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#### Recommended Citation

University of Denver, "The Ongoing Death of Classical Music: An Annotated Bibliography" (2023).

*Musicology and Ethnomusicology: Student Scholarship*. 162.

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## The Ongoing Death of Classical Music: An Annotated Bibliography

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# The Ongoing Death of Classical Music

## An Annotated Bibliography

Live classical music is an art medium that has been seeing a decrease in attendance for several decades. Several factors play into this ongoing “death,” which include but are not limited to decreasing support or funding for the arts, lack of education, as well as stagnating programs from repetitive repertoire. This paper examines these factors, and it suggests initiatives or solutions to this problem.

### **Dissertations and Theses:**

1. Graham, Hayley. “The American Symphony Orchestra: Factors Affecting Concert Attendance and Predictions for the Millennial Ticketholder.” Honors Program Thesis, University of Northern Illinois, January 2015. <https://scholarworks.uni.edu/hpt/233/>.

This thesis focuses on specific factors affecting symphonic concert attendance, such as music education, marketing, programming, and the like. However, they leave out important factors such as cultural and ethnic backgrounds that affect concert attendance. The thesis calls on many articles from music and culture academic journals, which help to support the arguments made within the piece. The thesis indirectly continues the conversation about factors influencing concert attendance by analyzing factors that might lead, specifically, millennials to attend or not, and it draws upon statistics provided by the author’s sources to substantiate claims. The authority of Hayley Graham’s work is predicated upon the acceptance of the thesis by the supervising advisors (ie, the director of the Honor’s Program at the University of Northern Illinois). This source is relevant to the overarching issues regarding classical concert attendance because it breaks down reasons concert attendance is seeing a downward trend, and it analyzes ways that trend is being addressed.

2. Jansen, Hilary Slade. “The American Symphony Orchestra Today: Problems in Community, Diversity and Representation.” PhD diss., The City University of New York, New York, 2021. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

<https://www.proquest.com/docview/2492667709?pq-origsite=gscholar&fromopenview=true>.

This dissertation examines the symphony, in particular, inclusivity and how the orchestra’s relevance depends on how they respond to socio-political issues. The paper utilizes statistics regarding concert attendance to argue that symphonies do not serve the communities that surround them or make them up. The dissertation continues the conversation about factors influencing concert attendance by analyzing how the decisions made by artistic directors, management and the like disallow inclusion of various communities. The authority the work is based upon the acceptance of the thesis by the committee, which is further strengthened by their qualifications. This source is relevant to the conversation because it questions the fate of the symphony based on their ability to be inclusive and change.

3. Wang, Alice. "The American Symphony Orchestra: Renewable Audiences or a Dying Institution?" Senior Thesis, Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, April 2003. <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&type=pdf&doi=d45b101d934815f35e4f956ae311d5d1392e481c>.

Wang's thesis begins by suggesting that the audience for classical music is largely older than the general populace, and that when that generation passes, there will be too low a quantity of other interested people to support the needed numbers for symphonies to succeed. She immediately contradicts that statement, however, saying that the audience base has actually broadened. Furthermore, revenue has increased for orchestras, but inflation and other factors are not considered in that metric. Wang also suggests that while the situation surrounding orchestras may become more dire in the future, there are initiatives being taken to counteract that. The activity in the conversation could not be more obvious; Wang's thesis directly takes a role in the ongoing issues regarding attendance and uses statistics from American orchestras to suggest that the attendance issue is not as bad as it may first appear. Wang's authority is substantiated by the acceptance of her thesis by the advisor, Stan Katz.

#### **Scholarly Journal Articles:**

4. Babbitt, Milton. 1958. "The Composer as Specialist." *High Fidelity* 8, no. 2 (February 1958): 38–40, 126–27. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400841226.48>.

Babbitt's article helps one to understand the underlying issues music is/was facing around the time of publication, and it can be used to help describe the decline in interest in music. Babbitt's article argues that nobody cares if you listen to or care about the music being written, especially when the purpose of the music being written is to be academic in nature. However, the music Babbitt talks about is largely unrelatable for the common audience, and would not be something non-musicians would generally be interested in. This can lead to a decreased turnout or interest in classical music. The conversation is indirectly related to the topic, as this kind of academic or hard to understand music can, again, kill interest and participation. Babbitt's authority is based on his education, but furthermore his career; Babbitt was on faculty at Princeton for almost 30 years, and afterwards, he was on faculty at Juilliard.

5. Borgonovi, Francesca. "Performing Arts Attendance: An Economic Approach." *Applied Economics* 36, no. 17 (2004): 1871–85. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0003684042000264010>.

Borgonovi's article is concerned with how education, prices, and government policy affect attendance and interest in the arts. She asserts that participation is highly correlated with the education of the arts, and that providing more funding for the arts will allow for more participation, although that education doesn't necessarily correlate to regular attendance. Statistics and controls are used as evidence for these claims. Her authority is that she is a professor at the University College London, as well as at the Paris School of International Affairs. This article is relevant as it is directly concerned with participation and attendance in the arts.

6. Feist, Andy. "Comparing the Performing Arts in Britain, the US and Germany: Making the Most of Secondary Data." *Cultural Trends* 8, no. 31 (1998): 29–47. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09548969809365048>.

This article examines the differences between American, German, and British arts participation, and supplies data about each populace. This is relevant because it provides insight

into the general interest of the population and, indirectly, helps one draw conclusions about whether interest is decreasing or not. The article is in conversation with the topic at hand through the data presented, albeit not directly. Dr. Feist's authority is supported by his education and his position working at City University.

7. Kolb, Bonita M. "The Effect of Generational Change on Classical Music Concert Attendance and Orchestras' Responses in the UK and US." *Cultural Trends* 11, no. 41 (May 2009): 1–35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09548960109365147>.

Kolb's article agrees with many others, suggesting that with population growth there is no growth in concert attendance. The primary argument is that the decline in participation isn't at the fault of music education or funding, but rather at the fault of changing interests and demographics. This puts the article into direct conversation with the likes of Hayley Graham's research, as it completely disagrees with the idea that increasing funding or education will increase turnout. Kolb uses audience attendance statistics to support her arguments, as well as the change over time in the interest of live music. Her authority is supported by her teaching position as well as the 13 works she has had published.

8. Moore, Jeanne. "Poverty and Access to the Arts: Inequalities in Arts Attendance." *Cultural Trends* 8, no. 31 (1998): 53–73. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09548969809365050>.

The primary argument presented in this journal is that, while access to events may be free, access to the arts is restricted to people who are poorer. This is in direct conversation with the topic at hand, as these types of restrictive barriers affect concert attendance to those who may be interested otherwise. The evidence provided is based on statistics, such as the level of education one has, their income, and their involvement with the arts within the past year. The article also synthesizes research done by research centers or other professionals and provides reasons that social barriers may exist for people on a lower income. Moore's authority is based upon her history of teaching, as well as her education and continued publication of research.

9. Pompe, Jeffrey, and Lawrence Tamburri. "The Symphony Orchestra in the Time of COVID-19: Will American Orchestras Rise from the Ashes?" *Cultural Trends* 32, no. 1 (February 2022): 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09548963.2022.2044266>.

Pompe and Tamburri's article focuses on the financial aspect of concert attendance, and how financial hardship on a national level directly affects participation and attendance of symphony concerts. Their primary argument is that orchestras must adapt and respond to these hardships in order to thrive, and they use audience turnout data from symphonies to demonstrate this. This is in direct conversation with many articles on this subject which focus on initiatives to boost audience turnout at concerts. Their article presents a correlation between unemployment and audience turnout by year, as well as how ticket prices can affect those numbers. Their authority is based on their respective teaching jobs, as well as the presentation of the research that they did.

10. Ravanas, Philippe. "Company Profile: Hitting a High Note: The Chicago Symphony Orchestra Reverses a Decade of Decline with New Programs, New Services and New Prices." *International Journal of Arts Management* 10, no. 2 (Winter 2008): 68–78. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41064954>.

Ravanas makes a point of detailing the selfish or imprudent approach to ticket prices and the like at the beginning of his article, and this is done to demonstrate how the symphony can rebound from poor decisions. The argument made is that reducing access to the symphony in turn reduces turnout and diversity, and that making it more accessible is the way to build a sustainable customer base. Additionally, the music programmed affects audience turnout, and through initiatives, the symphony can increase both turnout and diversity of attendees. This is in conversation with other articles that detail ways to increase participation through symphony led initiatives. Ravanas is an international lecturer on economics, and his background in drums helps to lead interest in the arts.

### **Secondary / Tertiary Monographs:**

11. Andreasen, Alan R. *Expanding the Audience for the Performing Arts*. Washington, D.C.: Seven Locks Press, 1990.

This paper asserts that art participation has been increasing, which directly disagrees with most sources on this topic. The primary argument is that initiatives and promotion, intentional or not, are the ways to increase audience participation and expand audience demographics. They assert that the typical audience member doesn't get into music by chance, but by choice, and that it is the artistic director's responsibility to generate interest for those who aren't interested already. The conversation continues the conversation with a disagreement to the assertions most sources make. It is still relevant, however, because it claims that it is on musicians to generate interest and prevent attendance decline.

12. Love, Jeffrey, and Bramble Klipple. *Arts Participation and Race/Ethnicity: An Analysis of 1982, 1985, and 1992 SPPA Surveys*. National Endowment for the Arts, 1995.

This work, as is obvious from the title, analyzes the ways in which race and ethnicity influence one's general participation in the arts. The paper focuses heavily on these factors, including change over time, and doesn't examine big picture things as much. Their evidence is overwhelmingly statistics heavy, with the majority of the information presented being done so with tables which follow the summing of said information. The source is in conversation with the topic, but it does not agree or disagree with anything, per se. It simply presents data. The authority of the paper is both in the education of the authors, but also in the fact that it is a government sponsored paper (National Endowment for the Arts). The paper helps to present data that is correlated with the decline of the arts which can be extrapolated from to form initiatives to stimulate change.