This kaleidoscopic collection reflects on the multifaceted world of classical music as it advances through the twenty-first century. With insights drawn from leading composers, performers, academics, journalists, and arts administrators, special focus is placed on classical music's defining traditions, challenges and contemporary scope. Innovative in structure and approach, the volume comprises two parts. The first provides detailed analyses of issues central to classical music in the present day, including diversity, governance, the identity and perception of classical music, and the challenges facing the achievement of financial stability in non-profit arts organizations. The second part offers case studies, from Miami to Seoul, of the innovative ways in which some arts organizations have responded to the challenges analyzed in the first part. Introductory material, as well as several of the essays, provide some preliminary thoughts about the impact of the crisis year 2020 on the world of classical music.

Classical Music: Contemporary Perspectives and Challenges will be a valuable and engaging resource for all readers interested in the development of the arts and classical music, especially academics, arts administrators and organizers, and classical music practitioners and audiences.

Edited by Michael Beckerman and Paul Boghossian
Over the last few decades, interest in the visual arts has grown dramatically. A few basic facts and figures can attest to this trend (Graw, 2010). The number of museum-goers has reached a record high. The Metropolitan Museum of Art had seven million visitors in 2017, while Tate Modern and the Louvre had over five million visitors. The same applies to visitors to large exhibitions. It is not uncommon for a show to get nearly a million visitors, such as the exhibition in 2016 of the former collection of Sergei Shchukin at the Fondation Louis Vuitton in Paris. In 2017, according to Clare McAndrew (2018: 15), the art market easily surpassed the $63 billion mark. Within the global market economy, this is hardly a significant number. Nonetheless, it is fairly remarkable in comparison to sales generated by content for classical music. Let us not forget the activities and industries generated by the visual arts: namely magazines, periodicals, blogs, fashion projects that are carried out in collaboration with artists; not to mention a whole range of ancillary activities, such as talks, conferences, debates, art fairs, previews, studio visits, etc. Further quantitative evidence speaks to the enduring strength of the visual arts, and the variety of its offerings. In 2017, the art market employed an estimated three million people. That year alone, there were approximately 310,685 businesses operating in the global art, antiques and collectibles market, accounting for 296,540 in the gallery sector and 14,145 in auction houses. It is estimated that the global art trade spent

---

1 I would like to thank Mebrak Tareke for her comments and research.
$19.6 billion on a range of business-related services, supporting a further 363,655 jobs (McAndrew, 2018: 21).

Here I would like to offer a very succinct historical perspective about the rapid development of the trade in artifacts in the West (based on Watson, 1992). Until the late eighteenth century, the plastic arts were reserved for a small, wealthy elite. For centuries most artistic practice was nearly exclusively devotional and religious in nature. Painters and sculptors were employed by the church, the state, and various potentates. With the emergence of the merchant classes in Florence and other small states in Italy and the low countries in Northern Europe, private commissions by wealthy individuals became more common. Art for the masses only emerged in the late eighteenth century with the creation of spaces for the public consumption of art, such as the Salons in France and exhibitions at the Royal Academy in London. In the Romantic era, artistic production became less dependent on commissions, and artists such as Eugène Delacroix or Théodore Géricault would initiate and pursue their own projects, often regardless of patrons and commissions. This can also be seen as a rebellion against the constraints imposed by donors and their political or social agenda.

A few decades later, with the building of the National Gallery in London and other similar institutions in Europe and North America, the visual arts became available to the vast majority of people, and often (as in the case of Sir George Beaumont at London’s National Gallery) they were imbued with a sense of educational and moral purpose. That being said, with the rise of Modernism and various avant-garde movements on the cusp of the twentieth century, art became a way to rebel against the establishment. There was a fairly widely shared belief that the modern visual arts, as in Fauvism, Cubism, Constructivism, etc., were aimed against the prevailing current, against the status quo. The same could be said of the modern music of the Vienna School in its quest for a radical musical expression.

In the West, the visual arts continued their expansion in the first half of the twentieth century, yet the public was largely drawn from educated elites and programs were subsidized by wealthy donors, such as the founders of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, foremost among them the Rockefeller family. Great art exhibitions of contemporary art such as documenta in Kassel or the Venice Biennale attracted a loyal
following, consisting of mostly well-heeled professionals. A seismic shift occurred in 1973 with the Robert Scull auction in which, for the first time, relatively modest prices were replaced by record prices for works by Andy Warhol and others. In today’s context, these prices seem modest, but they changed public consciousness. In more general terms, works that were deemed arcane, difficult, and eccentric attracted wide attention.

Since 1973, lobbying for contemporary art has grown more intense. What was once considered marginal or intellectual has permeated pop culture, and this has to do with the joined efforts of large blue chip galleries such as Pace, Gagosian, Hauser & Wirth, Zwirner, etc., as well as the auction houses Sotheby’s, Christie’s, Phillips, but also Poly Group in China, international art fairs in Basel, Miami, and Hong Kong, and non-commercial art extravaganzas such as biennials and large-scale events (Christo in Central Park or Olafur Eliason at Tate Modern, for instance).

The success and popularity of the visual arts cannot be dissociated from certain economic factors. After all, works of art are physical, tangible objects that can be bought or exchanged, just like other commodities. A piece of music can be downloaded, it can be purchased in various formats, but music hardly has the tangible uniqueness that we associate with artifacts. The trade in works of art gives rise to a vast economy on a global scale, stimulated by aggressive marketing at galleries and auction houses. The network of museums, exhibition spaces (often associated with innovative architecture), galleries, biennials, and art fairs, ensures the popularity of art beyond the circles of wealthy patrons and art professionals. Nowadays, art has become a lifestyle issue, a rarefied, but not overly rarefied, offshoot of pop culture. Museums, once seen as the bastion of the elites, have succeeded in bridging the divide between pop culture and the elites. Jeff Koons and Takashi Murakami can co-exist with Hanne Darboven or Pierre Huyghe.

The museum can be seen as a place of social interaction, as an open-ended secular church—it doesn’t require total devotion, but nonetheless it inserts itself in daily life, as do reading, sports, and yoga. Museums and galleries have succeeded in establishing themselves as trendy establishments. As a public forum, a museum serves the community in a variety of ways. The Museum of Fine Arts in Montreal, for example,
offers a dedicated art therapy space, one that welcomes as many as 300,000 participants per year, including autistic children, the sick, as well as marginalized groups. There are even consulting rooms staffed with professional doctors within that space. The same museum also has a studio devoted to social interaction in the workplace, in which teachers are encouraged to understand the emotional, political, social impact of works of art. Over the past few years, the number of visitors has doubled. In a similar vein, Tate Modern’s extension now boasts a large space called “Tate Exchange” devoted to debates on human interest stories. According to Chris Dercon, Tate Modern’s former director who oversaw these changes, “The museum was centred around individual experience. It needs to become the locus of collective exchange” (Dercon, 2019).

Many museums are large institutions which are run like complex organizations. They position themselves as brands. So do Carnegie Hall, the New York Philharmonic, and the Paris Opera. Institutions in the visual arts are good at blending mass-appeal with other, more daring or difficult projects. Tate Modern in London, for example, under the leadership of Nicholas Serota, put up blockbuster exhibitions, such as the recent “Picasso 1932” show (2018), as well as a more demanding ones, such as the Donald Judd retrospective (2004). They will mix high and low art, scholarly exhibitions and blockbusters, educational programs, performances and art-historical lectures.

Music venues could learn from this, in particular in terms of making the experience more inclusive, without sacrificing high standards. The idea is to be more inclusive of a variety of tastes, therefore increasing the overall reach, and to combine these with more focused projects as well. Carnegie Hall, for example, has been successful at mixing performances that have a wide appeal with more targeted projects, such as a composer-in-residence series and the Perspectives series.

Synergy and Collaboration between the Arts

Another crucial question, to my mind, has to do with the gradual divide between contemporary music and visual arts. In the last few years, I have come to the realization that the worlds of music and the visual arts seem to be evolving in different spheres. Perhaps this is because nowadays, society sees artistic disciplines as intrinsically separate—a tendency,
which, I feel, has grown over the past few decades. This is very different from the days of Sergei Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes, in which dancers, composers, performers, writers, and composers all conspired to create works of art that brought these various forms of artistic expression together. There were also striking parallels in terms of the approach and the overall spirit, as in the irreverent cultivation of parody and the off-centered classicism of Diaghilev’s post-World War One productions. Igor Stravinsky’s tapestry of clashing tonal orientations and rhythms that disrupt continuity, as a form of discontinuity that endeavors to create more space in the listener’s imagination. Often, compositions by Stravinsky from this period manage to juxtapose or to bring together high and low art, ranging from the classical to the vernacular. Here we find echoes of Picasso’s cubist method of assemblage and discontinuous surfaces. Or we could evoke the historic collaboration of Merce Cunningham with Jasper Johns and John Cage. That being said, initiatives such as Tauba Auerbach’s recent collaborative project with the composer of electronic music Eliane Radigue in Cleveland, or William Kentridge’s stage designs for the opera, are noteworthy. There is synergy between the arts, fashion, and architecture; perhaps this is to be expected since it all relates to space and the visual realm. But music can also be the locus of such efforts. Architecture and the auditory experience are also related, as illustrated in the next section.

New Technology

Based on my observations of contemporary art shows, there’s a great deal to be said for merging sound art/technology and architecture. We see it with Oliver Beer’s sound compositions. Oliver Beer, an artist based in London, is classically trained in composition and the foundation of his practice is in music and sonority. He has done several works which explore the resonance inherent in the shape of objects and artifacts. New works showing Beer’s development in his Two-Dimensional Sculptures were also on view at the Met Breuer in 2019. Created using objects such as musical instruments, cameras, shotguns, and often imbued with personal history, the artist slices them with surgical precision before immersing them in white gessoed plaques. Only the cut surface of the object remains visible, the objects losing their volume and becoming
two-dimensional images of themselves, which gives them new meaning, blurring the boundaries between painting, drawing, sculpture, and sound.

We have to embrace technology, starting with developing social media and social networks, new ways of expanding and engaging communities of like-minded people with common interests. In the long term, it is crucial for classical music platforms to increase connectivity, especially as new generations grow up with technology. This prompts the question of how we receive our music. Much of it is transmitted digitally, whether it is through streaming services, but let’s not forget words (podcasts), images transmitted through a variety of platforms, video, etc.

Here the strategy common to art galleries and performing arts centers (music, but also ballet) should emphasize the sense of surprise in terms of content; that is, to make an “old fashioned” experience (i.e., unmediated) fresh and relevant. There are two aspects to this: on the one hand, the live experience, the flesh-and-blood of the concert hall, involving the senses (sounds, but also visual and other sensory aspects in connection with a live performance; the tactility and physical, relational, and spatial aspect of works of art in a gallery), and, on the other hand, digital formats like TV, radio, social media, etc. These two aspects can complement each other; the digital platform can be seen as an extension of live experience. Yet it remains crucial to focus on live events—such moments are unique, with a sense of place and festive atmosphere; the more formal setting offering added weight and solemnity at times.

That being said, it is also worth considering and exploring the full range of sensory aspects elicited by the concert hall experience. The enduring popularity of opera stems from its unique blend of music, singing, dance, acting, stage sets, costumes, etc. We can also evoke trends whereby venues such as the Shed or the Park Avenue Armory in New York have sought to create a musical experience in which space and stage are not just added aspects to the auditory experience, but foundational, as in Hélène Grimaud’s collaboration with the Scottish artist Douglas Gordon at the Park Avenue Armory (Water Music). These experiments are now more common, and they push the boundaries on what that concert experience could be.
Innovative and Diverse Programming

New forms of programming reflecting a more contemporary sensibility seem to be an important step forward. Music can only evolve if new content is created. This involves music education, both private and public funding, but it also requires encouraging new music and new compositions. It is incumbent upon music professionals and managers to insist on more contemporary forms of programming. Conservative audiences are resisting this, but to me it seems to be the way forward. That’s how barriers can be broken down as well; the future doesn’t merely reside in creating crossover appeal (classically trained opera singers singing Broadway songs), but in more innovative programming. Venues should be places of experimentation in a world in which many contemporary musicians embrace larger traditions and propositions than the classical canon. Large museums are good at being inclusive: the same could apply to musical spaces, which offer a range of options for various tastes, from Baroque music to contemporary music, from recitals and small ensembles to large orchestral concerts. At the same time, at the opposite end of the spectrum, there is a future for small, targeted efforts: small museums devoted to one private collection or artist (the Frick Collection in New York, the Noguchi Museum in Long Island City) are thriving, and they can operate on small budgets; similarly small ensembles or musical entities without a permanent space such as the Mahler Chamber Orchestra, the Little Opera company, the Loft Opera or ICE can do the same.

Our view of the legacy of classical music is changing, to include histories that have been sidelined or marginalized. In the wake of World War Two, a new international order emerged, and as networks became increasingly connected through technology, globalism became a much-talked about notion. Today’s museums and art institutions give a voice to neglected or forgotten artists. Similarly, musical programming should embrace this diversity, to include composers whose works have been marginalized. One example involves some of the German- and Polish-Jewish composers who faced adverse political circumstances, such as Erich Wolfgang Korngold and Mieczysław Weinberg, ignored for decades and now given their due. Women composers, as diverse as Clara Schumann, Amy Beach, or Germaine Tailleferre, are now finally given greater exposure.
A Holistic Experience: The Concert Hall as a More Fluid Destination

Large museums today are very good at transforming their spaces in such a way as to provide a global experience in which the visual arts are only the core aspect. The architecture, restaurants, workshops, lecture halls, surrounding gardens, sculpture gardens, etc. are some of the attractions which allow visitors and families to spend as much as half a day there, particularly on weekends. What helps, needless to say, is the open-ended aspect of the experience. They can choose between various alternatives and programs, as opposed to the constraints of a concert which starts at a set time. Ticket holders are rushing to get a drink before the concert, or during the intermission. Perhaps there are ways to make the spaces and opportunities for socializing more friendly and inviting. Even the format could be changed; the traditional two-part structure with one intermission needs to be re-considered.

To conclude, if there are three things that we can discern about the future of music, it’s that there is an urgent need for the entire experience to be more inclusive, to narrow the yawning gap between the visual arts and music, and that technology will play a pivotal role in heightening the ways in which we experience music, especially when it comes to drawing in new audiences. I have not tackled issues of music education in this paper; these warrant a separate discussion, and are addressed by a rising number of dedicated scholars and musicians (see also Chapters 3 and 4 in this volume).

References