals, as well as a unique attempt to quantify elusive internal experiences, thus meriting its inclusion in this literature review. This paper summarizes the findings of two quantitative research studies conducted by the authors across a six-year span in which they attempted to gauge the impact that music, theater, and dance performances had on audience members.[37] Over 20,000 participants took part in these largescale studies, completing paper surveys both before and within 24 hours after performances presented by various US arts institutions.[38] In order to address the complexities associated with analyzing a concept as abstract as an individual's experience with aesthetics, Brown and Novak-Leonard tested various "constructs."[39] The first set of constructs explored an audience member's "readiness to receive" an arts experience, taking into account "context" (how much prior knowledge an individual had about the art form they

[36] Roose, "Many Voiced or Unisono?" 245.
[37] Alan S. Brown and Jennifer L. Novak-Leonard, "Measuring the Intrinsic Impacts of Arts Attendance," *Cultural Trends* 22, 3 (2013): 224.

[38] Brown and Novak-Leonard, "Measuring the Intrinsic Impacts of Arts Attendance," 224-225.

[39] Brown and Novak-Leonard, "Measuring the Intrinsic Impacts of Arts Attendance," 226.

were about to view), "relevance" (whether or not they were at ease at the arts event), and "anticipation" (how excited they were in advance of the event).[40] The second set of constructs examined six anticipated "intrinsic impacts" of the arts events, endeavoring to measure audience members' "captivation", "intellectual stimulation", "emotional resonance," "spiritual value," "aesthetic growth," and "social bonding."[41]

Notably, Brown and Novak-Leonard's research was overall more concerned with individual experience than social dynamics at arts events. Although "social bonding" was included in the list of intrinsic impact constructs that the authors set out to test, they ultimately found that measuring the type of unity that an audience shares from experiencing a performance together was too challenging to quantify separately from other cultural and social factors at play.[42] Brown and Novak-Leonard's attention to attendees' internal experiences contrasts with Pitts' and Dobson's interest in participatory elements and social interactions, and provides an alternative narrative to how we may investigate and discuss audience experience.

Brown and Novak-Leonard propose that audience members are eager to share their experiences at performances, and both policymakers and practitioners alike should listen to attendees' perspectives to inform their decision-making.[43] The authors name "anticipation" and "captivation" as the most significant factors in determining whether an individual is impacted by an arts event, and call upon arts organizers to experiment with ways in which they can increase expectation and excitement leading up to performances.[44] Despite the breadth of these studies,

[40] Brown and Novak-Leonard 226.

[41] Brown and Novak-Leonard 227.

[42] Brown and Novak-Leonard 228.

[43] Brown and Novak-Leonard 232.

[44] Brown and Novak-Leonard 229.

Brown and Novak-Leonard warn against over-generalizing findings or comparing results between different types of events, since, like Roose, they argue that both performances and audience members present a range of variables which must be considered in a variety of contexts.[45] Overall, Brown and Novak-Leonard's studies model a structured approach to audience research, which can be used not only by researchers and presenting organizations but also artists who wish to reflexively examine the impact of their work.

In each of the studies listed so far, the researchers endeavor to explore aspects of audience experience at live music events without taking into account the perspectives of the performers. Pitts, Dobson, Gee and Spencer aim to address this in a 2013 paper in which they examine the viewpoints of musicians in a regional symphony orchestra and its audience members. While this study attempts to address a hole in the literature and to some extent succeeds in representing the players' ideas and opinions, I believe it ultimately falls short of drawing meaningful conclusions about the roles and responsibilities a performer or organizer takes on to cultivate a positive audience experience in a concert setting. Some of these shortcomings can be attributed to a low response rate amongst the performing musicians in this study: while close to 200 audience members responded to the study's questionnaires, hardly any musicians completed the surveys, leading the researchers to discard this method and instead use narrative inquiry interviews with a smaller sample of musicians.[46]

More significantly, by choosing to research orchestral concerts, which by design involve decisions such as programming to be made by those in leadership roles such as the conductor, this study recognizes a dichotomy between the performing instrumentalists and concert

[45] Brown and Novak-Leonard 229-230.
[46] Pitts, Melissa Dobson, Kate Gee, and Christopher Spencer, "Views of an Audience: Understanding the Orchestral Concert Experience from Player and Listener's Perspectives," *Participations, Journal of Audience and Reception Studies,* 10, 2 (2013): 71.

organizers but does not actively seek out the perspective of the organization's decision-makers. Consequently, the researchers report the viewpoints of both audience members and instrumentalists on topics such as repertoire but fail to interview the artistic director to learn more about the decision-making process behind the programming and the extent to which audience members' needs were anticipated, an insight from which this study would have benefitted. Since the orchestral musicians in this context do not play an active role in the design of the concert experience, their impressions of the attendees, while interesting, are perhaps less significant than in other musical formats such as recitals or chamber music concerts where the performers are directly responsible for developing a meaningful program with the audience in mind.

As identified by the studies above, audience research in classical music has gained traction in recent years and yielded an emerging picture of factors that contribute to audience experience. Consequently, music organizations have responded by designing community engagement initiatives that attempt to address their audiences' preferences and concerns. Of particular interest, many organizations have begun presenting programs at nontraditional venues in public spaces including cafés, shopping centers, parks, and libraries. Anahi Ravagnani's 2020 dissertation analyzes the extent to which these types of community engagement initiatives succeed in their intended outcomes of inclusivity and participation by examining the Whistle Stop Opera Project of Opera North.

For her research, Ravagnani observed 19 performances of informal and reduced opera productions that aimed to break down barriers to attendance through means such as presenting the singers in everyday street clothes and staging the performances in public spaces such as

cafés, pubs, churches, schools, and museums.[47] Using methods such as interviews, surveys, informal discussions with audience members and autoethnographic reflections on her own experience in the audience, she identifies three themes that continuously emerged at Whistle Stop Opera performances: 1. individual and group experience; 2. project value recognition; and 3. barriers to opera attendance.[48] As in the earlier referenced studies, Ravagnani explores the social dynamics of a live music experience, as well as builds upon the work of Brown and Novak-Leonard to identify a correlation between attendees' emotional responses at the performance and their level of engagement.[49]

Her study is unique in two ways: first, by focusing her research on a performance project that is specifically designed for community engagement, Ravagnani moves beyond merely reporting observations at a conventional classical music concert and attempts to quantify the extent to which audience-minded performance decisions such as experimenting with unorthodox venue and presentation ultimately affect attendees' experience. Secondly, Ravagnani embraces her dual role in this study as both a researcher and audience member to provide a nuanced insight into whether the Whistle Stop Opera ultimately succeeds in its goals of participation and engagement.[50] Because she includes an autoethnographic account of her experience at the performances as a component of her research, she reports honest reactions to the performances that were not always positive, such as feeling uneasy by the very close proximity to the singers in certain venues for fear they would call on her to participate in a way she would find

[47] Anahi Ravagnani, "Listening to Audiences: A Critical Analysis of Participation in Classical Music Education and Outreach Projects" (PhD diss., The University of Leeds, 2020), 102.

[48]Ravagnani, "Listening to Audiences," 92.

[49] Ravagnani, "Listening to Audiences," 92-93.

[50] Ravagnani 98.

embarrassing.[51] Because positive bias in research is a well-documented phenomenon that Ravagnani herself ran into in face-to face interviews with audience members[52], the inclusion of her own impressions of the performance allows for a broader understanding of audience experience at a Whistle Stop Opera performance. Ravagnani's study demonstrates the value of reflecting on one's own experience at a classical music performance to generate knowledge and provides a model for my own research project, in which I use my perspective as the performer to contribute to a greater understanding of audience engagement.

2.3 Basis for Additional Research in Classical Music Audience Studies

The literature surveyed above shows that, although classical music audience engagement research is a moderately new area of study that has only emerged in the last two decades, quite a bit of work has already been undertaken on this subject. Within this body of existing studies, researchers have taken a variety of approaches to attempt to describe and define the complex experience of attending a live musical performance. While some studies have opted for a small-scale, qualitative approach, focusing on the narratives of a select few participants to present a detailed and nuanced account of their unique experiences, other studies have employed a much broader approach, analyzing data gleaned from thousands of participants to track themes and trends. Some studies highlight the social dynamics of a live music event, examining the interplay between audience members as well as between audience members and performers, while others center individuals' emotional and intellectual experiences. Across the existing literature, researchers have shown the diversity of perspectives and expectations that attendees bring to concerts, demonstrating how people from different backgrounds who have different levels of

[51] Ravagnani 99.

[52] Ravagnani 101.

previous experience with classical music react to variables such as a repertoire choice, venue, and verbal presentation.

Although the studies described above demonstrate a wide variety in research design, an overarching theme is that in almost every case, apart from Ravagnani who documents her own perceptions as a member of the Whistle Stop Opera audience, the researcher represents a third party separate from concert attendees, performers, and program organizers. While several of these researchers have industry experience as music educators, their role in each of the studies described above is to function as sociologists drawing objective observations and conclusions. While these studies have undoubtedly produced a body of knowledge that is useful and meaningful, they are limited by the researcher's role as a detached observer. Though these studies aim to represent diverse perspectives through means such as interviews, surveys, and other devices, they fail to represent the nuance and specificity of the performer's perspective in a situation as dynamic as a live performance.

The lack of the performer's viewpoint in the area of audience research forms the basis of my dissertation project, in which I serve as both a researcher and performer to organize creative performances, gather data, and reflect on my process. To do this, I utilize a mixed methods approach combining arts-based research with qualitative research, which I discuss in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

As stated in earlier chapters, this research project strives to investigate audience experience at classical music performances from my dual perspective as both researcher and performer. This issue is of immense personal interest to me – as a professional musician, I am deeply vested in providing valuable and meaningful experiences to others through my performances. This study is also borne of my concern for the future of the classical music industry – Chapter 1 of this thesis illustrates several examples of audience decline in recent years. The literature review in Chapter 2 allows us to understand that audience engagement is a complex, multi-faceted subject influenced by numerous factors and circumstances.

It is precisely because of the complexities involved in analyzing audience experience at classical musical performances that I have embraced an approach of openness, flexibility, and curiosity in my methodology. Declining public interest and concert attendance is an industry-wide concern – if the answer to increasing attendance and engagement at classical music concerts was straight-forward, this problem would have been solved long ago. Furthermore, as a professional musician, I strive to continuously improve my ability to perform well and connect with audiences. A research project which persistently requires me to self-reflect on my strategies and practice forces me to let go of hubris and pre-conceived notions, and provides me with a unique opportunity to grow as an artist through the pursuit of new knowledge.

The above factors have led me to select an approach in which I eschew hypotheses and pre-existing theoretical assumptions in favor of allowing knowledge to emerge from the data. For this reason, I have based my theoretical framework for this thesis on a constructivist grounded theory approach. Developed in the 1960s by sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, grounded theory research calls for the postponement of theoretical structuring, instead allowing

theories to be "discovered" from empirical data.[53] According to Uwe Flick, "the aim is not to reduce complexity by breaking it down into variables: rather, it is to increase complexity by including context."[54] Flick implores researchers using grounded theory to abandon expectations and begin with observation as the starting point of their research.[55] As the data sampling process begins, researchers must continuously analyze and engage with the data being collected in order to make informed decisions about future phases of the research. It is through this close connection between collecting and interpreting data that trends can emerge, and theories can be formulated.[56]

Using constructivist grounded theory as my framework, I crafted research questions for this project that were purposefully open-ended. To reiterate, this project aims to explore the following questions:

1. *How do factors such as programming, venue, mode of communication, and presentation affect an audience member's experience at a classical music concert?*
2. *How can I better understand what makes a concert interesting or enjoyable for people with varying levels of experience with classical music?*
3. *What is the responsibility of the artist to ensure that an audience member is actively engaged at a live classical music performance?*

This chapter of my thesis will provide an overview of the various methodological decisions I made in order to design a research project that effectively tackles these questions. In this chapter,

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[53] Uwe Flick, "Chapter 10: The Qualitative Research Process" in *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*, *5th Edition* (Berlin: Sage Publications, 2014), 170-171.

[54] Flick, "The Qualitative Research Process," 171.

[55] Flick, "The Qualitative Research Process," 175.

[56] Flick, "The Qualitative Research Process," 173.

I will justify my decision for selecting a mixed-methods approach that combines arts-based research with qualitative research. Furthermore, I will provide an overview of the various procedures involved in this research experiment, including the project timeline and description, justification for data collection methods, sampling and participant recruitment strategy, data analysis and techniques, and ethical considerations. Lastly, I will address the limitations involved in this research design.

3.1 A Mixed-Methods Approach: Arts-Based Research and Qualitative Research

At its heart, this research project seeks to construct a narrative from varying vantage points – in this case, the perspective of the audience, my perspective as a researcher, and my perspective as a performing musician – in order to paint a nuanced picture of how audience members receive and engage with classical music at live performances. Unlike in a quantitative study, in which Flick states "the researcher's influence should be excluded as far as possible" in order to "guarantee the objectivity of the study,"[57] the research design for this project relies on my own observations as a core element of the data gathering process. Furthermore, in addition to a written text in which I share my findings, a key feature of this study is my own presentation of multiple live performances, to be received as an equal component of my final doctoral thesis alongside the written portion. In line with the circularity of grounded theory research, these performances simultaneously represent multiple facets of the research process – from serving as initial platforms in which I can experiment, to later iterations that attempt to incorporate my earlier discoveries from the data, while also standing alone as musical events that are intended to be shared publicly and encourage attendees to self-reflect on their own engagement with art.

[57] Uwe Flick, "Chapter 2: Qualitative Research: Why and How to Use It" in *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*, *5th Edition,* (Berlin: Sage Publications, 2014), 40.

Given these intentions, I have chosen to use a combination of qualitative and arts-based research methods for this study. According to Patricia Leahy, in *Method Meets Art: Arts-Based Research Practice,* there are many overlaps in qualitative and arts-based research practices in both their goals and methods.[58] Leahy suggests that both of these methodologies are "holistic and dynamic, involving reflection, description, problem formulation and solving, and the ability to identify and explain intuition and creativity in the research process."[59] Though Leahy, in the first edition of her book, initially considered arts-based research (ABR) to be a subset of qualitative research, she later came to view ABR as its own paradigm, given the number of practitioners and artists who use arts-based approaches outside of the traditional parameters of qualitative research.[60]

Linda Candy describes practice-based research (a term commonly used interchangeably with arts-based research) as an investigation taken on by a practitioner such as an artist, designer, or musician, with the intent of producing new knowledge from both the practice and its outcome.[61] Candy posits that the "creative artifact" that results from this type of inquiry is essential to the understanding and evaluation of the new knowledge obtained.[62] While the creative artifact, which can include examples such as a painting, film, exhibition, or performance, remains central to the research process by offering a perspective that challenges its receiver to view things in

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[58] Patricia Leahy, "Chapter 1: Social Research and the Creative Arts: An Introduction" in *Method Meets Art: Arts-Based Research Practices, 3rd Edition* (New York: Guilford Press, 2020), 18.

[59] Leahy, "Social Research and the Creative Arts: An Introduction," 18.

[60] Leahy, "Social Research and the Creative Arts: An Introduction," 6.

[61] Candy, "Practice Based Research: A Guide," 1.

[62] Candy and Ernest Edmonds, "Practice-Based Research in the Creative Arts: Foundations and Futures from the Front Line," *Leonardo (MIT Press)* 51, 1 (2018): 66.

novel ways, Candy argues that this artifact must be accompanied by an explanatory text in order to truly be deemed research that presents innovative knowledge.[63]

I posit that the "creative artifacts" produced in my thesis project – the series of musical recitals – share equal importance with the accompanying written text analysis of the data. As I stated in Chapter 1, my goal in undertaking this study is to contribute to a growing body of knowledge surrounding audience engagement while simultaneously providing insight to other performing classical musicians who wish to better connect with audiences. In other words, one of my overarching aims in this study is to analyze and identify how classical musicians can improve in their ongoing "practice" of presenting meaningful concerts to the public. It is only by actively engaging in this practice – going through the process of organizing and performing recitals – that I am able to self-reflect on my successes and failures in order to offer insights that may help other musicians reflect on their own practice. Furthermore, designing a research project which involved a public component – in this case, a presentation of musical performances in a variety of communal settings – aligns with my ideals as an academic. This is, according to Leahy, one of the advantages of arts-based research: while many times, traditional research paradigms result in "jargon-filled" articles that are only read by a few people, ABR enables researchers to reach more people and engage in public scholarship.[64] Through this research project, where I called upon audience members to participate actively by sharing their impressions and opinions, I hope that I was able to encourage others to reflect on the value that art adds to their own lives and communities.

[63] Candy and Edmonds, "Practice-Based Research in the Creative Arts," 66.
[64] Leahy, "Chapter 1: Social Research and the Creative Arts: An Introduction" in *Method Meets Art,* 1-2.

Indeed, the act of organizing and performing concerts is a practice I am familiar with as a professional musician, but in order to fulfill the "contribution to new knowledge" that Candy deems integral to true practice-based research, I was required to develop and hone my skills as an academic researcher for this study. To do this, I borrowed from the approaches of sociologists to adopt a combination of methods that typically fall under the paradigm of qualitative research. Flick states that above all, qualitative data concerns text (as compared to quantitative data which prioritizes numbers).[65] Correspondingly, I selected several data collection methods that centered both written and spoken text, in order to fulfill my stated goal of gathering varied and unique perspectives. Surveys with open-ended questions were distributed at each performance, allowing participants to write their responses in text boxes. While most participants returned their surveys to me immediately after the performances, a few opted to send me their completed surveys via mail or email, which afforded them more time to think through their answers, and in the case of the emails, elaborate in more detail than the handwritten responses. In addition to surveys, I utilized semi-structured interviews, a qualitative technique in which researchers ask open-ended questions revolving around a preconceived theme.[66] To do this, I spoke with several audience members following each recital with the intention of having a natural, informal conversation so that I could learn more about their impressions of the performance. Following one of the performances an impromptu focus group[67] session emerged, as the audience members were eager to engage in a discussion with each other about their impressions of that evening's performance

[65] Flick, "Part 1: Framework; Chapter 1: A Guide to this Book" in *An Introduction to Qualitative Research, 5th Edition,* (Berlin: Sage Publications, 2014), 30.
[66] Tegan George, "Semi-Structured Interview: Definition, Guide, and Examples," Scribbr, January 27, 2022 (revised June 22, 2023), https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/semi-structured-interview/.

[67] Flick defines the focus group as an interview with a small group of people on a specific topic. He further elaborates that the interviewer must make every effort to maintain objectivity in their moderation of discussion between the interview participants. (In *An Introduction to Qualitative Research, 5th Edition,* 287).

while I served as a moderator. After the semi-structured interviews and impromptu focus group session, I recorded detailed notes with key takeaways from the discussions for the purpose of subsequent analysis.

In addition to word-based analysis, ethnography – a method used in social sciences that utilizes participant observation as its main source of information[68] – proved to be very influential in my research for this study. According to Hammersley and Atkinson, the task of an ethnographer is to "investigate some aspects of the lives of people, what they do, how they view the situations they face, how they regard one another, and also how they see themselves."[69] Incorporating observational methods that were based on an ethnographic approach allowed me to analyze not only what was said, but also what was not said, by the participants in this study. Before, during, and after the performances, particularly during the moments that I was not actively playing the violin, I tried to take in as much information as possible via observation: including, but not limited to, the physical features of the venue, the body language of the participants, the social dynamics between attendees, and facial expressions and level of eye contact during my verbal addresses to the audience. As this research project incorporated my impressions of audience experience from the vantage point of the performing musician, self-observations inspired by an autoethnographic approach enabled me to analyze my own perspective at each performance. According to Deborah Reed-Danahay, autoethnographies place personal experience within social and cultural contexts.[70] In addition to observing the audience, I

[68]Flick, "Chapter 19: Collecting Data Beyond Talk," in *An Introduction to Qualitative Research, 5th Edition,* (Berlin: Sage Publications, 2014), 345.

[69] Hammersley and Paul Atkinson, "Chapter 1: What is Ethnography?" in *Ethnography: Principles in Practice, Fourth Edition,* (Milton Park Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2019), 8.

[70] Deborah Reed-Danahay, "Anthropologists, Education, and Autoethnography," *Reviews in Anthropology,* 38, 1 (2009), 28.

reflected on my own feelings and thoughts as a performer in the moment, as well as attempted to gauge how well I myself felt connected to the audience in my delivery. As with the semi-structured interviews and focus group session, I recorded notes after each performance on what I had observed in both the audience members and myself.

3.2 Timeline and Procedures

The concerts for this thesis project took place between April 2022 and October 2023, and in total included seven performances. The timing of this longitudinal study was unique in that it coincided with end of the COVID-19 public health emergency phase and transition back into ordinary life. By all accounts, the pandemic had a damaging effect on the American arts sector, necessitating months of concert cancellations and leaving many wondering if would-be audience members would ever feel comfortable returning to in-person events.[71] During the initial, emergency stage of the COVID-19 pandemic, many musicians and concert organizers explored livestream platforms as a means of reaching audience members remotely. The earliest recitals in my research project, in April 2022, occurred during a time when musicians were beginning to cautiously offer "socially distanced" in-person concerts again, though infection rates were still high and live events were vulnerable to postponement and cancellation. As a result, two of my earliest performances were performed masked for small audiences, and one was performed via livestream with no in-person audience members present. It had been my hope since beginning my doctoral studies in 2019 to concentrate my dissertation research on audience engagement, and the onset of the pandemic in 2020 initially seemed to be an insurmountable obstacle in my pursuit of this research. However, the timing of when I began work on my thesis in relation to

[71] Randy Cohen, "COVID-19's Pandemic's Impact on The Arts: Research Update May 12, 2022," *National Arts Administration and Policy Publications Database*, https://www.americansforthearts.org/node/103614. Accessed August 26, 2023.

the end of the emergency phase of the pandemic in fact turned out to be beneficial, since this was a time when artists and arts-supporters were having widespread discussions about the relevance of offering live musical performances in-person.

This research project additionally coincided with a major transition in my personal life. When the project began in April 2022, I was living on the East Coast, splitting my time between New York City and Maryland. Consequently, the first three recitals in the study took place in Washington D.C. and Maryland. Later that spring, I accepted a faculty position at Kansas State University and relocated to the Midwest that summer. With permission from my doctoral advisor, each of the subsequent recitals after summer 2022 were performed in Kansas. For the purpose of this research, I do not consider the geographical location change of the performances to create any significant shifts in demographics of the audience members, since all attendees share a common cultural background of living within the United States. I simply offer this explanation as context for why the location of the performances changed midway through the study.

This research project was organized into three phases, featuring three different recital programs that were each repeated in different venues and settings, including a formal concert series, schools, a retirement community, a café, a church, and a private house concert. In the following section, I describe the procedures for each program, including how I selected the location and recruited audience members to attend and participate, a description of each performance, and my rationale for how I structured each phase of the study.

3.2.1 Recital Program 1

As stated earlier in this chapter, I have selected constructivist grounded theory as the framework which guides my research, which is founded on the belief that theories should emerge directly from the data rather than from preexisting hypothesis. While I have strived as much as possible to maintain objectivity in the process, I ultimately found it nearly impossible to fully separate my "musician self" from my "researcher self" in the context of planning and executing concerts that I hoped would be well-received by audiences. Consequently, I brought to this project many of my beliefs and values from the culmination of my previous experience as a performing violinist. For instance, in each recital I verbally addressed the audience throughout the performance, since this to me was the starting point from which I could hope to connect with people in a meaningful way. I mention this because, while speaking to the audience is becoming increasingly common, it oftentimes is not a given in a classical music concert. Indeed, I did vary my mode of communication from performance to performance: for instance, sometimes adopting more of a lecture-style while other times opting for a more interactive conversation with audience members. However, I ultimately chose not to perform any recitals in which I did not verbally address the audience at all.

Additionally, my preexisting experience led me to choose musical works that were united by a common theme for the first recital program of the research project. Since themed programming is a popular avenue that many artists and organizers opt to take as an attempt to attract and better engage with audiences, I wanted to test the extent to which this type of programming affected a person's experience at a concert. My first recital program featured all works which were originally premiered by women violinists, a theme which I used as a

launching point to contextualize the history and circumstances surrounding each work in my verbal addresses to the audience. This recital program featured the following pieces:

- *Romance* for Violin and Piano, Op. 23 by Amy Beach (premiered by Maud Powell)
- *Deep River* by Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, arranged for Violin and Piano by Maud Powell (premiered by Maud Powell)
- *The Lark Ascending* by Ralph Vaughan Williams (premiered by Marie Hall)
- *Wellen* by Rizgar Ismael (written for me, and premiered by me)
- *Violin Sonata No. 1 in A major* by Gabriel Fauré (premiered by Marie Tayau)

I performed this program three times: at the Arts Club of Washington noon recital series, a private house concert in Washington D.C., and livestreamed online from University of Maryland with no live audience attending in-person. The following sections offer detailed descriptions of each performance of Recital Program 1.

3.2.1a The Arts Club of Washington

The first of my recitals for this project, I performed a 30-minute subset of Recital Program 1 on April 15, 2022, as part of the Arts Club of Washington's Friday Noon Concert series in Northwest Washington D.C. A longstanding tradition at the Arts Club, this series is free and open to the public, with a catered lunch provided immediately after the performance for club members and the performers.

Most of the audience members for this performance were members of the club, who had heard about the performance via the Arts Club's website and publicity materials. A few attendees had been personally invited by me, and some had been personally invited by members of the club. In total, approximately 40 audience members attended this performance. Most attendees were senior citizens, though a handful of younger adults were in attendance. As the concert took

place during the school day, no school-age children were in attendance. Some audience members attended in groups or with their spouses, while others came alone. Based on my observations that day, most audience members seemed at ease at the event, as most were regular attendees at this concert series and were on familiar terms with others who were there that day. Club members who stayed for the lunch were especially eager to talk with me afterwards and share their thoughts on the performance. Notably, two of my personal invites who were not members of the club seemed somewhat less at ease – neither of these people were regular attenders of classical music performances, and both were much younger than most of the other attendees. Neither of these attendees stayed for the lunch or filled out the paper survey.

Prior to the performance, a statement explaining the research project was included in all publicity materials, indicating that participation was voluntary and that attendees may be asked questions about their background in classical music and their reaction to various aspects of the concert, including musical selections, venue, presentation, and length of pieces. Additionally, I made a verbal announcement at the beginning of the performance summarizing the research project and inviting people to participate. Paper surveys were left on each audience member's seat before the performance began, and listed the following questions:

1. What, if any, is your previous experience with classical music/classical music concert attendance?
2. What is your age?
3. To what extent did the venue/event location affect your experience at this concert?
4. To what extent did the performer's verbal communication or speaking affect your experience at this event?
5. Which musical selection(s) did you enjoy the most, and why?
6. Which musical selection(s) did you enjoy the least, and why?

7. Overall, to what extent were you interested or engaged throughout this performance? Were certain portions of the event more engaging than others? If so, why?
8. Would you recommend this type of event to a friend?
9. Please provide any additional feedback or commentary you wish to include in your response.

From the set of attendees for this concert, I received 11 written survey responses following the performance. Additionally, I was able to talk to several more people at the catered lunch afterwards. While I had several informal conversations at the lunch, five of these evolved into semi-structured interviews. Ultimately, I decided not to audio or video record these conversations, instead using memory recall to record written notes later that day after I had left the venue.

Apart from the communal lunch following the performance, this concert otherwise resembled a traditional classical music recital: the program was performed in a hall from a stage with stage lighting, though the house lights were not dimmed during the performance, and I was able to see audience members' faces and make eye contact during the speaking portions of the program. Most survey responders indicated that they were experienced in attending classical music performances, and as such, the audience behaved as classical music audiences traditionally do, staying quiet throughout the performance and clapping after each piece. Throughout the performance, I spoke to the audience about the history and context of each piece, emphasizing the theme of how each work had been premiered by a female violinist and the changing significance of what that meant over time. I used notes that I had prepared earlier for my speaking points and delivered this information lecture-style[72]. This concert did not involve any back-and-forth dialogue with the audience during the performance.

[72] See Appendix 1.

3.2.1b Private House Recital in Washington D.C.

The second performance of Recital Program 1 took place on April 30th, 2022, at the home of Ted Goldman in the Columbia Heights neighborhood of Washington D.C. For this concert, I performed the full 60-minute program with an intermission. This concert was part of an informal series which Ted and his wife had run for several years, though this was the first concert they hosted after the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, only 16 people attended this performance, which Ted reported was a smaller crowd than in previous years. Nonetheless, this crowd represented a wider age-range than the audience at the Arts Club Washington performance, spanning from ages 10 to 87. This group was also more diverse with their previous level of experience with classical music: while some were complete novices, others were avid appreciators, and others still were professionals, including a conductor and a retired violinist. Most attendees had been invited directly by Ted and were regular audience members at his house concert series prior to the pandemic. However, some people – in particular, those who indicated that they had little to no previous experience in attending classical music concert – were first-time attenders who had been invited along by their friends and neighbors. As with the Arts Club of Washington event, the email invitation to this house concert included a note summarizing the nature of the research project.

In comparison to the Arts Club of Washington, this performance was markedly less formal. Though this concert took place in a large townhouse with ample space for a grand piano and plenty of seating, the atmosphere still felt more relaxed since it was a private home. Furniture, including chairs and couches, had been gathered from other rooms in the house and brought to the performance area for audience members to sit on, and soft floor and table lamps lit the space so that I was able to see the audience members throughout the performance. Ted and

his wife served wine and snacks for audience members to enjoy before the performance and during the intermission, so that the event felt like a house party. A long, purple sash was hung from a high beam in the center of the performance space, which Ted's school-age daughter, who had been taking trapeze lessons, used to give a pre-show aerial performance. Both the pet dog and cat were present for the concert, moving freely between the audience and performers throughout the evening. While audience members were generally quiet during the performance, they nonetheless felt comfortable smiling, nodding, and making soft but audible noises (i.e., "ah") during the musical moments that moved them.

Of the 16 concert attendees, I received 5 completed written surveys following the performance – 3 were handwritten, and 2 were emailed to me the following day. Notably, the most significant data for this recital was gathered from an impromptu focus group session that emerged naturally at the end of the performance. Due to the small size of the gathered group, my spoken delivery, though prepared ahead of time, took on a conversational tone throughout the concert. As a result, audience members felt empowered to interact with me during the spoken portions, asking questions they had about the works, their history, including information about the premiering violinists, and the inspiration behind the pieces. The social dynamic that emerged, in which the attending audience members actively participated in conversations throughout the event, resulted in the attendees inspiring each other's thoughts and questions, feeding off one another's thoughts to propel the discussion forward. At the end of the performance, the audience members expressed curiosity about the research I was gathering, which led to a fifteen-minute discussion about what it means to experience live classical music. In this conversation, audience members reflected together on their own perceptions and experiences and asked each other questions, allowing me to serve as a moderator. Since this focus group type discussion emerged

organically, I did not take audio recordings, instead using memory recall to record detailed notes that night after I got home.

3.2.1c Livestream from the University of Maryland

The third performance of Recital Program 1 took place on May 16th, 2022, in the Gildenhorn Recital Hall at the University of Maryland. Many of the original planned details for this performance were changed at the last minute due to a COVID-19 outbreak in the UMD School of Music community. This recital was originally scheduled for May 10th in Ulrich Recital Hall at the University of Maryland, but my collaborative pianist tested positive for COVID the morning of the performance, necessitating the postponement of the concert to the following week, in a different hall using a different pianist. Due to many cases of COVID in the UMD School of Music community that week, it was deemed safest to offer this performance only in a livestream broadcast format, with no live audience members in attendance. In consultation with my doctoral advisor, I decided that a livestream only performance was in fact a good opportunity to explore a concert presentation format that had risen in popularity during the pandemic.

In total, approximately 20 people tuned in to watch this recital, though the number fluctuated up and down as people joined and exited the performance stream sporadically. The ages for this set of attendees ranged from 24 to 64, according to the survey responses I received. Most of this concert's attendees had been invited personally by me and included many of my own contacts. As a result, many of the attendees for this livestream performance were professional musicians, though some non-musicians, including a computer science professor from UMD, a visual artist, and a retired journalist, were in attendance.

Of the attendees for this program, I received back 10 written survey responses. The surveys for this online performance were distributed via a Google Forms link in the email invitation, as well as again in the chat feature during the livestream. No spoken interviews were conducted following this performance.

In some ways, this concert resembled a traditional recital, taking place in a formal hall with performance lighting. In other ways it felt quite different, due to the fact that I was performing to a completely empty hall. Most jarringly, silence followed each piece instead of applause, and I had to bow somewhat awkwardly after each piece to "acknowledge" an audience I could not see. Spoken portions were delivered lecture-style, and I had no way of interacting directly with audience members or even know who or how many people I was addressing. Following this performance, I recorded written notes about my own perceptions and experience in order to incorporate an autoethnographic perspective. From a performer's perspective, the lack of interaction with a live audience felt very strange and somewhat uncomfortable. Consequently, I found it more challenging to focus and communicate effectively than in concerts with in-person audiences.

Following the three performances of Recital Program 1, I engaged in an initial round of coding, a data analysis technique used in grounded theory research to assign segments of data a label to help sort and categorize gathered information.[73] I then used my preliminary findings from this data set to formulate the second recital program for this research project.

[73] Flick, "An Introduction to Qualitative Research," 239.

3.2.2 Recital Program 2

From the initial set of data gathered during Recital Program 1, it became clear that while the audience members' response to the verbal communication provided about each musical work was largely positive, they were not particularly affected by the themed musical approach that I took in programming that recital. Furthermore, one respondent mentioned that they would have appreciated more of my own personal take on the music being performed, as opposed to just historical information. Based on this feedback, I took a different approach in programming Recital Program 2, choosing instead to include works that both resonated with me personally and seemed to complement each other through a diversity of genre and style. This recital program featured the following pieces:

- *Sonata No. 1 in D Major for Violin and Piano, Op. 12* by Ludwig van Beethoven
- *Fantasia No. 7 in E-flat Major* by Georg Philipp Telemann
- *Rhapsody No. 1* by Jessie Montgomery
- *Sonata in G minor for Violin and Piano* by Claude Debussy
- *Scherzo from "F-A-E" Sonata* by Johannes Brahms

The three performances in Recital Program 1 elicited some interesting responses from the audience members that were specific to the venues and presentation formats of the concerts. For this reason, I wanted to further explore the dynamic of offering live performances in different types of spaces, as well as further explore notions of community. I performed Recital Program 2 in two venues: the Meadowlark Retirement Community and at Kansas State University's All Faiths Chapel.

3.2.2a Meadowlark Hills Retirement Community Performance

The first performance of Recital Program 2 took place on September 24, 2022, at the Meadowlark Hills Retirement Community in Manhattan, Kansas. While not a traditional concert venue, the Meadowlark organization frequently hosts special events for its residents, including musical performances, workshops, classes, and guest speakers. This recital was a part of their special events series and was attended exclusively by residents of the retirement center. The event was advertised to the residents via internal communications including newsletters and emails. In all, approximately 30 people attended this event. Due to the concert location, every attendee of this performance was a senior citizen, ranging in age from approximately 70 to 90. Since the concert attendees were residents of the performance location, they all seemed to be at ease at this performance, displaying comfort and familiarity with both the venue site and with each other.

Overall, this recital was rather informal in nature. The performance took place on a Saturday afternoon in a large multi-functional recreation room with a piano. There was no special stage lighting, only natural light coming in from the windows, and the acoustics were somewhat muffled by the carpeted floor. The audience members were seated very close to the performance area, so I could clearly see their faces throughout the performance and make eye contact with them while I was making verbal addresses between pieces. Just as I did for the first recital program, I spoke throughout this performance. While I did provide some historical context about the works, I prioritized speaking more about musical elements of the works, descriptions of what the attendees should listen for, and my personal connections to the pieces[74].

[74] See Appendix 2.

Of the approximately 30 attendees, 5 returned paper surveys to me at the completion of the concert. While many concertgoers were eager to talk to me at the conclusion of the performance, most were more interested in getting to know me personally than to share their impressions of the concert experience; thus, I only recorded notes for one semi-structured interview following this performance, relying instead more heavily on notes recorded from my own observations from that day. Despite this, the concertgoers overall seemed to enjoy themselves. All of the participants who responded to the survey questions indicated that they had extensive experience as audience members at classical music performances, and as such, the audience generally behaved as traditionally expected to at this type of performance – for instance, holding applause between movements until the conclusion of the piece and staying quiet throughout the performance – despite the informal nature of the event.

3.2.2b Faculty Recital at Kansas State University

The second performance of Recital Program 2 took place on September 27, 2022, in Kansas State University's All Faiths Chapel, a recital hall venue through the School of Music, Theatre, and Dance. This concert also served as my first faculty recital at KSU, and thus was attended by many KSU professors and music students, as well as some members of the community. The audience members had primarily heard about the performance either through personal invite by me or through the various social media advertisements and calendar listings created by the KSU School of Music. In total, approximately 35 people attended this recital, indicating from their survey responses that they ranged in age from 6 to 52. Compared to the other recitals in this research project, this concert's audience members were generally much younger, with about half of the attendees being college students at the university.

In comparison to the recital at Meadowlark Hills Retirement Community, this recital was overall more formal. The concert took place in the evening in a designated concert hall space and included traditions common in classical music such as formal dress worn by the performers. Except for some coughing, the audience generally remained silent during the performance, and applauded between movements. As with the performance at Meadowlark, I spoke to the audience about each of the works on the program, again focusing my speech on addressing musical elements that the audience should listen for, as well as sharing my personal feelings about the pieces.

Participation in the study was remarkably good at this concert – of the approximately 35 audience members in attendance, 19 completed paper surveys about their experience. Following the concert, one of my colleagues at KSU who had been in attendance invited me to discuss my research with his seminar "Attending Live Performances." During the conversation I had with his class, all of whom were college undergraduates who were not regular attendees of classical music performances, my colleague shared some of his thoughts about my recital and I had an impromptu focus group session with the students about their perceptions of classical music, all of which I audio recorded.

Just as I did after Recital Program 1, I engaged in another round of coding analysis of the data I collected from the concerts in Recital Program 2, as well as from the impromptu discussion session with the university seminar students. I used the findings from my second round of analysis to influence my procedures for Recital Program 3.

3.2.3 Recital Program 3

As with Recital Program 2, I chose repertoire for Recital Program 3 that I was excited to perform and felt offered musical variety, without adhering to a specific program theme. For Recital 3, I performed the following works:

- *Sonata for Piano and Violin No. 21 in E minor, K. 304/300c* by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
- *Sonata Movement in G Major for Violin and Piano* by Rebecca Clarke
- *Nocturne for Violin and Piano* by Lili Boulanger
- *Histoire du Tango* by Astor Piazzolla
- *Appalachian Waltz* by Mark O'Connor

As with the earlier recitals, I was interested in exploring the effect the performance environment had on audience members' social experience and ability to engage with the music. For this recital program, I selected two public venues in the Manhattan, KS community: a coffee shop and a church.

3.2.3a Flight Crew Coffee Shop

This casual afternoon performance took place on October 17, 2023, at Flight Crew Coffee Shop in downtown Manhattan, KS. In total, about 16 people attended, most of whom had been invited personally by me or by acquaintances of mine. Of the recitals in this project, this audience by far skewed the youngest. While the age range of attendees was 18 to 49, most were college-aged students who attended Kansas State University nearby. The audience members at this performance had mixed experience with classical music – some were music students at the university, others were amateurs, and a few were novices. In total, I received 13 survey responses following this performance.

The performance environment was distinctively informal, with drinks being made in the background by a noisy espresso machine and my pianist performing on a portable electric keyboard since the venue did not have a piano. The café was located on a busy downtown street with lots of foot traffic, and in an effort to welcome more people into the performance, we decided to leave the front door of the café open. From my position close to the door, I observed more than once curious bystanders pause outside to look inside the café and listen for a moment, but ultimately choose not to walk inside. The demeanor of these people appeared somewhat hesitant, as if they were unsure if the event was open to the public.

As with the other recitals in this study, I provided spoken introductions about the works before performing the music. I performed this recital without an intermission.

3.2.3b KSU Faculty Recital at First Presbyterian Church

This performance took place in the evening on October 26, 2023, at the First Presbyterian Church in downtown Manhattan, KS. In total, about 60 people attended. While some attendees had been personally invited by me, many people came because they saw the posters I hung around town advertising the performance or saw advertisements and events listings I had posted online through various platforms at Kansas State University.

The age range of audience members at this performance was 9 to 75, with a fairly even divide between young, middle-aged, and elderly adults. The crowd was also rather evenly divided in terms of previous experience with classical music, and consisted of a mix of curious novices, amateurs and school-aged violin students from the community, moderate to frequent concert attenders, and my colleagues who came to support me since this performance also served as my faculty recital at the university. In total, I received 18 written surveys following the performance.

The environment at this recital was more formal than the coffee shop performance. The concert took place in small but beautiful church, and my pianist and I wore formal attire. As with all the other recitals, I verbally addressed the audience before performing each piece. As with the speaking for Recital Program 2, the content of this consisted of a mix of historical background about the works and my own experiences and feelings. Prior to performing the Rebecca Clarke sonata, I invited my predecessor at the university, Cora Cooper, who is a Clarke scholar and the publisher of the sonata, to the stage for a brief interview about the composer and piece.[75]

3.3 Data Analysis

According, to Uwe Flick, grounded theory methodology puts a strong emphasis on two steps – sampling and analyzing data.[76] As stated earlier in this chapter, grounded theory methodology calls for a cyclical approach between data collection and analysis, so that each subsequent phase of research is influenced by the information generated in earlier stages. To engage with the data I collected, I employed the procedure of "coding," which Johnny Saldaña defines as the process of assigning words or short phrases to portions of language or visual-based data to generate constructs, assign meaning, and detect patterns in the data.[77] Using this approach, I was able to identify some key themes that emerged from the data which I discuss in Chapter 4.

3.4 Ethical considerations

On March 7th, 2022, a proposal for this study was submitted to the University of Maryland Institutional Review Board (IRB), to confirm its compliance with the university's policies to

[75] See Appendix 3.
[76] Flick "Part 6: Qualitative Data Analysis" in *An Introduction to Qualitative Research,* 265.

[77] Johnny Saldaña, "Chapter 1: An Introduction to Codes and Coding" in *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers, Third Edition* (London, Sage Publications, 2016): 4.

protect the rights and welfare of human subjects involved with research. Based on the submitted proposal, the board issued a determination of "Exempt from IRB Review" for this project, in accordance with federally defined protocols. This determination of Exempt status indicated that I was free to move forward with research for this study without ongoing IRB oversight. A copy of the Exempt letter from the UMD IRB office is included in the appendix section of this thesis.

While this study's Exempt determination meant that it was unlikely to inflict any harm on participants, I nonetheless took measures to protect the rights of those involved and ensure transparency in the process. Before each performance, I read a verbal statement describing the nature and procedures of the study and informed the attendees that their participation was voluntary. At the first recital, I included a consent form alongside the paper surveys and requested that each participant turn in a signed form with their completed survey. However, I ultimately determined this to be too cumbersome, realizing that the added inconvenience of completing a consent form might serve as a barrier for potential participants who were already being asked to take part in a research study at an arts event. After the first recital, I did not ask participants to fill out a consent form, instead relying on their implied consent based on the information I provided both verbally during the performance and written at the top of the survey.

3.5 Study Limitations

While this study endeavors to be thorough, it is not exhaustive, and thus makes certain sacrifices in its approach. First and foremost, this study focuses on the responses of participants who voluntarily attended a classical musical performance, and thus does not capture the views of those who actively choose to avoid such events. While gaining the perspective of this population would undoubtedly provide valuable insight, seeking out this viewpoint falls beyond what I am able to do for the scope of this project, and is best left to another research study entirely.

Additionally, many of the participants in this study were personal contacts of mine, which introduced the risk of bias. To mitigate this risk, I ensured that the written surveys were anonymous in order to protect individuals' identities as much as possible.

Secondly, many of the semi-structured interviews and informal conversations that comprise a portion of the data collected for this study were not audio recorded, and thus rely on memory recall from when I wrote memos following each event. In these cases, I made the conscious decision in the moment not to audio record. This is because I had to balance my dual roles of performer and researcher, and I felt that interrupting a conversation that emerged organically between an enthusiastic audience member and performer following the concert would feel awkward and unnatural, and in fact impede audience enjoyment at the event. While this meant that many of the notes I took following these conversations were paraphrased instead of transcribed verbatim, my decision to rely on memory recall is supported in Flick's manual, who acknowledges that many researchers share in my skepticism about the naturalness of recordings and advises researchers to "critically reflect on how much and how comprehensively they should audio and video record the situations they study."[78]

This chapter examined my methodological approach and provided a detailed summary of each phase of research collection. Additionally, it outlined my approach to data analysis, highlighted the ethical considerations of this study, and acknowledged some of its limitations. In Chapter 4, I present a detailed analysis of my findings.

[78] Uwe Flick, "Chapter 24, Transcription and Data Management," in *An Introduction to Qualitative Research,* 257.

Chapter 4 – Analysis

This chapter presents and analyzes the results of the data collected throughout this research project. To recapitulate, the aim of this study was to explore audience engagement at classical music concerts through a series of seven violin and piano recitals that I organized and performed over the course of a year and a half, from April 2022 to October 2023. These recitals took place in a variety of venues, featured a diverse range of repertoire, and experimented with different types of verbal communication and content. Following each performance, audience members were encouraged to complete a written survey featuring questions about their experience at the performance, as well as to verbally share their thoughts with me. Through this investigation, I hoped to be able to answer the following research questions:

1. *How do factors such as programming, venue, mode of communication, and presentation affect an audience member's experience at a classical music concert?*
2. *How can I better understand what makes a concert interesting or enjoyable for people with varying levels of experience with classical music?*
3. *What is the responsibility of the artist to ensure that an audience member is actively engaged at a live classical music performance?*

In total, 81 participants completed written surveys across the seven recitals in this project. Their ages spanned from the very young (six years old) to the elderly (91 years old). Their previous experience with classical music and concert attendance also varied widely: a small portion (approximately 10%) of the participants indicated that they were complete novices to classical music concert attendance, a much larger group indicated that they attended classical music performances occasionally to moderately and/or were amateur musicians themselves (roughly 40% of the study participants), and an even larger group (approximately 50% of participants)

indicated that they were experienced attenders and appreciators of classical music, with some of these participants being pre-professional college students studying music (14 participants) or classical music industry professionals (7 participants).

Using constructivist grounded theory (described in Chapter 3) as a framework, the data collected for this study allowed the following theory to emerge: *Audience members engage better with classical music performances when conditions enable welcoming and inclusive environments.* This theory supports the results of Melissa Dobson's 2010 paper "New Audiences for Classical Music: The Experiences of Non-attenders at Live Orchestral Concerts" in which she found that feelings of inclusion and participation were predictors of audience enjoyment (see Chapter 2). While Dobson's study sourced data from just nine participants who were all classical music novices, this doctoral research study incorporated feedback from over 80 participants of varying backgrounds with classical music. The data from this study, considered alongside the results from Dobson's earlier study, provide a basis for a tentative theory to emerge showing a correlation between inclusivity and improved audience engagement.

For audience members in this study who had been previously initiated into the world of classical music, particularly industry professionals and music students, it was easy to engage with the performances. The survey responses from these individuals demonstrated a background knowledge of classical music rituals and repertoire, an ability to listen discerningly to the music being presented, and an overall level of comfort and ease with the experience. Audience members who indicated that they were amateur musicians (for instance, had studied an instrument as a child or participated in a community choir) also self-identified as having been previously initiated into classical music, and generally demonstrated a strong level of comfort and enjoyment at the concerts. Tellingly, the novices repeatedly referenced in their written

responses the fact that they were previously uninitiated to classical music, and yet were able to effectively engage with the experience when conditions were set to invite them in. This was true across several of the factors that I investigated in this study, including venue choice, verbal contextualization of the repertoire, and other participatory elements.

In the following sections, I present and discuss audience members' reactions to various elements of the recitals, including the venues, programming, and verbal communication. Following this discussion, I use the evidence collected in this research study to examine the role and responsibility of the performer in ensuring that audience members are actively engaged at classical music performances.

4.1 The Effect of the Venue on the Concert Experience

Due to the scope of this project and the smaller-scale nature of recitals in comparison to other types of music performances, the venues I selected for this study were on the smaller side, intended to seat less than 100 people for each concert. Consequently, the word that most frequently came up among study participants when prompted to comment on the venue was "intimate." The participants overwhelmingly saw this as a positive feature of the performances: an attendee at the house concert described the salon-feel of the venue as "intimate and powerful, with no distractions from enjoying the music," and an audience member at the Arts Club of Washington performance commented on the "terrific, intimate, musical experience." An attendee at the Meadowlark Retirement Community also noted the "excellent, small group setting," which they described as "quiet with no distractions, allow[ing] for total enjoyment." Interestingly, while audience members appeared to agree about the positive nature of intimate spaces, they did not always agree on what constituted an intimate venue. At the All Faiths Chapel performance, a venue that can seat up to 500 people but had significantly less attendees that evening, one study

participant commented "this is a familiar, intimate venue" while another wrote "I might have liked an intimate venue more." Using the Oxford definitions of "intimate" – "creating a friendly atmosphere," "involving a very close connection," "closeness," and a "cozy atmosphere"[79] – it can be inferred that the study participants' perception of intimate venues as a desirable feature of the recitals reveals their belief that the spaces used for these performances contributed to their sense of belonging at the events.

Along similar lines, the notion of "familiarity" frequently appeared in the participants' survey responses. An attendee at the All Faiths Chapel performance described the space's effect on their overall experience as "positive", due to it being a "known and comfortable space." An attendee at the Arts Club Washington performance commented that they "love coming to events here, as a member of the Club," and a family member who resided at the home of the house concert noted that the venue made them feel "very comfortable." In these instances, each respondent belonged to the community to which the venue was a part of, and it can be inferred from their positive survey responses that the familiarity of the venue enabled them to feel welcome and at ease at the performances.

In some cases, physical factors associated with the venues, such as visual and auditory elements, affected the extent to which audience members could engage with the performance. An Arts Club Washington attendee noted "I always try to sit up front for both sight and sound enhancement," and attendees at the house concert commented in the impromptu discussion session after the performance that they enjoyed being able to sit so close to the performers that they could "see their fingers" moving on the instruments. These types of responses imply that attendees view close proximity to the performers as a means of strengthening their ability to

[79] Oxfordlanguages.com

participate in and engage with the experience. Contrastingly, when presentation conditions inhibited sight and sound, audience members saw this as a detriment to their experience and reported decreased engagement. A viewer of the livestream performance noted "the performer was very tiny and occupied less than 5% of the screen space and I could barely make out any details of the movements and facial expressions. So, after some time, I found myself distracted and started to do work as I had the performance as a [sic] background music." Other viewers of the livestream performance commented that "having one static camera was a negative," and "nothing beats being in the room and feeling the music as one can in a great acoustical space." While it could be argued that an audience member at a larger venue (such as a symphony concert hall) might not be able to see much more than the view afforded of the performers by the livestream, the visual disadvantages noted in the surveys by the participants combined with the lack of shared physical and acoustical space imply that the conditions imposed by a streamed performance promoted disengagement and inability to participate as fully in the experience.

Interestingly, while the study participants seemed to largely agree that different types of venues could contribute to positive or negative concert experiences, the degree of formality at each venue did not seem to have a strong bearing on overall audience enjoyment. This surprised me, and counters the current popular notion in the classical music industry that less formal venues help to initiate newcomers to classical music. At the Arts Club Washington, which I considered to be one of the more formal and traditional venues for this project, a survey respondent who reported "very little" previous experience with classical music described the event as "enjoyable in every way" and did not mention any discomfort at the formality of the setting. At All Faiths Chapel, another space that I considered to be one of my more formal venues, an attendee who reported that they "rarely attend concerts" commented that they enjoyed

the atmosphere of the space and said that they were so engaged with the "emotionally moving music" that they had "tears in [their] eyes." Anecdotal comments such as these should not disproportionately influence the data analysis, but they nonetheless suggest that people who have been previously uninitiated into the world of classical music are able to engage thoroughly and enjoy themselves in formal and traditional concert settings.

In some cases, the undoing of concert traditions and rituals by moving the performances into informal spaces was detrimental to audience engagement. At the Flight Crew Coffee performance, I anticipated that the informal, relaxed space would be appealing to attendees who might be put off by some of the traditional rituals associated with classical music. Indeed, some respondents commented that the space created a "welcoming atmosphere for non-musicians to join in" and that the event allowed people to "interact with [classical music] in their everyday life." However, many other respondents described various ways the informal setting challenged their ability to engage with the music. For instance, one attendee said it was "more difficult to focus due to outside distractions," and another said they did not "feel the need to sit and listen to the music or watch intently." Another person noted that because of the informal space, they "didn't know to what degree it was okay to talk," and another respondent commented on "lots of extra noise" in the background. While many respondents found the experience of attending a classical music performance in the informal setting of a café to be fun, they overall seemed to engage less thoroughly with the music than in other types of spaces.

More telling about audience experience than the degree to which a venue was formal or informal was the degree to which attendees perceived a space to be inclusive. Interestingly, spaces were not uniformly viewed as either inclusive or exclusive. In the case of Flight Crew Coffee, some of the respondents described the space as "accessible," "an inclusive environment"

and “welcoming,” factors that they pointed to as reasons they enjoyed the event. On the other hand, some viewers referenced the fact that with the door of the café left open during the performance in an attempt to draw in more people, they observed many people “stop in their tracks” on the street, but then hesitate and ultimately choose not to walk in. From my own observation as well as from observations noted in the surveys, these people seemed to hesitate because they appeared nervous or apprehensive about walking into the event, even with the door open. One attendee even noted in their survey response that they “wish[ed] people were more courageous about coming in.” This was surprising to me, because I had hypothesized that the space would feel inclusive and welcoming by virtue of being a non-traditional performance venue and casual public space. While the scope of this study does not examine the reasons that people choose to attend or not attend concerts, this is nonetheless interesting in that it reveals that classical music can still come across as exclusionary even in casual environments, an observation that some of the audience members in attendance picked up on.

In the case of the First Presbyterian Church performance, audience members were split as to whether they viewed the space as inclusive or exclusive. While this was one of the more traditional types of spaces I performed at, I had anticipated this space to be perceived as inclusive due to its easily accessible location (located centrally in town) and its communal function as a church. Indeed, several attendees made positive remarks about the venue, describing it as “cozy, but with good acoustics,” a “nice aesthetic and acoustics,” a “beautiful church with good sound,” a “great site for the venue,” and that “it feels good to listen to classical music in such a space.” Contrastingly, other attendees expressed unease at the church setting of the venue. One participant wrote “the venue has a good sound quality, but church in general brings up uncomfortable feelings unrelated to the music.” Another person wrote “not being

religious, the church setting does add an uncomfortable space to listen," another wrote "because I am not religious, it deters me from coming to anything in a church," and another person remarked "I'm assuming churches are a typical place to play, but for me it takes away some of the peace that you immerse yourself in when listening. I would prefer a concert hall over a church setting." Somewhat more neutrally, another participant wrote "the only church performances I have attended have been requiems or Gregorian chants; this was very different." Since churches are a common place to perform concerts, it did not occur to me that the space would make some people uncomfortable. The types of comments described above reveal the extent to which performance venues promote feelings of inclusivity or exclusivity at concert experiences. Even beyond classical music's typical associations with elitism, broader cultural contexts such as a person's comfort level with organized religion may affect an audience member's concert experience.

4.2 Programming and Repertoire Choice

Overall, reactions to the different repertoire presented across the seven recitals were divided enough that no strong correlation could be drawn between specific pieces and levels of audience engagement. This is consistent with the diversity of tastes and preferences we see in society at large across music genres and populations. Nonetheless, some patterns still emerged. As with performance spaces, the notion of familiarity came up frequently in the survey responses, another example of how being previously initiated to the music presented allowed for deeper enjoyment at the events. From Recital Program 3, one participant cited the Mozart sonata as their favorite work, "because I have played/heard it before," while another enjoyed the Boulanger Nocturne the most because "I have played it before and love her work!" In Recital Program 2, one participant noted that their favorite work was the Beethoven sonata, because "it

was familiar, and I loved hearing a different interpretation," while another person enjoyed the Debussy sonata the most because "I've had a soft spot for his works since hearing *The Sunken Cathedral.*" An attendee at the house concert from Recital Program 1 selected Coleridge-Taylor's *Deep* River as their favorite piece, because they were currently learning a version of this work on the piano. These types of responses from listeners who have been previously initiated into classical music imply that by bringing their own expectations, interpretations, and references to the concert experience, they may feel more connected with the music being performed and thus engage more deeply.

Importantly, familiarity with the music was not the only indicator of whether an attendee responded positively to the music, and many participants cited enthusiasm for music that was fresh, new, or unfamiliar. From Recital Program 1, one participant most enjoyed "the piece written for the violinist [*Wellen* by Ismael] because it was unique", and another person selected *Wellen* as their favorite work because "it's delicate and wild at the same time." From Recital Program 2, a participant noted that their favorite work was the Montgomery *Rhapsody* because of the "engaging ideas," and another person at the same program also selected this work as their favorite "because it seemed very new." Other attendees cited variation and contrasts as reasons for enjoying the programming: from Recital Program 1, an attendee at the Arts Club of Washington responded that they enjoyed "ALL the works equally and appreciate[d] the variety. An attendee at Recital Program 2 enjoyed the Brahms *FAE Sonata* for its "varied energy and excitement of some portions balanced with delicate areas," while another person at the same program enjoyed the Telemann the most because of the "contrast between movements."

In addition to variety, people often cited energy as a reason for their enjoyment of a particular work. For Recital Program 1, one respondent enjoyed the third movement of the Fauré

sonata, “probably because it felt the most upbeat.” An attendee at Recital Program 2 “liked the energy” of the Brahms *FAE Sonata*, and another person selected the same work because it was “joyful and satisfying.” Many people who attended Recital Program 3 selected the Piazzolla *Histoire du Tango* as their favorite, with one person writing “the performance was energetic, and the piece is super fun to listen to.” This pattern of gravitating towards pieces with high energy (understood in this context as music with fast tempos, louder dynamics, and virtuosic passages), variety or new ideas may imply that certain attention-grabbing musical elements allowed for better engagement. Indeed, many respondents noted, sometimes apologetically, that they occasionally “zoned out” during the performances. This comment occurred the most frequently in the responses of the participants who self-identified as novices to classical music, implying that they saw their inability to focus for portions of the program as being related to their lack of experience with classical music. Through the introduction of musical variety or energy, these attendees were able to reclaim their focus and better participate in the experience.

Responses were divided over the contemporary works on the recital programs. These divisions did not correspond with age, which challenged my own biases about audience members, since I had previously assumed that younger audience members would be more receptive to contemporary music than older ones. Many senior citizens who attended the Arts Club of Washington performance selected *Wellen* as their favorite work on the program, whereas a 32-year-old attendee at the house concert selected the same work as their least favorite because “I am personally not a huge fan of contemporary music, which is a little too ‘experimental’ for my taste.” Rather than age, previous levels of experience with classical music were a stronger indicator of whether an attendee responded positively or negatively to contemporary music, implying that to novices, contemporary music can feel alienating or exclusionary. Revealingly,

this phenomenon was also picked up on by some audience members: at the Arts Club of Washington, two attendees who self-identified as new music enthusiasts made several suggestions of presentation ideas for contemporary music as a "great way to engage more people with modern classical pieces." This type of comment reveals an understanding amongst some audience members of the need for contextualization to make certain types of music less threatening and more welcoming.

Interestingly, themed programming did not seem to have much bearing on audience engagement in this study. For Recital Program 1, which featured music that was all premiered by women violinists, hardly any of the participants cited the overarching program theme in their written or verbal reflections on the program, despite the fact that the spoken introductions to each piece highlighted this connection. This surprised me, since themed programming is often used as a strategy amongst classical musicians and presenters to attempt to attract and engage audiences. When I moved away from themed programming for Recital Programs 2 and 3, the data results did not show any significant dips in the engagement levels reported by attendees.

4.3 Contextualization of the Music through Verbal Communication

By far, the largest factor that attendees attributed to enhancing their engagement in the performances was the contextualization of the music through spoken verbal communication by the performer. This sentiment was reflected in almost every survey and verbal response following the programs, and was shared by people of all musical backgrounds, from novices to students to industry professionals. For attendees less experienced with classical music, the spoken introductions to each piece provided historical and background information about the works, which many said helped them to appreciate the music more deeply. One respondent wrote "as a non-musical member of the audience, it was fun to hear who the composers were and what

influenced their work," and another attendee remarked "you were like a tour guide, showing us around a new city and getting us excited about what we were about to hear." Many attendees of all musical backgrounds cited that the verbal commentary helped them to understand the music more clearly, commenting that the "great remarks prepared us to appreciate each piece," "it made it easy to know what to expect and how to follow along," and it enabled "directed listening." These types of remarks, which reveal a preoccupation amongst audience members with comprehension of non-verbal classical music, show that to some people, musical understanding may not come simply by hearing the works. For many attendees, the verbal introductions allowed them to feel more included in the experience, regardless of their background. Indeed, respondents noted that the spoken communication gave "a sense of welcoming to the audience," was "very inviting and welcoming to the audience," and "enhanced the experience… it made it feel more accessible."

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the content of my speaking evolved over the course of this project based on feedback I received early on in the survey responses. Initially in Recital Program 1, my speaking focused primarily on the historical background of the composers and works, but by Recital Programs 2 and 3, I also included my own personal feelings and interpretations of the works, as well as provided suggestions for musical elements to listen for. In these spoken remarks, I used terminology free from jargon and made references outside of the music. I also shared my own tastes, preferences, background about myself, and reasons that I enjoyed playing the pieces. Audience members responded well to this broader approach in my spoken content: many still remarked that they appreciated the historical context provided about the music, but others shared that they enjoyed feeling connected to me as the performer. One attendee said this kind of spoken introduction "makes a connection between the musician and the

audience," another described it as "humanizing," and another said, "it feels very personal to hear why [the] performer chose each music piece." Others responded positively to my personality and demeanor: one person wrote "your enthusiasm added to the experience," and another wrote that my speaking had "good energy," but they "wouldn't have enjoyed it as much if there had been TOO much talking, or the performer wasn't as relatable." These types of responses demonstrate that many audience members want to feel a personal connection to the performer, as this type of participatory and inclusive dynamic helps them to feel more engaged in the experience.

4.4 Tradition and Ritual in Classical Music Performances

In many ways, this study sought to experiment with the traditions and rituals associated with classical music and identify the effects on audience members when these traditions were altered or undone. As already discussed, I examined the effect of venue spaces on audience members, which had both positive and negative outcomes for their ability to engage with the performances. Additionally, I included spoken introductions to the works in all seven performances: while this practice is becoming increasingly common in classical music performances, it is still not uniformly standard in the industry. This type of verbal contextualization resulted in overwhelmingly positive outcomes for audience engagement.

In addition to venues and spoken introductions, a few other topics relating to concert rituals came up in the study participants' responses. One participant who watched the livestream performance noted that they missed the "ceremonial aspect" associated with attending an event in-person. They wrote:

> When you go to these events in person, there is a certain "ceremonial" aspect to getting ready, putting on clothes, meeting and greeting other people, and after sharing our experiences with each other. The social and physical aspect was completely removed – while this is not directly related to the performance, I felt that it made me be able to disconnect from the performance a lot easier.

In addition to revealing a need for shared social connection, this type of comment demonstrates that ritual can elevate an event or make it feel special. This person's remark about "getting ready" and "putting on clothes" challenges the conception that people avoid attending concerts because dressing in formal attire for an event makes them ill at ease, and instead suggests that for some people, engagement is enhanced because of, not in spite of, the ritual associated with attending these types of performances.

In classical music, much attention has been given to the discomfort that audience members who have not previously been initiated into classical music culture experience regarding their behavior during performances.[80] Examples of this include not knowing when to clap or remaining silent while music is being performed. When these types of behavioral traditions were removed from the performances in this study, audience members did not always view these modifications as beneficial to their experience. Rather than promoting inclusivity, these modifications resulted in some audience members feeling awkward or confused. As already noted in the discussion earlier this chapter on formality of venues, one respondent mentioned that they "didn't know to what degree it was ok to talk" at the Flight Crew Coffee performance. In this case, the informality of the venue did not encourage increased participation amongst audience members, but instead resulted in confusion over appropriate behavior at an event which combined a traditional concert format in a non-traditional space.

The livestream performance, which eliminated audience applause all together, also produced feelings of ambivalence in the participants' survey responses. One person

[80] Melissa Dobson, "Classical Cult or Learning Community? Exploring New Audience Members' Social and Musical Responses to First Time Concert Attendance," *Ethnomusicology Forum* 20, 3 (2011): 353-383.

remarked “it is an odd experience to have watched a great performance and not hear an applause,” and another commented “the silence [after each piece] was awkward.” Rather than liberating audience members from having to monitor their behavior surrounding applause, the removal of this ritual altogether resulted in negative reactions amongst the participants. On the other hand, applauding at a traditionally “incorrect” time during a live performance did not seem to have any deleterious effect on audience experience. At the First Presbyterian Church performance, which had the largest percentage of classical music novices in the audience, about half of the audience applauded enthusiastically after the first movement of the first piece on the program. I responded by smiling and giving a polite nod in acknowledgement of the applause. Noticing that others in the audience did not clap, this group modified their behavior for the rest of the performance by holding their applause until all movements in a work had been performed. Despite having navigated a potentially embarrassing situation, all the attendees I spoke with following the performance were in high spirits and expressed enthusiasm at the event, and not one person mentioned feeling awkward in their survey responses. This situation implies that rituals traditionally associated with a classical music concert experience may not be as off-putting as some people believe, particularly if novice audience members are not made to feel embarrassed if they make a mistake.

4.5 The Performer’s Responsibility to the Audience

In the above discussion, I provide examples of how audience engagement is deepened when conditions at classical music concerts promote inclusivity. It then follows that the responsibility for creating these types of inclusive environments falls on the performers and

organizers of these concerts. This can be achieved through venue selection, presentation of repertoire, and the performer's demeanor.

As discussed above, cultivating inclusive concert environments does not necessarily call for an overhaul of all classical music concert traditions. The data results discussed in this chapter suggest that audience members of all prior experience levels can enjoy themselves at either traditional or non-traditional venues, provided the venue environment allows for distraction-free, focused listening. Furthermore, inclusivity can be promoted through accessibility, by organizing concerts in convenient and communal spaces. Accessibility can extend beyond the physical location and function of the venue and anticipate audience members' needs: for example, one elderly audience member at the First Presbyterian Church performance commented that a microphone for the spoken introductions would have helped them to understand more of the verbal communication. While this is not specifically related to the performance venue, it nonetheless falls under the category of decisions a performer must make prior to the event to create an inclusive physical space for audiences.

Importantly, performers do not need to pander in their repertoire programming in order to more deeply engage audience members. The results in this study demonstrate that attendees of all experience levels with classical music, including novices, can enjoy and appreciate "difficult" music. While some audience members remarked on how certain musical works such as sonatas felt "long" and contemporary pieces could be challenging to understand, my efforts over the course of the study to refine my speaking to provide greater clarity and inclusivity seemed to have an overall positive effect on audience members' ability to engage with these types of works. These days, many concert organizers are turning to popular music programming, such as when symphonies and string quartets perform film music or rock band covers. While these types of

programs can be fun and provide entertainment for audiences, they do not need to take the place of programming more challenging or complex repertoire. Instead, it is the performer's responsibility to invite audience members to participate in experiencing this type of music by providing contextualization and clarity. Furthermore, it is the performer's responsibility to treat the music with integrity, through the best preparation and presentation that their ability allows for, in order to invite audiences to engage more deeply with a variety of music. In this study, many audience members were drawn to "higher energy" music – moments that included fast, loud or virtuosic playing. My response to this is that, as the performer, it is my responsibility to imbue focus, intent, and energy into the slower, darker, or more static musical moments to demonstrate more thoroughly to audiences the value in this type of music.

This study also suggests that attendees better engage with non-verbal and complex music when the performer addresses the audience with verbal commentary. This includes, but is not limited to, providing historical facts about the works and their composers, as well as highlighting musical elements to listen for during the performance. Beyond this, the performer's own personality, enthusiasm, and ideas work together to set a tone that is inclusive and welcoming. Live musical performances are social events – not only amongst audience members, but also between the performer and the audience. By sharing one's own personality as a part of the concert presentation, performers invite audience members into a more participatory experience.

This chapter has described the results of the data collected across the seven performances involved in this research study. In the next chapter, I offer concluding remarks, as well as suggestions for further study.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion

In this doctoral study, I used a mixed methodology of arts-based research and qualitative research to investigate audience engagement at classical music performances from the perspective of a practitioner. Using my background as a professional violinist to determine the parameters of research experimentation, I organized seven violin and piano recitals from April 2022 to October 2023, altering performance conditions such as the type of venue, repertoire choice, and verbal communication about the music. I then followed each performance by soliciting feedback from audience members about their experience via written surveys and semi-structured interviews. People of varying levels of background experience with classical music attended these recitals, and in total, 81 participants filled out research surveys. From this undertaking, I found compelling evidence to suggest a correlation between audience engagement and performance conditions that fostered feelings of inclusivity amongst the concert attendees.

One of my goals in this research project was to assess how factors such as programming, venue, mode of communication, and presentation affected an audience member's experience at a classical music concert. Additionally, I wanted to understand what makes a program interesting for people with varying levels of previous experience with classical music, as well as identify what responsibilities fall to the performer to promote audience engagement. Through the seven recitals in this study, I was able to explore these topics and identify patterns in the data that offered insight into my research questions.

While I organized concerts in venues that were both traditional and non-traditional in order to explore audience members' reactions to different types of environments, I ultimately found that the formality of the venue did not have a strong bearing on audience engagement levels. Instead, I found that the venue, whether formal or informal, was responsible for setting

the tone of the event, as well as for creating a distraction-free environment in which people could engage in focused listening. Research participants showed a preference for venues that were "intimate" and "welcoming," but preferred environments with good sight and sound over more casual environments where it was difficult to see or hear.

Audiences enjoyed programming that provided musical variety and energy. They did not show a strong preference for any one piece or type of repertoire, since tastes varied widely, consistent with the way people's tastes vary in society at large. Nonetheless, some audience members, especially those who were less experienced with classical music, expressed a dislike for music that was complex or difficult to understand, such as contemporary pieces or particularly long pieces. This sentiment was not consistently represented in the data – surprisingly, many novices to classical music cited that these works were their favorites on the program – but this pattern emerged enough that it is worth addressing. Throughout the study, I varied my spoken introductions to provide more contextualization for these musical works in an effort to invite more audience members to listen deeply and engage with this music. While my efforts found some success, this is an area that I am interested in exploring further. Additional studies can be done to examine the performer's responsibility in demystifying music that is perceived as complex or difficult, in order to initiate more people and promote inclusivity at concerts.

The study participants overwhelmingly cited spoken introductions and verbal communication at the performances as integral to their ability to engage with the music. Attendees of all musical backgrounds appreciated both the informative content of the speaking as well as my delivery and demeanor, which they described as "enthusiastic" and "welcoming." The types of responses expressed in the data gathered for this project suggest that not only do

audience members want to learn about the musical works, but they also want to feel connected to the performer. This yearning for connection supports the notion that inclusivity is a driving factor in a person's ability to engage at a classical music performance.

This study contributes to a growing body of knowledge surrounding audience engagement in two important ways. First, it identifies inclusivity as a key factor in audience experience and attempts to go beyond the ways this is usually addressed by classical music industry professionals such as venue and repertoire choice, and instead explore less tangible performance conditions such as demeanor and delivery of the performer. Secondly, unlike many other studies in audience engagement, this study was undertaken by a practitioner. From my dual vantage point as the performer and researcher, I was able to redirect my efforts throughout the study to not only observe and report on attendees' behavior, but also to attempt to improve audience experience.

As with all studies, this research project was not without limitations or shortcomings. These recitals were promoted via personal invitation as well as public advertisement, so the participant pool consisted solely of people who were already enthusiastic about attending a classical music performance. While a significant portion of the participant pool consisted of classical music novices, a majority had some previous experience with classical music, either through frequent concert attendance or having studied music amateurly or professionally themselves. Since the data does not reflect the viewpoints of people who actively avoid classical music performances, it has the potential for a positive bias skew. I attempted to address this concern throughout the study by exploring ways of promoting the events to a wider population. While many studies exist to address the viewpoints of non-attenders, that is beyond the scope of this particular project.

Another limitation of this study is the broad, generic usage of the term "engagement." In this paper, the term "engagement" is used to cover a variety of things an audience member can experience at a live performance, such as enjoyment, intellectual stimulation, and emotional impact. While all of these indicate that participation in the experience has occurred, this broad usage of the term "engagement" does not differentiate between the variety of personal goals that audience members might hope to achieve by attending a classical music concert. Further studies could explore the diversity of goals and motivations that audience members bring to a classical music performance, as well as the goals of the performer, and assess the outcomes of these.

In this study, I found that amateur musicians – for instance, those who had previously studied an instrument or sung in a choir – were especially enthusiastic about the performances and sharing their thoughts afterwards. This subpopulation of participants seemed to engage especially well at the recitals. Further studies could be done to explore engagement habits of people previously initiated into classical music culture as children, especially in cultures or countries where musical study in early childhood is more ubiquitous than in the United States. Additional research could also be done to explore the type of spoken engagement that resonates with concert attendees that have some previous experience with classical music: while most public speaking at concerts attempts to address a general audience, future studies could investigate the effect of balancing speaking between content aimed at novices versus those who have some previous knowledge of classical music.

Through undertaking this doctoral project, I have attempted to contribute to knowledge about audience engagement and experience, as well as model a process for other performers who wish to learn more about connecting with the very people who support their artistic pursuits. It is

my hope that through this type of ongoing research and practice, we as an industry continue to make strides towards cultivating a more inclusive and welcoming culture in classical music.

Appendix 1

The following notes were used to guide my speaking points for Recital Program 1.

Amy Beach *Romance*

- Beach was American composer (from New Hampshire) – piano prodigy, but largely self-trained in composition
- Composed 1893
- Dedicated to Maud Powell
- Premiered by Beach and Powell at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor *Deep River*

- SCT was an English Romantic composer trained at the Royal College of Music
- Became increasingly interested in his father's heritage (father was from Sierra Leone and was the descendent of enslaved African American people) – took several musical tours of the United States and began to explore African American music
- SCT composed *Deep River* in 1904 as a part of a 24-work collection of African American spirituals which he set and transcribed for solo classical piano.
- Of these works he said:

"What Brahms has done for the Hungarian folk music, Dvorak for the Bohemian, and Grieg for the Norwegian, I have tried to do for these… Melodies."

-In 1911, Maud Powell reconceived the instrumentation of the piece, transcribing it for violin and piano

RVW *Lark Ascending:*

-composed in 1914, originally for violin and piano
-Re-worked in 1920 for violin and orchestra; premiered by violinist Marie Hall.
-English pastoral – lilting, rolling melody in 6/8 that recalls English folk song
-Inspired by the English poet George Meredith's poem of the same name

He rises and begins to round,
He drops the silver chain of sound,
Of many links without a break,
In chirrup, whistle, slur and shake.
For singing till his heaven fills,
'Tis love of earth that he instils,
And ever winging up and up,
Our valley is his golden cup
And he the wine which overflows
to lift us with him as he goes.
Till lost on his aërial rings
In light, and then the fancy sings.

-Opening melody imitates the flight of the lark

Rizgar Ismael, *Wellen*

- Composed in 2021 for me
- "*Wellen* (German word for waves) is a work for solo violin. *Wellen* refers to the two waves that govern the piece: dance-like energy, and stillness."
- Kurdish musical influence

Fauré Sonata:

- Composed 1875-1876 – the first work to put French composer Gabriel Fauré on the map
- Premiered in 1877 by the composer at the piano and the young French violinist Marie Tayau. Following the premiere, Fauré stated:

"I will never be able to express adequately how she made my sonata her own, how she put her heart and spirit into playing it. [...] Mademoiselle Tayau's interpretation was perfect."

-The sonata was well-received; his teacher Camille Saint-Saens stated "a magic floats above everything" in reaction to the work.

-As was fashionable in late 19th-century French music, this work combines Romantic musical techniques with elements that hearken back to the Medieval era, such as use of ancient church modes.

Appendix 2

The following notes were used to guide my speaking points for Recital Program 2.

Beethoven *Sonata 1* (op. 12)

-written 1798 (he was 28 years old)
-Classical style
-why I like it: joyful, optimistic, energetic
-what to listen for:
-How does music move through time and space?
-Beethoven's music is a "musical journey" – driven by harmonies, goal-oriented (pulled towards a resolution)
-first movement has a beginning, middle, and end, like a story
-second movement is theme and variations – see how the melody changes and evolves
-third movement is a rondo – same idea keeps coming back to link the sections together. Lopsided dance with the accented notes
-melodies and ideas trading like a conversation

Telemann *Fantasia No. 7 for solo violin*

-Telemann was friends with Bach – Bach's 6 sonatas and partitas are more famous, but Telemann wrote 12 himself

-A short and light suite of four movements for unaccompanied violin – in a Baroque ensemble, you usually would expect to hear a bass, continuo instrument, and a few melody instruments but in this case, the violin has to fulfill all the roles!

-Why I like this piece: I enjoy the challenge of fulfilling the different roles on one instrument
-I like the dance-like energy, feels like folk music
-in the repeated sections, it's fun to improvise ornaments and embellishments

Jessie Montgomery *Rhapsody No. 1 for Solo Violin*

-She wrote it for herself in 2014! Living composer, young, based in New York City

-Another unaccompanied violin work – this one draws on the traditions of Ysaye's 6 solo sonatas (very virtuosic and technically demanding) – she will plan to write 6 total as an homage to different composers who wrote for unaccompanied violin

-why I like her music: like Beethoven, she uses harmonies to create special colors and moods.

-What to listen for:

-musical ideas and materials introduced earlier in the work will cycle back at the end
-what moods and images does this produce in your mind?

Debussy Sonata:

I chose this one to contrast the Beethoven: if that one was optimistic and youthful, this one is opposite and was written with a darker backdrop – it was the last sonata Debussy wrote before he died – wrote it in 1917 during WWI, he was sick with cancer

"This sonata will be interesting from a documentary point of view and as an example of what may be produced by a sick man in time of war."

-unlike Beethoven's music, Debussy's does not tend to be "goal-oriented" – if Beethoven's music explores time, Debussy's decorates space.

-he was fascinated with Japanese culture and influenced by art (i.e.,. wood block paintings, gardens etc.) using stasis and repetition to explore the concept of space (concept of "ma" – sensibility towards space)

- This sonata that we will play decorates aural space – listen for colors, textures, moods, rather than the story-telling type of drive we heard in the Beethoven sonata

Brahms *Scherzo from the FAE Sonata:*

-A fun social collaboration written in 1853 – Joachim (great violinist of the era) approached his friend Schumann about writing a multi-movement piece authored by himself and two of his students, Brahms and Dietrich, and Joachim's job was to guess who wrote which movements.

-Dietrich wrote first, Brahms wrote the scherzo, and Schumann wrote the intermezzo and finale. Joachim easily guessed each!

-the name FAE is from the acronym of Joachim's personal motto: *Frei Aber Einsem* (free but lonely)

-the scherzo is the most popular and works as a stand-alone piece, I love the driving energy and drama, and think it makes a great program closer.

Appendix 3

The following questions were used at Recital 3 during my onstage interview with Dr. Cora Cooper about the Rebecca Clarke Violin Sonata.

Clarke Sonata Questions

1. The preface in the score for this sonata states that the work was written while Clarke was a student at Royal College of Music. Could you tell us more about the history of the piece, including Clarke's time at RCM? (i.e., elaboration on how this was a time she was finding her "true self"/identity)

2. Was Clarke one of the only women composers in her class at the Royal College of Music? What do you think that was like for her? What other challenges did she face throughout her life and career as a female composer?

3. Clarke's viola sonata has become established as a standard in the repertoire, but her violin sonatas are practically unknown and not played nearly as often, having only recently been published by Sleepy Puppy Press. Why do you think that might be?

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This large-scale study examines how individuals are impacted by arts performances, with a focus on emotional, intellectual, social, and aesthetic constructs. The authors investigated "intrinsic impacts" in over 20,000 people who attended music, theater, and dance performances over a period of six years.

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This document describes "practice-related" research methods, differentiating between two main approaches: practice-*based* and practice-*led*. If the creative artifact is the outcome of the research (the contribution to knowledge), the research is practice-based. If the outcome is a contribution to knowledge about practice, the research is practice-led.

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This article describes Candy and Edmonds' approach to practice-based research and provides a discussion for how this method can be used in doctoral-level research to generate new knowledge about practice in the creative arts. The authors provide a brief history of practice-based research and provide numerous examples of this type of research approach in design, arts, and digital media.

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This report, compiled by Chamber Music America in coordination with The Wallace Foundation, outlines fiscal and other impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the small ensemble music field. Despite most organizations reporting fiscal losses in the wake of the pandemic, the majority of survey respondents had resumed in-person concerts and reported optimism at the time of the most recent report update in 2022.

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https://www.meiea.org/resources/Journal/html_ver/Vol01_No01/Vol_1_No_1_A1.html
This study served as the basis upon which Dobson built her later study from 2010, "New Audiences for Classical Music: The Experiences of Non-attenders at Live Orchestral Concerts" (see above). Kolb's study took college-aged students who were not previous attendees at classical music performances to a concert at London's Royal Festival Hall and gathered

information about their reactions to the performance. The students expressed various barriers to concert enjoyment, including the perception that they needed extensive previous knowledge of classical music to enjoy the experience.

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A research compilation from 2009 by the League of American Orchestras to report on audience demographics.

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A compilation of suggested reading, organized list-style, by audience engagement research pioneer Stephanie Pitts.

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This study explores the viewpoints of both audience members and performers. Researchers distributed surveys to and conducted interviews with members of a regional orchestra and the audience members who attended their performances to gain insights into participants' experiences on both sides of the events. Additionally, marketing tactics were examined to try to understand what appealed to potential audience members in the community.

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This book examines the role of arts in society and discusses issues of access, privilege, and more. Chapter 2 specifically addresses the authors' research method for this book. With funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council, the authors were able to conduct widespread research across four cities in the U.K. and a variety of performance venues and art forms. This enabled them to identify broader patterns across audiences of various art forms, which they discuss throughout the book.

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This study is a follow-up to Pitts' earlier research from 2005 with the Music in the Round Chamber Music Festival (see above). In this study, the authors explore the viewpoints of long-term classical music fans at the Music in the Round Festival to gain insights about audience development and retention.

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A largescale study which examines survey responses distributed to audience members at five major arts institutions in Flanders, Belgium. From the data, three types of audience groups emerge, which the author defines as the passers-by, interested participants, and inner circle. These groups have different motivations for attending performances but are united in their desire to be emotionally moved by live art events.

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A newspaper article from 2020, early in the COVID-19 pandemic that discusses classical music’s aging audiences and offers the perspective that this is not necessarily negative since elderly people are a loyal, devoted, and reliable fanbase. This type of discourse fits within the broader cultural conversations surrounding classical music and its role in society.