

EVERYBODY IN? CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON PARTICIPATORY ONLINE CLASSICAL MUSIC
PROJECTS

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ABSTRACT

Joanna Evelyn Helms: Everybody In? Critical Perspectives on Participatory Online Classical Music Projects
(Under the direction of Chérie Rivers Ndaliko)

This thesis identifies and critiques a recent trend wherein institutions, composers, performers, and other actors within Western classical music have turned to the internet to produce musical projects that encourage active participation. I define participatory online classical music projects as a cohesive object of study and develop theories through which to understand them, exploring their relationship to traditional understandings of classical music-making and assessing the widespread claims of accessibility, both implicit and explicit, which underlie them. While acknowledging the strengths and value of the projects, I argue for a more critical examination of their claims, in part because the problems they raise are not always immediately evident. I undertake my examination through the lenses of participation, embodied and disembodied practices of performance, and an examination of representation and benefit.

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Writing acknowledgments for a document that was largely composed over the course of two months feels somewhat absurd. And so it might be (although giving appropriate credit for collaborative work is never absurd, as I argue here)—but the truth is that the groundwork for this project has been laid over the course of about three years. In that time, I have benefitted immensely from the wisdom and assistance of a number of people.

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INTRODUCTION

On the evening of April 15, 2009, Conductor Michael Tilson Thomas stepped onstage at Carnegie Hall to thunderous applause and shouts of praise. Standing in front of his orchestra, he introduced the night's event:

Good evening, everybody. Welcome to an evening [that] is definitely a meeting of a lot of different worlds—the real-time world and the online world—and this is definitely an experience of getting acquainted. And for us it's been somewhere between a classical music summit, conference, scout jamboree, with an element of speed-dating thrown in.

He paused while the audience laughed, then continued:

Actually, over the last nine months, so many people from many different countries with different talents, priorities, and perspectives have contributed to the form and content of this evening. And it's such a huge project that I have to tell you, even I don't completely know what the many different teams have been up to and what they're contributing to the final shape of this evening. It's all about these terms that we hear in terms of the internet, like “interactive, creative, fluid, democratic”—these things have nothing to do with the normal world of maestrodom, I can tell you. It couldn't be more different.¹

No, this was no ordinary concert. Thomas was introducing the YouTube Symphony Orchestra, billed as the first ever “collaborative online orchestra” and consisting of musicians from around the world who had been selected based on audition videos they had submitted over YouTube.² Thomas went on excitedly to describe the “diversity of classical music” that would be represented by the evening's program, as well as the passion the assembled musicians from around the world held for performing classical music. Just a week shy of the four-year anniversary of YouTube's first video upload, Thomas described the role that he saw the internet playing in the experience of classical music:

¹ “Act One: YouTube Symphony Orchestra @ Carnegie Hall,” uploaded April 16, 2009, accessed March 25, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ueJcRmfweSM>.

² “Press Release – YouTube Symphony Orchestra,” December 2, 2008, accessed March 25, 2015, <https://sites.google.com/site/youtubesymphonyorchestra/home/online-press-kit/press-release>.

For me, classical music is this great, unbroken, twelve-hundred-year-long span of music from Gregorian chant to electronics that tells us so much about who we have been as people. It's too vast to be defined. But we don't have to define it anymore, we can experience it, the amazing amount of it that is more and more available online, on YouTube...there are great masters of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance and legendary virtuosi and singers and avant-garde recorder ensembles—beyond your imagination.³

Thomas's idea of Western classical music is of something so broad as to be practically universally appealing and relatable. But is classical music really so vast that it defies definition? Who exactly are "we"—we who can learn about "who we have been" from listening to Gregorian chant and electronic music, as well as the "great masters" of millennium-old music? Thomas's claims mirror the universalizing rhetoric commonly associated with the internet—to which he alludes when he brings up the words "interactive, fluid, creative," and above all, "democratic." Perhaps it is this belief in the fundamentally broad appeal of classical music—the idea that people would love it, if only they could have real access to it—that leads its proponents to search for innovative ways to provide that access through the internet. However, it is important not to confuse possibility with reality; classical music may in fact have the potential to appeal to all kinds of listeners, just as the internet can provide outlets for all kinds of users, but there is nothing inherently democratic about either.

Over about the past decade, many prominent individuals and institutions working within the Western classical music tradition have turned to participatory internet projects as a means of demonstrating their efforts to reach out to broader audiences. These projects encourage a variety of modes of participation through open calls for entries, public visibility of submissions, and the encouragement of community-building through commenting, rating, and other forms of online communication. Broadly defined, such projects range from encouragement of live-tweeting during concerts to lighthearted conducting contests to performance competitions clearly aimed at

³ "Act One: YouTube Symphony Orchestra @ Carnegie Hall."

serious amateurs or professionals. I see these projects as constituting a loose but definable trend, in line with a concept that cultural anthropologist Mitsuko Ito labels a “genre of participation”:

“Genres of participation”...suggest different modes or conventions for engaging with new media. A notion of participation addresses similar problematics as [sociological] concepts such as habitus or structuration, linking activity to social and cultural structure. More closely allied with humanistic analysis, a notion of “genre,” however, foregrounds the interpretive dimensions of human orderliness...We recognize certain patterns of representation (textual genres) and in turn engage with them in social, routinized ways (participation genres).⁴

The projects included in this thesis can be considered a genre of participation because they encourage certain forms of interaction. Although the specifics may vary in substance and form, identifiable patterns of representation arise because the projects engage with Western art music traditions and conventions and are presented through online media. These patterns in turn produce certain patterns of participation, such as uploading files as a form of musical contribution or exploring a multimedia website as a form of listening.

I have compiled a list of a number of projects that I include in this genre by nature of the fact that they are participatory, involve online technology, and engage in some way with Western classical music. By participatory, I mean that they seek to involve a broad range of people in the production of a musical experience, rather than limiting general involvement to consumption. By online, I mean that some kind of internet technology is vital to that musical experience, whether this means downloading an app, sending a message, or streaming video, among many other possibilities. And by Western classical music, I mean the set of practices and traditions associated with art music primarily originating in Europe or in European diasporic communities around the world, typically revolving around a canonized set of repertoire and performance conventions.

I have limited my focus to Western classical music projects to draw attention to some of the unique implications of claims of democratization as applied to this genre. Many online

⁴ Mitsuko Ito, et al., *Hanging Out, Messing Around, and Geeking Out: Kids Learning and Living with New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), 15.

participatory projects involve popular music, from The Johnny Cash Project—in which user-submitted and -curated artwork accompanies Cash’s song “Ain’t No Grave”—to UNICEF’s #IMAGINE campaign, in which participants around the world uploaded videos of themselves singing John Lennon’s “Imagine.” But classical music has lately been undergoing a self-reflective image crisis that does not map well onto most popular music.⁵ Classical music is more likely to be associated with a number of barriers to entry in terms of knowledge and skills required as well as financial limitations: guitars and amps may be fairly expensive, but they cost nowhere near as much as a top-notch violin. These barriers, combined with common perceptions of elitism of patrons, performance space, and social conventions associated with classical performance means that the genre of classical music, broadly defined, has something special to gain from association with the ostensibly democratic space of the internet. It is not difficult to imagine some possible publicity or branding goals underlying classical participatory projects—to respond to ubiquitous claims that the classical music world is out of touch or stuck in the past, to engage audiences who are increasingly used to more interactive models of entertainment, and to reach younger generations of listeners through media that are more familiar to them, to name just a few possibilities.⁶

⁵ Anxieties about classical music’s waning viability are so ubiquitous in contemporary music criticism as to be difficult to pin down. There is a litany of literature demonstrating this point, from listening guides that attempt to make the genre more accessible to calls to action for the classical world. For a decade-by-decade cross-section of examples by authors of varied backgrounds: Michael Walsh, *Who’s Afraid of Classical Music* (New York: Fireside, 1989); Norman Lebrecht, *Who Killed Classical Music? Maestros, Managers, and Corporate Politics* (Secaucus, NJ: Carol Publishing Group, 1997); and Lawrence Kramer, *Why Classical Music Still Matters* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007). The issue is so pervasive that there are even attempts to counteract it, as in William Robin’s tongue-in-cheek article tracing the death-of-classical-music narrative back to the 14th century, “The Fat Lady is Still Singing,” *The New Yorker*, January 29, 2014, <http://www.newyorker.com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/culture/culture-desk/the-fat-lady-is-still-singing>. Will Boone—dealing specifically with classical music’s relationship to the internet—also offers some useful examples in the introduction to his 2008 MA thesis from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, *Composing Playlists, Conducting Streams: The Life of Classical Music in the Internet Age*.

⁶ Kimberly B. Schultz recorded some of these motivations in conversation with staff of select orchestras in her 2009 Webster University MFA thesis, “How Symphony Orchestras in Chicago, St. Louis, and Peoria use

The projects I have included in this thesis (listed with brief descriptions in the appendix) range in date from 2008 to the present and constitute a diverse group of participatory forms.⁷ This list is surely incomplete. But in choosing to discuss trends and complications in recent classical music participation online, rather than to present an overview of a single project or a comparison of a select few, I identify several critical issues that could be relevantly applied to any number of similar projects. Through these issues, I use my examples to advance existing critical frameworks, as well as to develop new ones that address new forms of music-making not yet thoroughly theorized in music scholarship.

Part of the work I do in this thesis, then, is to define participatory online projects as a cohesive object of study and develop theories through which to understand them, teasing out the ways in which they both connect to and depart from traditional understandings of classical music-making. The remainder of my work is to uncover and assess the claims of accessibility, both implicit and explicit, that lie beneath them. Although participatory online projects often promise broad inclusion and expansion of the classical audience, these promises are certainly not fulfilled universally or evenly. Even when projects arguably do broaden musical inclusivity, they can create new problems, for example by misrepresenting participants in publicity materials and by exploiting musical labor. As much as I find value in all of these projects—and I do often find myself amazed by the creative thought and potential for musical exploration, the genuine connections that participants develop with each other, and the art itself—it is also necessary to

Social Media Tools to Connect with the Public”; see for example a discussion of audience age and social media relevance on 55–56.

⁷ I explain my rationale more fully in a prefatory note to the appendix, but one notable exclusion deserves mention here. I have not included mobile (phone or tablet) apps that are intended mostly for personal use, meaning that they are constructed without at least one of the following options: capturing, sharing, or exploring others’ creations. Although individual users could decide to use these apps as participatory media, their construction encourages and is optimized for a different type of use (i.e., personal, rather than collective, experimentation).

examine them critically, especially because the issues they raise are not always immediately evident.

The three chapters of this thesis roughly correspond to the life cycle of a typical online project—from initial contact with a project (participation), to involvement in a musical activity (performance), to the presentation and representation of the action that took place (production and promotion). Chapter 1 discusses what it means to participate in an online musical project and what allows people to participate. Critically examining the rhetoric of participation and democracy that accompanies many online projects, I consider who might be included and excluded from making classical music online. Chapter 2 explores the meaning of performance in an online setting, particularly considering the relationship of performance to the body. This chapter challenges a common scholarly and popular dialectic construction of live, in-person performance as strictly embodied and technologically mediated performance as strictly disembodied. Chapter 3 examines the ways in which classical music aesthetics affect the production decisions behind projects' final musical products, as well as the way participants are represented in publicity materials in order to advertise online projects as inclusive. The chapter closes with a discussion of labor and exchange, which ties in to questions about the value of musical work in the internet age.

In this thesis, some projects will be discussed more frequently or in greater depth than others. There are a few reasons for this unevenness. Some projects simply have generated a greater volume of accessible material than others. Other projects offer better opportunities for discussion of the particular issues I raise. Although I do make some generalizations, I do not claim that all of the topics I discuss, the critiques I raise, or the aspects I find positive are relevant to all of the projects. I have given specific examples whenever possible, and have made a conscious effort to reference each project listed at least once. Although each project is unique, it shares certain characteristics with others that lend them all to inclusion in the collection as a whole and

comparison with others. At times, it will be evident that critiques or praise I levy at one project could equally apply to another, even though I have not explicitly drawn these connections.

My methodology combines extensive internet research and analysis with ethnographic research, considering perspectives of both project organizers and participants. In my internet research, I have explored project websites and apps as well as consulting news coverage, forums, comments, Kickstarter pages, and a variety of other affiliated sites. My ethnographic work takes two forms—some of it overlaps with this online research, as online comments inform my understanding of participant experiences; I also performed several interviews with select participants and organizers from a few projects that I considered more substantial in terms of length, effort, or breadth of experience: the YouTube Symphony Orchestra, *In B-flat*, Eric Whitacre’s Virtual Choir, and the World Online Orchestra.⁸ I am very grateful to Patrick Chapman, Mads Damsbo, Megan Davies, Christy-Lyn Marais, and Darren Solomon, as well as several of my graduate colleagues from Indiana University, for sharing their experiences with me.

Throughout the thesis, I use some slippery but unavoidable terminology that deserves explanation. With *participant* or *performer*, I refer to someone who has played a role in contributing to the material included in the project—to the substance of the project itself. A participant may be someone who posts to or reads Twitter during a concert event, someone who submits a contest entry, or someone who uploads a video of themselves making music. With *audience* or *observer*, I refer to someone who encounters the project after its creation. An audience member may be someone who reads what people tweeted at a concert after the concert has ended, someone who browses through and watches contest entries or winners, or someone who views a compilation of

⁸ I have italicized the title *In B-flat* throughout this document to acknowledge the way in which Darren Solomon (its creator) described the project to me—as an open, collaborative composition. Other project names are not italicized according to standard formatting conventions, as they tend to name the ensemble or the concept rather than a work of art that is produced. This decision is not intended to suggest that *In B-flat* is somehow more valuable than other projects, although perhaps it will draw the reader’s attention to the strangeness of applying traditional formatting to projects that often stretch traditional concepts of authorship and presentation.

other people's online performances. These two groups are not rigid and in fact often overlap; the online composition *In B-flat*, for example, is designed so that listeners who encounter the site, even several years after it was first uploaded, play an active role in the realization of each specific performance by choosing which moments of several given videos to play at any moment. I have had to make conscious and subjective, though informed, decisions about where exactly the "substance of the project" lies in any given instance. An occurrence of any of these four terms throughout the text represents such a conscious decision.

Contemporary online practices of any kind, I would argue, represent an emergent cultural form. The internet today is used constantly and thus is evolving constantly, both technologically and socially, in real and radical ways. In my analysis of the practices and productions of online contemporary classical music projects, I raise criticisms that do not always have easy solutions or prescriptions, particularly given that it is impossible to know how interactions with technology will change tomorrow, much less several years in the future. I also aim to illuminate positives and possibilities, in the hopes that these provide some guide for what could change for the better even as future developments are unknown and unknowable. I invite my readers to set aside their desires for clear-cut pronouncements and navigate this emergent landscape with me.

CHAPTER 1: PARTICIPATION

The most fundamental common characteristic to all of the projects under consideration in this thesis is an underlying ideal of participation. This ideal has occupied an important place within the context of the cultural reception of Western classical music in the United States and Europe, both in the past and more recently—responding to perceptions that classical music is intellectually, economically, and socially exclusive. Playing classical music requires a great deal of time, equipment, knowledge, and money, partly because audiences expect professional classical performances to meet certain aesthetic and technical standards. It would be contrary to the conventions of a symphony orchestra performance to have someone who has never held a violin before play on stage, as this would certainly yield a musical result that would either confuse or anger concert-goers.⁹ In most professional performances, the performers are a limited group of people, selected primarily on the basis of their musical abilities. Amateur classical performances typically use the professional model as a standard; while audiences may have lower expectations of musical ability (although not necessarily, as in the Van Cliburn piano competition), they typically expect the performers to come as close to a professional standard as possible.

Just as classical performers adhere to certain conventions and tend to have certain backgrounds, there are certain conditions associated with being a member of a classical audience. The act of attending classical performances in Europe and the United States has often served as a

⁹ The Portsmouth Sinfonia, an amateur performance group active in England in the 1970s that required its members (including co-founder Gavin Bryars and, at one time, Brian Eno and Michael Nyman) play non-familiar instruments to the best of their ability, is one notable exception. On the other hand, its eventual positive reception—including a popular single and several albums—may have depended upon its perception as a novelty act. See Michael Parsons, “The Scratch Orchestra and Visual Arts,” *Leonardo Music Journal* 11 (2001): 5–11.

signifier of the attendees' prestige, taste, education level, and social background.¹⁰ It has also demonstrated that audience members have the financial means for admission, appropriate attire, and in some cases sponsorship or donations. Even in parts of the world where these barriers to entry are significantly reduced by lower ticket prices and less lofty expectations in terms of attire and financial contribution, audience members still have to meet certain conditions just to be in attendance. They have to be able to get to and from the concert venue. They have to have the free time to be at a concert in the first place.

The traditional conditions of classical performance have thus tended to be somewhat prohibitive—if not, in fact, exclusionary—to a number of potential listeners, especially in terms of socioeconomic barriers. But the greater concern for many modern commentators, particularly those focused on increasing attendance at classical events, is the performer-audience divide.¹¹ Twenty-first century audiences find classical performances intellectually inaccessible, a common argument goes, because they do not get to *do* anything. There are so many restrictions telling them what not to do: don't dress too casually; don't clap or make any noise except at the beginning and end of a piece (and certainly not between movements); don't fidget with your phone; don't eat, drink, sleep, read a book, or do anything else that suggests you're not paying full attention to the

¹⁰ See, for example, Tia DeNora's sociological discussions of prestige in late 18th-century Viennese concert culture in *Beethoven and the Construction of Genius: Musical Politics in Vienna, 1792-1803* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); and Pierre Bourdieu's critical application of taste to classical music in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), especially 11–18.

¹¹ Related to the concerns about the accessibility and relevance of classical music cited in the introduction, the arguments I paraphrase here were especially common in the second half of the first decade of the 2000s, coinciding with an upswing in informal performances at venues like (le) poisson rouge (opened 2008 in Manhattan) and through organizations like Classical Revolution (founded 2006 in San Francisco). See, for example, Chloe Veltman, "Classical Music Moves from Concert Hall to Cafes," *The New York Times*, August 4, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/05/us/05bcculture.html?_r=1. However, the rhetoric and mentality behind this movement arguably also have a much longer history; for example, many orchestras attempted to attract broader audiences through youth education and pops and outdoors concerts throughout the twentieth century.

performance at hand. The only actions that are allowed are watching and listening.¹² Such activities are insufficient to hold the attention of people who have grown up in an interactive, internet-filled environment, full of stimuli waiting to be manipulated and shaped by them.

One proposed response to this crisis is a participatory ideal. This ideal says that listening is not enough. Listening is passive, receptive. For an audience to be truly engaged—actually invested enough in the performance to get out of the house to attend a concert—they need to feel more involved in the performance. And so classical orchestras and opera companies open up social media sections, in which audience members are encouraged to post to Twitter throughout the concert, or they create contests in which audience members can try their hands at air conducting. Classical composers invite performers of all kinds to compete to perform their music in an innovative way, using YouTube to upload videos of their performances. The local community music ensemble is exploded into a digital compilation video including thousands of musicians.

This chapter examines the claims to increased participation, whether implicit or stated, that accompany many online music projects. The broadest definition of participation in a musical performance includes any type of interaction with it.¹³ Not all participation is identical; a spectator or audience member at a concert participates in one way, and a performer on stage participates in another. Participation may or may not be experienced in the context of a community—it is not dependent on the existence of an underlying community structure for all of the projects I am considering. This is to say that participants in online projects may not self-identify as part of a

¹² Or, of course, pretending that you are watching and listening while allowing your mind to wander aimlessly. David Goodman has explored a similar concept in this in his discussion of “distracted listening” in 1930s radio in “Distracted Listening: On Not Making Sound Choices in the 1930s,” in *Sound in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, ed. David Suisman and Susan Strasser, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 15–46.

¹³ Christopher Small argues for a broad definition of musical participation in *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1998), suggesting a verb “to music” that might include activities as diverse as performance, listening, rehearsal, even ticket collection or stage management, 9.

larger project community; they may think of the project as *a thing I once did* rather than *a group of participants to which I now belong*.¹⁴

Types of musical participation are often judged—both in scholarship and casual conversation—in terms of the amount of activity they involve, on a spectrum ranging from the most active to the most passive. Of the traditional types of engagement in a musical performance, performing is often assumed to be the most engaging, or most active, while listening is generally assumed to be less engaging or more passive. Depending on the context, commentators tend to discuss other activities including movement to the music, organized dance, and the formation of opinions about music as falling somewhere in between the two. An exploration of the judgments involved in determining which kinds of behavior are active and which are passive will help us understand the ways in which people discuss musical participation in online projects.

The Active/Passive Binary

Curator and art critic Nicolas Bourriaud developed his “relational aesthetics” in response to a trend he observed in visual and conceptual art of the 1990s, in which “artistic practice is...focused upon the sphere of inter-human relations.”¹⁵ This art “[takes] as its theoretical horizon the realm of human interactions and its social context, rather than the assertion of an independent and private symbolic space.”¹⁶ Bourriaud asserts that an emphasis on these relations results in the shifting of the (Benjaminian) auras of the artworks “towards their public,” contributing to the audience “*learning to inhabit the world in a better way*,” and offering “ways of living

¹⁴ The issue of community is discussed further in Chapter 2, as I see the act of performance as contributing significantly to the formation of community in a certain subset of participatory projects.

¹⁵ Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, trans. Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods (Dijon: Presses du Réel, 2002), 28. Bourriaud gives several examples of what he considers relational art, including: “Rikrit Tiravanija organizes a dinner in a collector’s home, and leaves him all the ingredients required to make a Thai soup. Philippe Parreno invites a few people to pursue their favorite hobbies on May Day, on a factory assembly line. Vanessa Beecroft dresses some twenty women in the same way, complete with a red wig, and the visitor merely gets a glimpse of them through the doorway,” among others. *Ibid.*, 7–8.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.

and models of action within the existing real.”¹⁷ Ultimately, Bourriaud’s model offers a way of explaining art that creates a different set of relationships between itself and its viewers. This is a model that is more engaged, describing works of art that he characterizes as “convivial, user-friendly...festive, collective and participatory.”¹⁸

Art historian Claire Bishop has responded to certain discourses and works that arose in contemporary art following Bourriaud’s articulation of this concept. In her book *Artificial Hells*, she traces the rise of “participatory art,” connecting it to earlier twentieth-century art movements—Italian Futurism, Proletkult, and Dada—that questioned or refashioned the role of the audience, while also considering the unique conditions of the new post-1990s social turn.¹⁹ One of Bishop’s main critiques of twenty-first century participatory art is that it tends to be judged based on whether or not it encourages or facilitates public participation, rather than on the basis of the type or quality of the participatory interactions it produces or the aesthetic or social issues it raises.

A central concept in Bishop’s discussion is that of active and passive participation. She notes, drawing significantly from Jacques Rancière, that the quality of participation in an aesthetic event has tended to be divided into two categories: the passive, encompassing activities more commonly associated with gallery culture such as observing and contemplating; and the active, considered more hands-on, engaging, and inclusive of the audience. Bishop asserts that this binary contributes to some problems in contemporary participatory art. First, discussion of this binary can lead to participation “becom[ing] an end within itself,” contributing to Bishop’s criticism of judgment on social terms noted above. Second,

¹⁷ Ibid., 58 (emphasis in original) and 13 (emphasis in original). Bourriaud explicitly states that his understanding of aura follows that defined by Walter Benjamin, most famously in “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 217–251.

¹⁸ Ibid., 61.

¹⁹ Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012), 1.

...the binary of active/passive always ends up in deadlock: either a disparagement of the spectator because he does nothing, while the performers on stage do something—or the converse claim that those who act are inferior to those who are able to look, contemplate ideas and have critical distance on the world...As Rancière argues, both divide a population into those with capacity on one side, and those with incapacity on the other.²⁰

Bishop notes that this division resonates with classist perceptions in the art world, where the gallery is the space of the upper class, the middle class have mental space to interpret and consider artwork, and the lower class can only relate to the art physically, rather than conceptually or aesthetically. She argues that this approach “reinstat[e] the prejudice by which working-class activity is restricted to manual labor. It is comparable to sociological critiques of art, in which the aesthetic is found to be the preserve of the elite, while the ‘real people’ are found to prefer the popular, the realist, the hands-on.”²¹ The effects of this prejudice are not limited to a conceptual debate; they affect rationale behind funding and other impactful decisions, which (Bishop argues) can further serve to reinforce class divides.²²

Within musical thought and scholarship, the active/passive binary is commonly reinforced when we discuss the relationship between different musical roles in performance. One example is in Thomas Turino’s definition of participation in *Music as Social Life*. Turino establishes two models of musical performance: participatory and presentational. In presentational performance, “one group of people, the artists, prepare and provide music for another group, the audience, who do not participate in making the music or dancing.”²³ In participatory performance, on the other hand, “there are no artist-audience distinctions, only participants and potential participants

²⁰ Ibid., 37–38.

²¹ Ibid., 38.

²² “To argue, in the manner of funding bodies and the advocates of collaborative art alike, that social participation is particularly suited to the task of social inclusion risks not only assuming that participants are already in a position of impotence, it even reinforces this arrangement.” Ibid.

²³ Thomas Turino, *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2008), 26.

performing different roles, and the primary goal is to involve the maximum number of people in some performance role.”²⁴ Turino intentionally excludes listening and interpretation from his definition of participation:

Sitting in silent contemplation of sounds emanating from a concert stage is certainly a type of musical participation, as is walking in the woods or down a city street to the soundtrack of music coming through the headphones of an iPod. Here, however, I am using the idea of participation in the restricted sense of actively contributing to the sound and motion of a musical event through dancing, singing, clapping, and playing musical instruments when each of these activities is considered integral to the performance.²⁵

Turino is considering a wide range of musical activities across many types of cultures and contexts, highlighting large-scale differences in the value systems of various musical performances. His discussions of value and of group dynamics are particularly useful in explaining a mode of performance in which forms of group participation like dancing or singing are considered an important measure of a performance’s success—an important task given that he seems to be largely addressing readers grounded in Western presentational musical traditions. But by limiting his definition of participation to performance-based activities, his model clearly suggests that such performance-based types of participation are more effective, fulfilling, and vital than others. I would argue that, similar to the commentators that Bishop critiques, Turino subtly encourages a binaristic understanding of participation—an understanding which risks focusing on participation as an end in itself. Such a focus can overlook the qualities of forms of musical engagement that do not seem as active (e.g., listening, thinking, even discussing with others after the performance), writing them off as entirely non-participatory.

This division is not limited to Turino’s work, but is also readily apparent in the rhetoric of these participatory projects, as well as much general discourse on the past and future of classical performance. But listening is a form of participation, if a complicated one, and it can certainly be

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., 28.

integral to performance. In fact, in a mode of performance in which dancing, clapping, singing, and other forms of participation are not the norm, listening becomes all the more important. Without a listening audience, what is the point of such a performance?

Diverse theories of listening suggest that it can be an engaged, conscious act, including widely cited models of Theodor Adorno (writing on listeners of “serious music”) Michel Chion (reduced listening), and Mihály Csíkszentmihályi (listening as flow).²⁶ Listening is not always purely passive. And participation in the form of song, dance, or clapping is not necessarily more fundamentally active than listening, depending on one’s definition of “active.” Such participation can be a rote behavior, a social expectation rather than a form of stimulating or stimulated activity. Sometimes we move along to dance steps almost out of habit—maybe our partner is a poor dancer or leader/follower, or we are pressured into performing a style of dance we know but don’t really enjoy. Sometimes we clap along because the performers ask us to, or we tap our toes, nod our heads, or clap at certain times because doing so increases our social capital by showing that we know we should. It is hard to imagine arguing that people who attend churches in which presentational musical performances are employed do not feel that they are participating in a spiritual and fulfilling ritual. The type of participation is not nearly as important as the feeling that lies beneath it.

Furthermore, to suggest that certain forms of participation are more palatable to an uneducated or uninitiated public of potential listeners, as many project organizers do either explicitly or implicitly, runs the risk of reinforcing a bias similar to the one that Bishop points out in visual art. Perhaps it is true that a general audience would prefer to engage with music through production, rather than through contemplation, creative thought, or discussion. But making such

²⁶ Although these are ideas that run through multiple writings in each author’s work, see for example Theodor Adorno, “On Popular Music,” in *Essays on Music*, trans. Susan H. Gillespie, ed. Richard Leppert (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 437–69; Michel Chion, *Guide to Sound Objects*, trans. John Dack and Christine North (London: 2009); Mihály Csíkszentmihályi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (New York: Harper and Row, 1990).

an assumption also might close off a certain interpretative space that should be open to anyone who wants to engage with a work of art, regardless of their musical background.

It is not enough for critical commentators to decide that participatory projects are beneficial because they encourage people to interact with classical music in ways other than listening. In order to develop a deeper understanding of participatory projects, it is necessary to examine how they engage people, and what happens when people listen in new ways, have new kinds of thoughts, or feel newly energized about what they are hearing. The design of some of these projects even reinforces this view. For his piece *In B-flat*, for example, composer and producer Darren Solomon asked for performers to send him YouTube submissions that followed a certain set of predetermined guidelines. He then chose a group of twenty videos (five of which featured himself) and assembled a website in which he directed visitors to “play these together, some or all, start them at any time, in any order.”²⁷ The project thus engaged a few of its participants as performers, but countless others as listeners and arrangers.²⁸

Perhaps *In B-flat* is participatory solely on the basis of the fact that the listener has to press play—clicking as a form of musical performance, *In B-flat* as a musical instrument. But what differentiates *In B-flat* from many musical instruments is that it provides a limited (though extensive) amount of musical material, passing through several steps of mediation before it gets to the audience. First, Solomon came up with the conditions of the piece; next, the performers came up with the order of the notes, the way the sound was produced, the timbre, and so on, and recorded their contributions; finally, Solomon curated the submissions. At every step, people with relatively advanced musical knowledge judged the material on the basis of whether or not they thought it would adhere to the standards of the project or sound good with other parts. This means that listeners are contained within the final project, still free to explore without having to

²⁷ “*In Bb 2.0*,” accessed March 13, 2015, <http://www.inbflat.net>.

²⁸ Most of the individual videos have play counts of over 1.5 million as of March 15, 2015.

worry about the limitations of their own musical abilities. Instead, they can engage in creative listening, judging and forming opinions about how the different parts interact. There are no objectively wrong notes, only music that sounds right or wrong to the listener—a liberating condition for anyone who is intimidated by the idea of trying to produce music that adheres to preexisting models or aesthetic standards.

Whether we view *In B-flat* as an instrument or a performance, there is something liberating about being able to experiment without fearing negative consequences. What is important is not that participants have the ability to manipulate musical material themselves; technically this is always true for anyone who has access to a musical instrument, including their own voice. What is important is that their listening and behavior is guided by the structure of the project in a way that many participants find new and stimulating, while also removing the need for participants to know how to perform the music themselves. Such an understanding of the project judges it in terms of the experience of participation rather than considering participation as a means in itself.

Accessibility and Inclusion

The promotional rhetoric behind many of the musical projects included in this thesis draws on the active/passive binary, claiming to offer access to more active ways of engaging with music than acting as an audience member, including performing and commenting in real time. This claim is one of conceptual accessibility. At the same time, promotional materials often emphasize a more physical kind of accessibility—bringing a classical music community to people who have none near them, feel threatened by classical music culture, or (in fewer cases) are barred from participating in more traditional forms of classical performance by the inability or refusal to accommodate their physical impairments by those who coordinate those traditional forms.

In this section, I analyze some representative examples of the rhetorical strategies employed both by promoters of the projects and the press in representing the projects to the

public in order to establish the ways in which they tend to discuss participation and accessibility. Although I am providing only a few of these examples, this emphasis on access (whether conceptual or physical) is a pervasive trend and can almost certainly be found in one way or another in any of the projects I have considered. Because project claims vary based on the aims and format of the project, I will break my examples into two broad types: first, projects that use the internet or online technologies to encourage the flow of information about music; and second, projects that invite participants to act in a performance role.

The first category, those projects encouraging the exchange of information and ideas about music, consists largely of projects that use Twitter or similar textual platforms in real time to allow audience members to respond to a musical event as they hear it.²⁹ There is sometimes an educational or informative component, but there is often more emphasis either on creating a personal listening experience or on dialogue between experts (conductors, historians, performers, and so on) and the audience than in traditional forms of audience education such as program notes or pre-concert lectures.

A number of classical groups and institutions have encouraged audiences to join in on Twitter, following along with tweets by the hosts of the concert and posting their own comments—a process commonly known as live-tweeting. The earliest mention I have found of live-tweeting a classical concert is a July 30, 2009 concert by the (American) National Symphony Orchestra, in which associate conductor Emil de Cou prepared a series of explanatory tweets about Beethoven's Sixth Symphony and encouraged concert attendees—listening outdoors at Wolf Trap National Park in Washington, DC—to follow along. In a preview article for the concert for PBS, de Cou explains that he would like to encourage audiences to see Beethoven as a more relatable

²⁹ Twitter, an online social network founded in 2006, allows its users to send and read messages with lengths of 140 characters or fewer. In keeping with contemporary terminology, I refer to these messages as “tweets,” and the act of composing and sending them as “tweeting.” “Live-tweeting” is any coordination of an event in real time with the release or exchange of messages over Twitter. Users registered with Twitter can both compose and read tweets; users who do not have an account can only read posted tweets.

figure, saying, “People like to think of Beethoven as a bust on a piano, but I’d rather people think of him as a grungy foul-mouthed guy...to look at his music not as Holy Scripture, but as the primitive markings of some genius, and really make it come alive.” The author of the article hopes that the tweeting and further ventures will be able “to break down the barriers of unfamiliar classical music.”³⁰

Such activities are not limited to Twitter, but may be hosted on other online platforms as well. I participated in similar events myself, both as moderator and audience member, as a master’s student at Indiana University (IU). Since 2009, IU musicology graduate students regularly research and write scripts to accompany live online broadcasts of the university’s opera productions, a process that the school calls “live blogging.”³¹ In a live chat room hosted on the IU music website, my collaborator and I sent out our script section by section, timing our comments to the action on stage at the performance of Giuseppe Verdi’s *Falstaff*. While watching the live stream and our remarks, audience members could comment in the chat room and participate in polls and quizzes that we had designed related to the performance.

It is difficult to analyze the IU opera live blogging in terms of its public rhetoric. The school does not normally publicize these interactive notes other than in passing in press releases and via a small banner underneath the video when a performance stream is live. However, we as bloggers had our own internal rhetoric during our preparation about how the project should function and whom it should address, informed by the ideas of a number of faculty members and administrators in the Jacobs School of Music. This rhetoric envisioned our listeners as largely uninformed about the work being performed, but with a vocal minority of users with more

³⁰ “NSO to Live Twitter Performance of Beethoven,” PBS *Newshour*, July 29, 2009, accessed January 27, 2015, <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/art/nso-to-live-twitter-performance/>.

³¹ Live broadcasts of musical performances are in themselves a way of making musical events more broadly accessible; Fabian Holt argues that livestreamed performances have profound implications for how listeners experience music based on visual expectations in “Is Music Becoming More Visual? Online Video Content in the Music Industry,” *Visual Studies* 26, no. 1 (2011): 50–61.

extensive knowledge. The style of our writing tended to reflect this range, aiming to be understandable to a general audience while including a few in-depth observations and historical details to keep more familiar listeners engaged.

A more widely publicized example of interactive audience outreach is the Philadelphia Orchestra's LiveNote app, released in 2014. The app functions as live program notes, allowing listeners to follow the performance with slides that automatically change when the orchestra gets to certain points in the piece. The app is designed to be unobtrusive for audience members who do not wish to use it, with a dark background and gray text.³² LiveNote does not have a commenting function, but it allows listeners to swipe through the notes at their own pace if they wish and view other materials during the performance, including a musical dictionary and a copy of the printed program notes.

Despite the lack of dialogic emphasis of the LiveNote app, there are many other aspects of the concept and its marketing that tune into the concepts of accessibility and participation. First, the app is flexible and allows listeners the freedom to flip to other types of information whenever they wish to construct their own listening experience, a fact that is highlighted both in the promotional video for the app and on its website.³³ At \$25 per ticket, the LiveNote concerts are among the orchestra's more affordable offerings, surpassed only by family events and reduced ticket options for college students.³⁴ They occur earlier in the evening—the orchestra's website suggests this is so attendees can plan to go out to dinner afterwards—and last only an hour,

³² "A critical feature of LiveNote is that it has been developed to have minimal impact on concertgoers in the hall...The application is designed with grey text on a black background specifically to minimize light and disruption. The content is custom designed for each piece to optimize the experience of hearing the work without distraction." "Introducing LiveNote™ Nights," *The Philadelphia Orchestra*, accessed March 17, 2015, <https://www.philorch.org/introducing-livenote%E2%84%A2-nights#/>.

³³ Ibid. and "LiveNote™--The Philadelphia Orchestra's Concert Hall Mobile App" uploaded October 2, 2014, accessed March 17, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5qr4xTje6RA>.

³⁴ Ticket prices appear to originally have been set at \$45, but were reduced sometime between January and March 2015. "Introducing LiveNote™ Nights," as accessed January 27, 2015 and March 17, 2015.

shorter than most other programs. And the tickets are even egalitarian; whereas ticket prices escalate quickly for more desirable seats at other events, all of the seats on LiveNote nights cost the same price. The website stops short of actually promising that the app and its associated events will provide a more involved experience, but comes close in claiming that the app will “[engage] you in an interactive and informative forum, including an electrifying performance of the music.”³⁵ But the extent to which the experience can be considered a “forum” is questionable, given that the app itself does not encourage any form of communication or exchange.

The second type of project encourages participants to be engaged in some type of performer role. Projects of this type usually ask performers to upload videos or recordings of themselves, and include a variety of contests as well as ensemble projects like the YouTube Symphony Orchestra, Eric Whitacre’s Virtual Choir, and the World Online Orchestra. Because these projects involve a different type of activity, they also tend to use a different type of participatory rhetoric that particularly emphasizes the benefits of “active” involvement in music-making (i.e., performing).

The YouTube Symphony Orchestra (YTSO) was an early and ambitious participatory classical music project jointly coordinated by YouTube and the London Symphony Orchestra. The symphony’s first iteration, announced in 2008, offered two options for participation. One option was analogous to a traditional orchestra audition: participants uploaded videos of themselves performing standard solo and orchestral repertoire in the hopes of being invited to play live at Carnegie Hall under the direction of Michael Tilson Thomas. The other option for participation was to compete for inclusion in a digitally compiled performance of Tan Dun’s *Internet Symphony*, *Eroica*, newly composed for the occasion.³⁶ Applicants for the digital performance played their supplied parts individually, following a track of Tan conducting for synchronization, then

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ This piece is also occasionally styled as *Internet Symphony no. 1 ‘Eroica’*.

uploaded their performances to YouTube for consideration. There was also an option to record instruments that were not included in the score; this was in fact encouraged in an official FAQ.³⁷ It is unclear from the contest rules how these entries were judged—except that they were not scored by the same rubric used for the other type of entry. Ultimately, however, a number of videos (including several featuring instruments not included in the original scoring, such as saw, various acoustic and electric guitars, recorder, sho, pipa, toy piano, melodica, harmonica, and voice) were selected and combined into a so-called “mashup” premiere released online a day after the orchestra’s live concert.³⁸

YouTube presented the competition as open to “professionals and amateur musicians of all ages, locations and instruments.”³⁹ The website cheerfully informed prospective participants that the new answer to the age-old question of how to get to Carnegie Hall was simply to “practice and upload.”⁴⁰ Promotional materials also encouraged audience feedback on the submitted audition videos, both through commenting and by voting for videos that had been selected as finalists and posted to the YouTube Symphony channel. The latter was even presented as a participatory alternative to being able to contribute one’s own video in the contest FAQ:

Q: I don’t play an instrument, but I’d still like to be involved. How can I help?

A: Thank you for your interest! You can certainly help this project by encouraging participation in your school, city or among your friends. We also hope you’ll return frequently to YouTube to view video submissions for the project and, most importantly, vote for your favorite musicians that you would like to be included in the YouTube Symphony Orchestra during the final stage of the audition process.⁴¹

³⁷ “Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) About the YouTube Symphony Orchestra,” accessed May 2, 2014, archived October 13, 2009 at <https://web.archive.org/web/20090131065519/http://www.google.com/intl/en/landing/ytsymphony/faq.pdf>. The original page is no longer active.

³⁸ This is still only a partial list. See “‘The Internet Symphony’ Global Mash Up,” uploaded April 14, 2009, accessed March 20, 2015, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oC4FAyg64OI>.

³⁹ “YouTube Symphony Orchestra,” accessed March 19, 2015, archived December 4, 2008 at <https://web.archive.org/web/20081204185704/http://www.youtube.com/symphony>. The page is still active, but has since been updated to reflect the 2011 YTSO performance.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

However, the contest rules revealed that the voting had no official bearing on the selection process.⁴² Michael Tilson Thomas was in fact solely responsible for ranking the finalists and determining the final live ensemble using a provided rubric, although he could choose “in his sole discretion use the results of the YouTube user ‘Thumbs Up’ vote as part of determining the final score per Finalist Entry.”⁴³

Other online projects that focus heavily on participation use similar rhetoric claiming to make music-making more accessible. Eric Whitacre frequently presents his Virtual Choir as improving upon a traditional choir model, in which ability and background often might either severely discourage or entirely prohibit potential members from participating. For example, he lists three participants in his 2012 Virtual Choir in a commentary accompanying his 2011 TEDTalk:

- A legally blind man who has never been able to sing in a choir because he couldn't see the conductor. With the Virtual Choir he was able to get close enough to the screen to see me conducting and join the choir for the first time.
- A woman in Zululand (Southern Africa) who had no internet access in her village. She spent two days uploading her video over her mobile phone.
- A woman who sat with her dying mother in hospice, gently holding her hand just offscreen while she recorded her video.⁴⁴

⁴¹ “FAQ About the YouTube Symphony Orchestra.”

⁴² Sarah Carsman pointed out the disparity between promotional claims and the selection process, as well as other aspects of the two YouTube Symphony performances, in a presentation at the 2011 Annual Meeting of the American Musicological Society in San Francisco, “The YouTube Symphony: Orchestrating an Image of Inclusion On and Offline.” I am grateful to her for sharing a copy of this paper with me.

⁴³ “YouTube Symphony Orchestra Official Rules,” accessed May 1, 2014, archived December 17, 2008 at <https://web.archive.org/web/20081217125537/http://www.google.com/intl/en/landing/ytsymphony/terms.html>. The original page is no longer active. YouTube’s general rating system was still based on a five-star model at the time (a thumbs-up/thumbs-down system was gradually introduced in 2010), so the language here refers to a special rating system that was used only for the finalist videos at the time. A thumbs-up or thumbs-down vote could be submitted once per video, per day—whereas a YouTube user could typically only ever submit a single rating for a video. Additional details about rating are available in “FAQ About the YouTube Symphony Orchestra.”

⁴⁴ Eric Whitacre, “Eric Whitacre: Part of Something Larger than Ourselves,” *Huffington Post* (part of the TEDWeekends series), published November 23, 2012, updated November 29, 2012, accessed December 1, 2012, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/eric-whitacre/virtual-choir_b_2175526.html. Note that Zululand

During the TEDTalk itself, Whitacre tells of a woman who is able to sing with her sister through the Virtual Choir despite the fact that her sister is traveling as a member of the Air Force; another participant is isolated geographically (in the “Great Alaskan Bush”) in addition to feeling personally discouraged by her husband’s criticism of her singing abilities.⁴⁵ In all of these cases, the Virtual Choir is represented as providing a solution to a variety of problems that would normally impede participation in a traditional choir: disability, geographic isolation or displacement, time-consuming personal issues, and feelings of exclusion based on lack of training or ability. Although it takes many forms, the rhetoric of accessibility is common to many online projects, both educational and performance-based.

Barriers to Participation

Ethnomusicologist Kiri Miller offers an insightful analysis of the potentials of technology to affect music participation in her ethnographic exploration of interactive media in music, games, and physical practice, *Playing Along*:

So what makes playing along with interactive digital media distinctive? In a word: access. Playing along is a privilege, and achieving its rewards has historically required time, money, and the development of face-to-face relationships. Consider the resources required to play piano four-hands arrangements, perform a classical dance repertoire, act in a theatrical production, join a rock band, or participate in team sports. Such pursuits generally entail in-person, real-time contact with other people: teachers, fellow participants, audiences. Would-be participants have to coordinate their schedules, pay for lessons and special equipment, and submit to the traditional authority of teachers or coaches....[E]ven setting aside [these matters], many communities present explicit or implicit barriers based on gender, age, class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, language, body shape, or physical ability.⁴⁶

in fact refers to a district municipality of South Africa in modern usage (although historically the term described a larger region, i.e. the Zulu Kingdom). I return to this example in Chapter 3.

⁴⁵ “Eric Whitacre: A Virtual Choir 2,000 Voices Strong,” TED, delivered March 2011, uploaded April 2011, accessed November 8, 2012, http://www.ted.com/talks/eric_whitacre_a_virtual_choir_2_000_voices_strong.html.

⁴⁶ Kiri Miller, *Playing Along: Digital Games, YouTube, and Virtual Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 222.

Miller goes on to note that digital media cannot solve all problems of access, observing that “it still takes a certain amount of time, money, physical ability, and commitment-to-practice” to become fluent, and that identity can play a significant role in participation.⁴⁷ Despite a prevalent assumption that the internet serves as a democratizing force, it does not always do so. Although many of the claims to increased accessibility are valid for most people or under certain conditions, the projects might still require a great deal of equipment, time, knowledge, and other qualifications that would exclude certain groups of would-be participants who do not meet those standards.

As an example of the possible barriers involved in online projects, consider the conditions required for involvement in the Virtual Choir. Internet access is needed in order to read the instructions, watch the conducting video, view the score, hear a recording, and eventually upload the finished recording. It is particularly important to have reliable access in order to submit the final video file, which is relatively large in size.⁴⁸ Participants need video and audio recording equipment and the ability to use this equipment in a space appropriate to recording oneself singing—that is, a location in which others will not be disturbed and with a minimum of background noise.⁴⁹ At an even more basic level, they have to have heard about the choir in the first place, either through an online group such as a website, social network, or email list, or through an offline network, especially one interested in this kind of project (e.g., choral singers).

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ In addition to the example mentioned above, Megan Davies told me about a participant in Cuba who sent their recording directly to the producers in one small part at a time; it would be inefficient to have every participant do this. Megan Davies, interview with the author, February 25, 2015.

⁴⁹ Melanie Armstrong describes how she recorded herself singing in her bathroom in an attempt to avoid annoying her neighbors. One can imagine that in many other parts of the world where it is more common to live together with several extended family members that it would be very difficult to avoid disturbing or being disturbed by other members of one’s household. Melanie Armstrong, “Musicking in Cyberspace: Creating and Fostering Global Community Through a Virtual Choir” (MA thesis, Tufts University, 2012), 61.

There are also certain types of knowledge required for participation. Participants must be able to read English in order to understand the instructions. They also must possess enough familiarity with recording equipment and software in order to go through the process of creating a video and uploading it, or know someone else who can assist them. There are also musical requirements—aspiring choir members have to learn their parts at the very least, which means that they either have to read Western musical notation or have the aural abilities to determine their part solely from listening to recordings. Participants would certainly benefit from previous choral training to help with tone production, diction, and other technique; at the very least, it would be helpful to have experience following a conductor. Some of these issues of ability can be addressed by interacting with other members online over the forum and live video chats. But these solutions also require many of the conditions above to be true, as well as knowledge of such opportunities for interaction with others.

Participatory online projects often claim to extend classical music to a broader group of participants and audience members, but these claims do not always hold up under closer inspection. In this chapter, I have highlighted the strengths of several online classical projects while also bringing out some of the ways in which they (inadvertently) reinforce existing barriers to access in classical music and create new ones—many of which are not immediately evident from the projects’ press materials and musical products. It is certainly not the responsibility of Whitacre or any of the other project organizers to eliminate all barriers to access. But it is ours as critical thinkers to be aware of potential restrictions and weigh them against the various claims to increased accessibility and participation. Internet technologies are only as democratic and egalitarian as the world in which they function. An awareness of the conditions of inequality surrounding technological, intellectual, and social access to these projects provides a more balanced perspective on their actual ability to include a varied range of participants.

CHAPTER 2: PERFORMANCE

In group musical performances compiled from materials submitted online, at least part of the act of performance is necessarily removed from the body. This separation has already been the subject of extensive intellectual debate. To name just one example, Kiri Miller has used the term “schizophonic performance” to refer to situations in which performers play along with a prerecorded performance (for example, while playing the popular games *Guitar Hero* and *Rock Band*), following terminology of R. Murray Schafer describing the “splitting [of] the sound from the makers of the sound.”⁵⁰ Schafer intended his neologism to be a “nervous word,” full of both positive and negative potential ramifications of the ways in which we interact with sound; his hesitance falls into a long tradition of criticism of the act of capturing and replaying performance, a tradition active for basically the entire history of recorded sound.⁵¹ However, it is also possible to conceive of recorded and remixed performance in a positive light—in comparison with embodied performance instead of in opposition to it. As Miller points out, schizophonic performance and embodied performance have much in common: “We still have bodies and we still have to practice, whether we’re playing *Guitar Hero* or a guitar with strings. Moreover, we still

⁵⁰ Miller, *Playing Along*, 15; quoted *ibid.*, 12. Miller gives the reference for the latter as R. Murray Schafer, *The New Soundscape: A Handbook for the Modern Music Teacher* (Ontario: BMI Canada, 1969), 46; I do not find that quotation there, although he does refer to schizophonia on that page as “the cutting free of sound of its natural origins.” Miller is considering an opposite process from the one that takes place in these online projects; in her cases, a performance becomes embodied through human interaction with a recording, and here human actions become disembodied through the act of recording.

⁵¹ Schafer, *The New Soundscape*, 47. Miller compiles a list of examples of ambivalence toward recorded sound in her introduction, from “early critics of the phonograph” to theorists Theodor Adorno, R. Murray Schafer, Roland Barthes, and Jacques Attali; Miller, *Playing Along*, 12.

have to learn from *other people's* bodies, finding a way to comprehend their kinesthetic knowledge and make it our own.”⁵²

This chapter examines how embodiment operates in the performances associated with online participatory classical music projects, with specific attention to how the mediation of the internet affects activities that usually happen in live performance. Within this chapter, I am looking at a subset of all of the different types of projects explored in this thesis, in which participants take part in an act of performance by submitting videos, rather than performing other actions primarily as members of an “audience” or in some other capacity. The main projects under consideration are the YouTube Symphony Orchestra “Internet Symphony” mashup, the Virtual Choir, *In B-flat*, and the World Online Orchestra.

In this chapter, I analyze music performance at the convergence of new media and old musical traditions and styles, addressing similarities and differences between online performance and traditional, in-person performance.⁵³ I take a broad definition of performance, divided into two main stages of rehearsal and presentation. The first stage, rehearsal, can be broken further down into the processes of community involvement and musical preparation. In the projects considered here, the act of presentation consists of capturing individual performances through audio or video recording and compiling, or assembling or reassembling the various parts of the performance into a recognizable whole. Through a consideration of these aspects, I explore the presence and absence of the body in online performance. But first I examine the discomfort of accepting online group performance as related to embodied, live performance.

⁵² Miller, *Playing Along*, 183 (emphasis in original).

⁵³ With this phrasing I reference Henry Jenkins's definition of convergence: “the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behavior of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want.” The media in the case of online projects might include live concert hall performances, apps, websites, videos, and recordings. Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 2.

Bodies and Togetherness in Group Performance

When I talk to other classical musicians about the Virtual Choir (the project that started my inquiry into this topic), many of them react with skepticism—not necessarily skepticism about the merits of the project as much as about its claims to being a choir. Many classically trained musicians (including myself) have participated in a choir at some point in their lives, and even those who have not usually have performed as a part of some other large ensemble. The Virtual Choir does not mesh with their experiences, does not feel familiar. Most of its members never see one another in person, never rehearse together, never hear themselves along with the other performers' voices until a production team assembles the final video.

Why are we as musicians so skeptical of understanding this and other participatory projects as musical performance? A cynical view might suggest that we are stuck in the past, resistant to the opportunities for collaboration that new technologies afford. I am not quite so cynical. If I question my own initial resistance to the concept, I find that what I enjoy about the experience of performing in a large ensemble simply feels unique to an embodied context. So much of the experience of live musical group performance is multisensorial and reactive. When I played flute and oboe in middle school band, one of my favorite things about performing was feeling the vibrations of the stage under my feet—the lower frequencies and greater amplitude of the tones produced by the low brass instruments resulted in physical motion that I could not ever hope to create on my own instruments. When I solo as a flutist in the charanga at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, I feel myself affected by the rhythm section's variations on the basic patterns they repeat underneath my improvisation. We react to one another. Perhaps even more importantly, I notice changes in less articulable elements—energy, mood, vibe—based on the level of the excitement of others in the room, from the other performers to the audience (whether seated in a hall or dancing in a crowded club).

These experiences are not the only reason I have found myself skeptical of the idea that online group music-making can substitute for the experience of making music in person. The most important reason lies in the smile I shared with my best friend across the stage in our band concert at a particular moment in the program, laughing to ourselves at the way our conductor always moves at that moment while (mostly) maintaining outward decorum for the sake of the audience. It also lies in the surprise ending our charanga added to a *son montuno* chart, returning to an earlier section of the piece and adding a heavy metal beat in place of the usual Afro-Cuban rhythms that gave the piece its original structure—an ending that grew out of an in-joke in rehearsal. What these experiences have in common is that they arose from the long process of rehearsal and collaboration that took place in person. Building community takes time, and time spent *together*, in many cases sharing a sustained and intensive effort.

Online interactions do not eliminate shared effort, but they do require us to reconceptualize what it means to be “together” in time and space. Togetherness is a common theme in studies of the internet, verging at times on an anxiety, readily visible in titles such as Sherry Turkle’s *Alone Together* and Felicia Wu Song’s *Bowling Alone, Online Together*.⁵⁴ This discomfort is part of why it is so important to talk about embodiment in online music-making, as it has to do with changing relationships of bodies to each other and of performance (whether social or musical) to the body.

Musically interacting with technology can be uncomfortable for many reasons. One reason is that technology does not yet accommodate our musical needs. For example, latency (delays in data processing, often due to data volume exceeding available bandwidth, that correspond to delays in video and audio) currently prevents most real-time group performance of classical

⁵⁴ Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together* (New York: Basic Books, 2011); Felicia Wu Song, *Virtual Communities: Bowling Alone, Online Together* (New York: Peter Lang, 2009). Song’s title references Robert D. Putnam’s *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), in which Putnam claimed that a decline in in-person interactions (fueled by media that encouraged solitary activities, like television and video games) was destroying American civic values and democratic participation.

music.⁵⁵ For many users, it is also simply frustrating to deal with transmitting a musical idea through two levels of mediation or technology—the instrument (voice or musical object) and the equipment that has to capture it and transmit it to others.⁵⁶ Another reason has to do with a quality that is harder to define: it is fun to spend time making music in person with others, and it leads to a special kind of relationship. It is not the same when the only contact you have with others is in a final video compilation, or when you can kick someone out of your space just by logging off a video chat. There is something about the physicality of our bodies in shared social and physical spaces that is both inconvenient (we have to deal with other people, their expectations, quirks, messiness) and convenient (we do not have to deal with the confusion and frustration of inadequate or unfamiliar technology), and many of us have come to terms societally with navigating those issues. But this changes with online interactions.

Despite all of these reasons that online musical collaboration might feel strange or uncomfortable, the act of moving music-making online opens up new and exciting possibilities. Internet technologies enable collaboration with people who are not physically nearby, and the low cost and wide availability of digital recording equipment means that many (even if not all) people can join in. The development of unique online platforms has the potential to expand the number of people who can play performance roles by providing informative and useful tools for preparing and presenting the music. As more people can get involved in musical activities, they may form

⁵⁵ Latency is not an issue in music that does not require temporal synchronization, and it may be less of an issue as new technologies develop to reduce its effects. A small live Virtual Choir group actually performed live at TED in 2013, but required a special setup in order to avoid latency problems; see http://www.ted.com/talks/eric_whitacre_virtual_choir_live.

⁵⁶ This frustration is evident in many troubleshooting conversations that take place within the Virtual Choir community on Whitacre's forums and on Facebook, although these conversations also show that many participants in that project are likely to turn to other community members for solutions rather than give up at the first sign of a problem. See for example "Video Recording Methods and Equipment for the Virtual Choir," Facebook, posted April 22, 2013 by Jack Rowland, accessed April 7, 2015, <https://www.facebook.com/virtualchoir/photos/a.430963004927.214126.96697614927/10151798973694928/?type=1>.

new communities that never would have existed offline. Online music-making has much positive potential—but it requires a reorientation of embodied conceptions of performance and sociality.

Rehearsal: Community Involvement

The first step towards any classical music performance is rehearsal. Even in classical traditions that incorporate substantial amounts of improvisation, musical groups and the individuals within them must come to an agreement about how a performance will proceed, and that process requires musicians to plan and practice both individually and collectively. I see rehearsal for group performance as divisible into two parts: the constitution of a musical community, and the technical and logistical preparation that that community undertakes for the presentation of a performance.

What is the best way to define community in an online context? There are a number of theoretical options, from political science and sociology to more topically related considerations in the fields of technology studies and music studies.⁵⁷ Most contemporary theories call into question the assumption that community is dependent on place or physical proximity. Benedict Anderson's influential concept of imagined communities, for example, gives that community can be imagined or constructed by any spatially diffuse group whose members feel an affinity, without implying that this affinity is any less real than in locally based communities.⁵⁸ Raymond Williams argues that the understanding of the term "community" as more geographically localized in relation to that of "society" is relatively recent, having developed significantly in the nineteenth century concurrent with the development "of larger and more complex industrial societies."⁵⁹

⁵⁷ For a concise history of some of these applications, see Kay Kaufman Shelemay, "Musical Communities: Rethinking the Collective in Music," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 64, no. 2 (2011): 356–60.

⁵⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 2006), 6.

⁵⁹ Raymond Williams, *Keywords*, revised ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 75. Shelemay cites Williams's definition; see "Musical Communities," 356.

In spite of an intellectual move away from local conceptualizations of community, spatial concepts and metaphors are still strong in discussions of online communities. Some scholars have considered the internet almost literally as a place; René Lysloff, for example, noted in a 2003 study that language describing internet use frequently involves spatial and physical metaphors. This is still true over a decade later, even as terminology has changed slightly; we still “go to” or “visit” websites, and when we navigate (a term with strong spatial implications itself) to a new page we “leave” the old one, for example. Lysloff claimed that participants in the online music community of the mod scene that he observed defined their community in a way that was strongly based on place—but this place was “defined specifically in terms of the internet, rather than the real world.”⁶⁰ Sherry Turkle’s idea that technology makes people “alone together” also relies both on spatial metaphors and actual discussion of space. Both of the words “alone” and “together” can have meaning either in terms of geography (being physically isolated or close to others) and psychology (perceiving oneself to be emotionally isolated or close to others). Turkle plays on these multiple meanings, ultimately arguing, “We are increasingly connected to each other, but more oddly alone.”⁶¹

In an approach that deemphasizes space while still considering its influence, Felicia Wu Song considers the internet as a cultural context. Song views individual online communities in terms of an underlying cultural structure in which the configuration of community is constituted by “structural conditions...[to be understood as] active aspects of a cultural institution that frame and inform the experiences and practices of online life.”⁶² This approach does have some lingering spatial implications; Song quotes the view that “the internet is more like a social space than a

⁶⁰ René T. A. Lysloff, “Musical Community on the Internet: An On-Line Ethnography,” *Cultural Anthropology* 18 (2003): 244.

⁶¹ Turkle, *Alone Together*, 19.

⁶² Song, *Virtual Communities*, 9.

thing,” and claims that her consideration “works against the conventional notion that the internet is primarily about the elimination of spatial and temporal barriers to communication.”⁶³ But as a whole, her approach is focused more on considering the internet as a network of interactions than as terrain. Song’s thirty case studies consider the ways that sites are both designed and used, offering a nuanced approach to the relationship between the technological systems and constructions that undeniably structure online experience and the agency that users exert in adapting those systems to their own needs.

Song keeps her definition of online communities intentionally open, reflecting the wide variety of interactions that tend to be considered under that label. When considering online musical communities, however, a definition may be desirable in order to differentiate music-making from other types of interactions. Kay Shelemay has recently offered a broad definition of musical community that accounts for the possibility of virtual relationships:

A musical community is, whatever its location in time or space, a collectivity constructed through and sustained by musical processes and/or performances. A musical community can be socially and/or symbolically constituted; music making may give rise to real-time social relationships or may exist most fully in the realm of a virtual setting or in the imagination... [A] musical community is a social entity, an outcome of a combination of social and musical processes, rendering those who participate in making or listening to music aware of a connection among themselves.⁶⁴

The breadth of Shelemay’s definition and the flexibility of community boundaries that it offers are useful to my consideration of these online musical projects, as the collective sense and strength of community—and how community is actually constituted—varies from project to project.

Combining Shelemay’s definition with Song’s consideration of the structure and design of virtual communities, I want to focus on these communities’ social processes and how they inform and are informed by their respective project designs.

⁶³ Ibid., 8.

⁶⁴ Shelemay, “Musical Communities,” 364–65.

First, for a community to be socially constituted under Shelemay's definition requires that its members form social groups based on their interactions.⁶⁵ As Shelemay states above, these can be either "real-time or virtual/imagined." In an online setting, these social groups will usually be "imagined" in the strictest sense of Anderson's terminology—its members will probably never meet each other face-to-face, in real time—but they may also go further in that many their members may never directly interact with one another through any means of communication. Shelemay's use of the term "symbolic" draws on Anthony Cohen's understanding of community as "a matter of feeling, a matter which resides in the minds of the members themselves."⁶⁶ This sense of community is based on the use of shared symbols or rituals, which, in this case, are online music performances.

The use of internet media themselves contributes to the sense of community. Scholars and users of the internet have long observed that it is home to communities, and this often leads us to assume that it is thus inherently conducive to the formation of communities. This assumption carries over to reflect on specific sites as well. For example, when the respective organizers of the YouTube Symphony Orchestra, the Virtual Choir, and In B-flat chose YouTube as the primary site for submission, they benefitted from use of a site that was commonly seen as democratic and encouraging social interaction—increasing the likelihood that the projects themselves would be associated with those qualities.⁶⁷ When projects like the Virtual Choir and the World Online Orchestra turned to Kickstarter for funding, they benefitted from the press buzz that Kickstarter had generated, both in terms of its novel ability to mobilize and grow existing communities and

⁶⁵ Shelemay is explicitly drawing here from Turino, *Music as Social Life*.

⁶⁶ Anthony P. Cohen, *Symbolic Construction of Community* (London: Routledge, 1985), 21, quoted in Shelemay, "Musical Communities," 358.

⁶⁷ Whitacre's Virtual Choir used only YouTube to collect video submissions up until Virtual Choir 3: *Water Night*, when the team designed an upload tool hosted on Whitacre's website.

as a community in its own right, with its own understood set of conventions.⁶⁸ In short, the use of pre-existing social media sites can generate or add to a project community, drawing interested users from an existing social network and adding them to the community of project participants.

Furthermore, project designers can encourage certain means of interaction both through design choices and explicit instructions to project participants, both of which may also influence the formation of communities. Eric Whitacre's website, for example, encourages would-be Virtual Choir participants to sign up for an online forum. In this case, the forum provides a space for discussion of the submission process, while also allowing participants (and other Whitacre fans) to keep in touch even when the Virtual Choir is not actively accepting submissions. Virtual Choir participants have supplemented the interactions that take place on the forum and Whitacre's Twitter and Facebook pages with their own activities. These have included Google Hangout sessions in which participants discuss or practice their parts and bond over their participation in the group, occasionally joined by Whitacre himself.⁶⁹

In *B-flat*, in contrast, did not have its own centralized social network—neither one designed by its creator, Darren Solomon, nor one hosted on a pre-existing networking site. To find submissions for the project, Solomon posted on his own blog, which he says does not have much of a following. He later received many more submissions when a blog called *Geekdad* (affiliated

⁶⁸ Kickstarter itself has recognized and responded to this image; in June 2014, the site published a new guide for project creators called the "Creator Handbook" that advised, "Consider your reach: Kickstarter is a great way to share your project with new communities. (There are over one million repeat backers!) That said, most of your support will come from your core networks and the folks who are most familiar with you and your work—family, friends, etc. You'll want to have a good sense of how much support you can reasonably expect from them." "Creator Handbook: Funding," *Kickstarter*, accessed February 15, 2015, <https://www.kickstarter.com/help/handbook/funding>.

⁶⁹ Some participants have shared screencaps of Virtual Choir video chats including Whitacre on his forum, for example, in a thread titled "Have you met Eric? Tell us about your experiences here. Photos and videos, please!," *Ericwhitacre.com* forum, first posted May 2013, accessed February 4, 2015, <http://ericwhitacre.com/forum/discussion/37/have-you-met-eric-tell-us-about-your-experiences-here-photos-and-videos-please/p3>.

with *Wired* magazine) covered the project, leading other blogs to share it with their readership.⁷⁰

Solomon told me that he has seen conversations take place in the comment sections for the individual YouTube videos, as well as on link-sharing sites such as Metafilter and Reddit, but there does not seem to be strong community cohesion among the participants themselves.⁷¹

Solomon and Virtual Choir producer Megan Davies both stated that the technological choices made in the Virtual Choir and *In B-flat* had more to do with achieving specific goals for the projects than in consciously trying to foster community. Davies described the Virtual Choir community as “organic,” saying that from her perspective as producer,

There is no strategy in it. There are, of course, methods of facilitating it happening...the forum on Eric’s site has always existed. There’s Facebook, there’s Twitter...But it’s not necessarily, “alright, we’re going to create this page, create this website, and people are going to bond over this.”⁷²

In the case of *In B-flat*, Solomon’s idea for the project stemmed from his observation that embedded YouTube videos could be played simultaneously within the same browser window; YouTube’s social capacities were thus of limited importance to his plans.⁷³ But regardless of organizers’ intentions in selecting the sites and the technologies they employ, these sites and technologies shape the formation and nature of communities by providing infrastructures for participant interaction.

Ultimately, however, the establishment of an online musical community is a complex and difficult issue that cannot be attributed to any single factor. Projects that seem similar on a surface level may actually be quite different in terms of the constitution and actions of the groups that form around them. For example, the YouTube Symphony Orchestra (YTSO) and the Virtual Choir

⁷⁰ Daniel Donahoo, “In B Flat 2.0: New Music Collaboration,” *Wired* (Geekdad blog), May 5, 2009, accessed April 4, 2015, <http://archive.wired.com/geekdad/2009/05/in-b-flat/>.

⁷¹ Darren Solomon, interview with the author, February 27, 2015.

⁷² Megan Davies, interview with the author, February 25, 2015.

⁷³ Darren Solomon, interview with the author, February 27, 2015.

were both high-profile, internationally open projects that hosted multiple performances. Both took place on platforms conducive to social interactions. But the YouTube Symphony Orchestra does not seem to have been host to a sustained, central community based around its participants' shared experiences in the same way that the Virtual Choir has.⁷⁴ Eric Whitacre has a management and publicity team (to which Davis belongs) that works even when the Virtual Choir is not operating, and thus his website serves as an active infrastructure through which a community can operate. The infrastructure associated with the YTSO, on the other hand, has not been actively updated since the group's last performance in 2011. The conditions of each individual project affect how the members interact with each other while the projects are active and afterwards, and these interactions affect the long-term cohesion of communities.

Rehearsal: Preparation

Participant interactions typically begin with preparation—that is, actually reviewing and refining the musical material and the processes involved in performance. In these online projects, coordinated, real-time group rehearsal may never happen. But this does not mean that the group does not prepare, or even that its members do not prepare together. The specific types of preparation required differ depending on the project, but all of these group performances involve individual, embodied musical practice—albeit a different kind of practice than might be found in traditional ensembles.

Discussing the act of accompanying online video tutorials to practice pieces or learn new techniques, Miller writes, “Playing along allows people to experience intimate connections with other practitioners even if they never meet face to face.”⁷⁵ In the same way, participants in these

⁷⁴ Davies noted that the community is still active even when no Virtual Choir is going on (and thus few promotional materials related to the Virtual Choir are being released); this is also readily evident through observation of Whitacre's forums and social media sites. Megan Davies, interview with the author, February 25, 2015.

⁷⁵ Miller, *Playing Along*, 225.

online projects might “play along” with other videos or tracks to prepare, or even practice along with other participants, sharing their preparations in online comments or in video chats. As already noted, Virtual Choir participants have helped each other prepare in various ways, including performing for one another and sharing tips over live video chats. In more recent versions of the choir, Whitacre’s website has also allowed users to select any of the parts they wanted to hear at any moment in the composition, so that it was possible to listen to as many or as few as they wished at once. Participants could thus choose to practice along with the recording if they liked, hearing their own parts or other sections of the choir or accompaniment.

The type of preparation required—whether for a competitive or collaborative project—is informed by and informs the formation of community, as can be seen in a comparison of the Virtual Choir and the YTSO. Because the Virtual Choir is not presented as a competition, its participants are likely more willing to work together than they would be if they thought other members could take their spots within the choir. On the other hand, all parts of the YTSO (including the mashup) were competitively selected. Even as the project was promoted as participatory, its organizers made clear from the beginning through the official rules that not all videos could be included and that the selection process would be competitive. Its participants thus had less incentive to help others succeed, and it is perhaps unsurprising that they were less likely to collaborate in preparation.⁷⁶ The more socially active and collaborative the community, the more likely its participants are to prepare in social settings rather than only individually.

In both of the steps of rehearsal I have outlined, community interaction and preparation, the bodies of the performers are directly involved—even when their bodies are not physically near one another. Interactions that take place over the internet are often discussed as being disembodied and less personal than face-to-face interactions. But even if performers in these projects are not

⁷⁶ On the other hand, the YouTube Symphony Orchestra offered videos of professional symphony musicians giving tips for the audition—a service offered by the organizers instead of activity on the part of the participants.

interacting directly with other bodies, they still interact with technology using their own bodies. Technology functions to mediate embodied interactions, many of which correspond to traditional modes of performance preparation.

Presentation: Capturing

The type of presentation that has occurred in the online performances under consideration has more in common with recorded music than the live setting that is most common to classical performance. Each of these projects has asked users to upload videos of themselves playing their parts, then compiled these videos into a single object that is then emphasized as the final outcome of the project, placing the event of publicly presented performance in a single recorded track. Unlike a traditional (and unrecorded) live performance, these performances are meant to be indefinitely repeatable, and so the stakes are higher for producing something aesthetically pleasing and of a high quality.⁷⁷ For most classical recordings, or indeed for most commercially released recordings regardless of genre, listeners expect a certain level of quality—in terms of both performance and audio fidelity.

Online music projects rarely require their participants to use expensive or specialized technologies, certainly not beyond the microphones and cameras that now come included with most computers and phones. Many participants neither use sophisticated sound and video equipment nor understand the difference between file formats and sample rates.⁷⁸ (Even if they did have this equipment and knowledge, the sites to which they upload their videos do not necessarily accept the larger file sizes of lossless formats.) The audio and image quality of the

⁷⁷ Expectations of high quality can be seen in many of the projects' final products; for example, the difference between the production values of amateur videos and the final videos are immediately evident in both the YTSO mashup and the Virtual Choir. However, even participants themselves are often concerned with achieving certain outcomes such as minimizing background noise and fixing desynchronized audio and video. For an example of these concerns in the context of the Virtual Choir, see the Facebook discussion under the post "Video Recording Methods and Equipment."

⁷⁸ Participants' range of knowledge is demonstrated through discussions such as the one cited in the note above. Ibid.

videos that participants provide to the projects is usually similar to those made in other amateur online contexts, such as song covers on YouTube and other video sites. Project organizers allow for this possibility, taking it upon themselves to make sure that the final file (whether audio, video, or both) is presented in a professional manner. Two solutions to the problem of audio quality are to accept that videos will not have high fidelity audio quality (e.g., In B-flat) or have measures in place to help account for videos of poor quality, such as having a professional audio team edit and master the audio before it is released (e.g., the Virtual Choir).

Still, certain conditions are required to produce audio and video of sufficient quality that a participant could expect it to be included in a project—after all, there is only so much that audio engineers can do to fix a poor recording. As mentioned in Chapter 1 among other requirements, prospective participants must make sure that they have set up a space free of distracting background noise, especially any sounds that are not uniform in terms of timing, consistency, or frequency. They might want significant amounts of quiet time in order to record multiple takes, in the hopes of getting the best possible performance.

Of all of the steps considered so far, recording is the one that really shows that human musical interactions with technology are not yet seamless. As anyone who has ever recorded their own musical performance knows, the process presents numerous (often unforeseen) difficulties. Perhaps the recorder was not turned on for the best take, or the sound quality is poor, or there is feedback on the high notes. Timbre matters in music—but it can be difficult to achieve a desirable sound without extensive knowledge of acoustics or audio recording technologies and techniques.

Even though recording is a process of separating the sounding of music from the body, making it reproducible outside of that context, the performer's body is still involved during the process. Using their bodies, performers not only have to produce the sound but also (in most cases) follow a click track or conducting video; monitor the performance while it is happening, adding in all of the elements of their preparation; and listen back to recordings and judge their

quality, adjusting performance accordingly if they choose to rerecord. In her master's thesis on the Virtual Choir, Melanie Armstrong gives an example of this kind of self-monitoring and feedback when she mentions that both she and other participants—particularly those with previous choral experience—tried to imagine blending with other, unheard voices while they recorded.

Armstrong describes her own experience with recording as follows:

While [the process of recording the track] involved some of the same elements that go into live performance—trying to blend with others, wanting to execute your line perfectly because one continuous take is all the audience will hear—it felt like a wholly different process to me because of the technical obstacles and the fact that I had neither the sonic feedback nor the support of other voices.⁷⁹

The relationship between the body and recording technology can be frustrating or strange. For performers, the knowledge that the quality of sound is out of one's own control can be hard to accept, particularly if they are highly trained and thus used to having a great deal of mastery over their musical craft. The act of recording forces performers to give some musical control over to a recording device, and in this case, digital sound technologies and sound engineers.

Presentation: Compiling

The act of compiling (putting individual videos together into a complete musical product) differs the most from live classical performance, whether professional or amateur—in part because it is so far removed from performers' bodies. On the other hand, it is very similar to the process of producing a recording, particularly one in which the parts are recorded separately and then mixed in a studio. The implications of recording on the relationship between human-made sound and the human body have been discussed at length elsewhere, for example in Jonathan Sterne's idea of recording as a "resonant tomb" which "offer[s] the exteriority of the voice with none of its interior self-awareness."⁸⁰ But here I am less concerned with the general relationships between

⁷⁹ Armstrong, "Musicking in Cyberspace," 61; she discusses other performers' responses on 70.

⁸⁰ Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 290.

recorded sounds and the bodies that make them than with what this disembodiment means for performer agency and involvement.

In all of the projects considered in this chapter, performers give over control of their recordings to a curatorial power by submitting them to the project organizers to be assembled into a single object. This process is similar to other familiar performance and recording situations, and just because performers hand over some control at the stage of assembly (as in those situations) does not mean that they act without agency. It is safe to assume that many performers act with a full understanding of the fact that their work will be compiled, edited, or curated in some way. Project organizers usually provide terms of use agreements in order to protect themselves legally and inform participants of how their performance will be used. But even knowing these terms, performers cannot know how every single choice will be made. They have to trust that the people putting the project together have performers' interests in mind.

Organizers publicly acknowledge and discuss the amount of curatorial work they have to do to different degrees. Solomon is open about the curatorial work that had to be done to assemble *In B-flat* in the project website FAQs, saying, "There were a lot of creative submissions. I played each one along with the other videos, in different combinations. Ultimately, it was a subjective call, certain videos just felt right to me."⁸¹ In conversation with me, he further explained:

95% of the videos I got were unusable. Most people didn't get it. I would say 50% of people didn't even really read the instructions that I gave. So 50% could be tossed in the garbage right away. I would get ones that were like Ronald Reagan saying, "We're about to bomb in five minutes," or you know, just things that are certainly valid pieces of art, but have nothing to do with this thing I was trying to make...And another 45% read the instructions, but just didn't understand what I was trying to do. Which is fine—they made art that works on their own level. And I'm not saying they did bad things, they just made something that wouldn't work...So then there was like 5% that you would kind of go, "oh, okay this person kind of got it," you know. And then within that there were a few that were particularly, I thought beautiful, or moving, or heartfelt, or somehow kind of made my skin tingle or gave me a little magic feeling or something...And then what I

⁸¹ "In Bb 2.0 FAQ," accessed August 20, 2014, <http://www.inbflat.net/faq.html>.

would do is I would play the videos that existed along with that one that was sent to me. And I would just listen, and it was pretty clear. I mean, I think there was like one or two that I had to struggle over, that I wasn't quite sure, but pretty much it was pretty obvious who got it and who didn't get it.⁸²

Solomon saw curation as an important part of his project—he couldn't include everyone who participated, because not everyone who participated had met the project requirements. Out of those who did meet the requirements, only a few actually fit his vision for the piece. The performance aspect of his project encouraged participation, but with a recognition that openness might have aesthetic limits.

The teams behind the Virtual Choir and the YouTube Symphony have been less open about how they evaluated participant materials. Whitacre and his team do not often discuss the process of evaluating videos in promotional materials; when they do, it is to reassure participants that their video will be included, for example when Whitacre wrote on Huffington Post that “there is no audition process; every single video submitted makes it into the film.”⁸³ Davies shared some details of the process:

Sound and video both have to be checked...there have been some odd glitches where it's been heartbreaking, where some people, unfortunately their microphones have been on mute or something. And we go through and of course have to filter...and then often you try to come to some resolution and find audio and go back to work on that.⁸⁴

Still, the details provided publicly are very vague. In the case of the YouTube Symphony Orchestra, guidelines for selection of the videos used in the mashup were noticeably absent from the official rules, even as a detailed rubric was provided for the selection of members of the live ensemble.⁸⁵ Such vagueness allows project creators to leave themselves room to edit the final product as desired without diminishing the appearance of claims to participation.

⁸² Darren Solomon, interview with the author, February 27, 2015.

⁸³ Whitacre, “Part of Something Larger than Ourselves.”

⁸⁴ Megan Davies, interview with the author, February 25, 2015.

⁸⁵ “YouTube Symphony Orchestra Official Rules.”

The act of relinquishing agency to an organizer or leader does not always result in an exploitative relationship. It is not usually considered exploitative when members of a live ensemble hand over creative authority, for example when they trust a conductor to make artistic decisions on behalf of the group. But performers in a live ensemble can always choose to ignore or contradict the conductor, right through the moment of live performance—although of course not without social or professional risk. Participants in online projects do not have such an option, because they have completely turned over their performance to organizers long before the moment of presentation. And when organizers of online projects subtly misrepresent the ways in which they evaluate and use submitted material, or the ways in which they benefit financially and otherwise from the projects, we should question how performer agency is operating in online contexts. Discussion of power and agency also raise questions about how benefits are distributed based on the labor that goes into each project. Both issues necessitate a deeper investigation of the processes of production and promotion—to be further explored in Chapter 3.

The Body in Online Performance

In this chapter, I have drawn from multiple models of performance to reconfigure past understandings of how bodies are present and absent in music performed in new online contexts. In a general way, the role of the body in online, prerecorded performance is not so different from live performance: performers engage their bodies to create music and communicate with other people. Just as in offline settings, a sense of community can develop during the shared process of preparation for a musical performance. However, participants perform most of their activities through the mediation of internet platforms and sound recording. Thus the greatest differences from offline contexts lie in the types of community interactions shared by participants and the disembodiment at the stage of presentation. Because they mostly take place online, community interactions are highly dependent on available online resources for communication and collaboration. And the process of constructing a performance through recording and compilation

differs from typical live, offline presentations, in that performers cannot use their bodies to directly control their contribution to the musical performance. Unlike traditional recordings, which often serve to create a record of an event or an idealized presentation of a work, these compilations are presented as—and should be understood as—performances in themselves: presentations of ensembles whose members' bodies come together only in a virtual space. Online musical performance reconfigures the physical relationships between performers while maintaining many of the qualitative aspects of embodied group performance, including the experience of community.

CHAPTER 3: PRODUCTION AND PROMOTION

The musical projects in question in this thesis often operate within traditional aesthetic value systems associated with Western classical music, wherein musical products are expected to adhere to a conventionally beautiful outcome in terms of acoustics, sound quality, and skill level. This implicit value system—which can only be achieved through a high level of control—is often at odds with the promotional rhetoric common to these projects (explored in Chapter 1), which tends to emphasize experimentation, novelty, and accessibility. The drive to maintain control over the creative output of such projects is understandable within the economic and cultural environment of the classical music world. Claims to the quality of performance are essential to establishing the value of participatory musical projects. Classical audiences might not be convinced of the value of the projects if they had not produced results that align with conventional aesthetic standards within classical music. This condition is also true within various genres of recorded music more generally; in fact, the practice of listening to recordings, which are often edited together from multiple takes in order to achieve an idealized performance, may affect the expectations we have for classical performances. Mark Katz has described the effects of listening to recordings on listening to live classical performance:

When the phonograph was invented, the goal for any recording was to simulate a live performance, to approach reality as closely as possible. Over the decades, expectations have changed. For many listeners—perhaps most—music is primarily a technologically mediated experience. Concerts must therefore live up to recordings.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Mark Katz, *Capturing Sound: How Technology Has Changed Music*, revised ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 30.

Katz later concludes, “if control and precision have become central values in classical performance...then recording affects not only technique but also aesthetics.”⁸⁷ Thomas Turino has attributed these effects to music’s role as a commodity in capitalist societies:

The cultural conception of music has shifted toward recordings—the form in which most cosmopolitans experience music—as the ‘real thing,’ not as a representation of something else. In capitalist societies, ‘real’ or at least successful musicians and music are largely conceptualized in relation to professional presentations, recordings (both video and audio), or (usually) some combination of the two.⁸⁸

There is a tension between the idea of total inclusivity and the audience expectation of a beautiful, moving, and near-perfect product or, more practically, one that adheres to certain conventions of the music tradition(s) to which it claims to belong. To put it more bluntly: participatory projects may appeal in theory to the groups and individuals who run them, but in execution it is often safer to conform to existing standards of beauty and exaction in order for a project to have a chance at achieving financial and popular success.

In this chapter, I discuss value through the processes of production and promotion. Both musical value and economic value determine a number of important issues, such as who is included and how participants are represented in presentational products and promotional materials. I also consider the economic effect of using crowdsourced labor in creating and (in some cases) funding these projects, examining who profits from collaborative projects and how.

The Work Concept and Online Projects

Many online classical music projects operate under the concept of classical music as defined by a collection of standard canonic repertory. This can be seen in pieces selected for inclusion in many of the projects. The earliest instance of orchestral live-tweeting was along with Beethoven’s Symphony No. 6 (“Pastoral”); the YouTube Symphony Orchestra asked applicants for its live performance to submit audition recordings of standard orchestral repertoire for their

⁸⁷ Ibid., 34.

⁸⁸ Turino, *Music as Social Life*, 25.

instruments; the World Online Orchestra plays the second movement of Beethoven's Symphony No. 7; the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin put on a remix competition of Antonín Dvořák's Symphony No. 9 ("From the New World"). These are only a few representative examples, drawn from major orchestral projects, but at this point a survey of such orchestral projects reveals a list of composers not so far removed from Bruno Nettl's survey of names carved on Midwestern music department buildings (if a bit revised to include Dvořák).⁸⁹ Even online, the canon is still strong.

Along with this adherence to the classical canon, many projects show a dedication to the concept of a work as fixed in a musical score, written by a single composer. Even if they do not require their audience to use a score to learn or experience a piece, many do have written scores and fall under a model in which it is desirable to adhere to a fixed idea of a piece as closely as possible—or at least enough so that any deviations can be taken as creative decisions of the performer while still adhering to the notes on the page.⁹⁰ These conditions are true of many of the projects that use canonic repertory as well as the YouTube Symphony Orchestra mash-up, Eric Whitacre's Virtual Choir, and David Lang's piano competition. In all of these cases, replication of a fixed listening experience is a desirable quality in the final output. Such a model—one in which replication is the ideal—is difficult to adapt to account for the possibility of multiple authorship.

The decision to value repeatability is not inherent to online classical music projects. Many other projects encourage audience exploration and a multiplicity of listening and/or viewing experiences, including *In B-flat* and the World Online Orchestra. A number of musical apps, both classical and non-classical, are also designed with variety of experience in mind; these include instruments such as the John Cage prepared piano app and several different apps by Brian Eno, as

⁸⁹ Bruno Nettl, "In the Service of the Masters," in *Heartland Excursions: Ethnomusicological Reflections on Schools of Music* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 17–19.

⁹⁰ This is related to Lydia Goehr's theorization of the work-concept. See Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, revised ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

well as multimedia presentations in Björk's *Biophilia* and Radiohead's *Polyfauna* that allow users to direct and change each experience of the material.

As much as the classical canon and adherence to a model of single authorship can reinforce persistent trends in thought about and performance of classical music, it is not necessarily desirable for classical music institutions and actors to abandon tradition entirely. There is much at stake in combining standard classical repertoire or conventions with new media and technologies. In the most negative view, the act of adapting older works to newer media is just a repackaging of classical music; in the most optimistic, it demonstrates that classical music of the past is still relevant, or that it has a viable future. But using digital media to uphold traditional values presents a challenge in terms of developing something genuinely innovative in a creative sense—that is, writing specifically for the medium and creating something new for it, fulfilling the claims to innovation that often accompany these projects.

There are notable exceptions to all of the above observations, and some projects do point to alternative possibilities. *In B-flat* is one such example. Its score was flexible, consisting simply of a set of instructions loosely evocative of Terry Riley's *In C*:

- Sing or play an instrument, in Bb major. Simple, floating textures work best, with no tempo or groove. Leave lots of silence between phrases.
- Record in a quiet environment, with as little background noise as possible.
- Wait about 5-10 seconds to start playing.
- Total length should be between 1-2 minutes.
- Thick chords or low instruments don't work very well.
- Record at a low volume to match the other videos.
- You can listen to this mix [<http://inbflat.net/bflatmix.mp3>] on headphones while you record.
- After you upload to YouTube, play your video along with the other videos on this page to make sure the volume matches.⁹¹

Darren Solomon, the project's creator, imposed these guidelines in order to produce a project that he thought made sense and was more than pure cacophony. He is careful to point out that he does

⁹¹ "In Bb 2.0 FAQ."

not think of this as a fixed or repeatable score; unlike *In C*, the musical material was not fixed ahead of time and is not ordered in its final form.⁹² Participants had the freedom to move around within these guidelines, even as Solomon would be the final judge of which videos would be included and excluded. Furthermore, the finished project itself encourages a flexible interaction with the musical material—listeners can start and stop any of the videos at any time, move around in time within any of the videos, and adjust the volume (Solomon compared the volume sliders in each YouTube pane to faders on a mixing board). This loose relationship to the concept of a fixed performance or score was part of the project design, and has resulted in interesting interactions between listeners on various external sites (noted in Chapter 2). Even though Solomon ultimately curated the entries, *In B-flat* embraces multiple authorship as well as the idea that different users may experience the piece differently.

Another project that incorporated collaborative authorship into its design was the Tweetfonie, a project associated with the Kurt Weill Fest held in 2014 in Dessau, Germany.⁹³ The Tweetfonie website housed a tool that translated participants' doodling on a keyboard into an alphabetic and numeric notation of pitch and rhythmic values (Fig. 1). (Participants could also type in the code themselves, writing melodies without use of the keyboard, if they wished.) The tool also had a playback function, allowing users to hear their melody, as well as the option to specify a title and tempo marking. When participants were ready, they could publish their melodies to Twitter for consideration. The submission period took place over the course of a single day, on March 2, 2014; select melodies were then given to a team of composers, who

⁹² Darren Solomon, interview with the author, February 27, 2015.

⁹³ The Tweetfonie was based on a project called the Tweetfony, in which the Dutch Metropole Orchestra performed similar Twitter-inspired compositions over the course of an eight-hour fundraising concert on October 26, 2012. I have focused on the Tweetfonie because the website for the Tweetfony is no longer active and the interface no longer viewable, although videos of the compositions can still be viewed on YouTube.

arranged them for full orchestra. The next day, members of the Anhaltische Philharmonie Dessau—the festival’s artists-in-residence—sightread the compositions.

Figure 1. The Tweetfonie keyboard entry tool.



One could argue that the Tweetfonie had something of a paternalistic bent, elevating the uninitiated into the world of classical orchestral composition, but one can also see the project as a collaborative venture between two composers of varying musical backgrounds. The range of options with which participants could compose their melodies offered a number of ways to conceptualize the process, useful even if those involved did not understand music theory or know how to use a musical keyboard. *In B-flat* and the Tweetfonie are not exempt from other critiques (including those on the basis of technological accessibility and reach presented in Chapter 1 and those presented later in this chapter), but they do offer different models for collaborative classical composition and performance using digital technologies.

Quality and Production

The desire for a replicable experience that aligns with classical music aesthetics also often results in curatorial and production practices that adhere to traditional standards. These practices were mentioned briefly in Chapter 2 in the context of understanding online performance and embodiment, but also should be reconsidered in terms of how classical values shape the process of producing online participatory projects.

In many classical amateur ensembles that take place offline, membership is open to anyone in a given area who wishes to perform. Perhaps there is an audition due to overwhelming interest, or in order to determine that a participant has a base skill level. Once a member is in a group, however, it is difficult to silence their musical voice without asking them to actually quit. Even in a typical classical ensemble recording setting (regardless of whether the group is composed of amateurs or professionals, and assuming that the group is recorded together on a small number of microphones) it would be very difficult to edit out one person's musical contribution without their consent or knowledge. Having participants upload their individual parts makes it easier for project producers to choose who is involved in the final track (and how) on an individual basis. Producers can thus shape an ensemble that fits as closely as possible to the public image they hope to project, and a musical product that fits as closely to the ideal of perfection as they wish—at least, as closely as possible considering the submissions they have received.

As an example (already mentioned briefly in Chapter 2), Eric Whitacre and his team have to sort through thousands of videos to create a single compiled musical object. Whitacre and his team do not publicly provide many details of the editing process for videos produced after 2010; the most revealing source is a brief explanation that Whitacre provided prior to the livestreamed premiere of *Virtual Choir 2: Sleep* in New York in April 2011.⁹⁴ Before unveiling the video,

⁹⁴ The two earliest Virtual Choir videos (one a “beta” version of *Sleep* and the other a performance of Whitacre's piece *Lux Aurumque*, in 2009 and 2010 respectively) were produced by a fan and amateur

Whitacre shared a short audio clip with the audience. This clip involves a “relatively small amount of singers” and sounds very different from the final audio track, with synchronization and balance problems that Whitacre quips makes them sound like “drunk zombies.” Describing the process of compiling this track, Whitacre continued,

[The audio team] went in and they cleaned up those tracks, and by cleaning them I mean they took out crickets, and cars honking, and mothers yelling at them in the background, and [audience laughs] all of this stuff. Then they very carefully lined them up. There were all kinds of latency issues, and different speeds of computers, sometimes PCs or Macs, or depending on the bandwidth—just subtle enough that when you started having thousands of people together, that there was this kind of bulbous sound that emerged. And they cleaned them up, and then they found within the 2000 singers this core group, I think it was 50 or 60 people, who were sort of the Virtual Choir honor choir, really exceptional singers. And they became the core of the sound.⁹⁵

As for the approximately 2000 remaining tracks, Whitacre said only that the team “just started adding the audio on top of that, building out...constantly making it better and better.”⁹⁶

Whitacre’s statements reveal the curatorial power involved in the process of compiling a massive online musical project, indicating a level of manipulation that is not evident to users based on most of that project’s publicity and informational materials.

In competitive projects, such as the YouTube Symphony Orchestra, the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin remix competition, and David Lang’s piano competition, selection is part of the project design. Participants are free to participate in the sense of creating an object to be judged. They are not, however, represented in the outcome of the project if the creators do not judge their video to be worth inclusion. In a sense, this negates the fact of the failed applicants’

producer named Scott Haines, who claims that he used every single audio track. All of the subsequent videos were professionally produced.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ “World Premiere of Eric Whitacre’s Virtual Choir 2.0 Sleep on Paley Center,” Livestream, originally streamed April 7, 2011, accessed May 23, 2014, http://www.livestream.com/paleycenter/video?clipId=pla_0c36bce3-e3ba-456b-8ad5-bfe4a9b02b02. Megan Davies confirmed that these statements were generally accurate (though obviously delivered in a tongue-in-cheek and nontechnical fashion); correspondence with the author, April 10, 2015.

participation at all, regardless of the extent to which the contest promoters want to suggest that holding a contest is in itself a participatory act. Representation in a final product can be vital to the act of participation. A participant's emotional enjoyment of having been involved in a project may be diminished if it is difficult to prove that they have contributed to a project; recognition can serve as validation that helps participants feel like equal or valuable contributors. This point starts to open up the questions to be discussed in the following section: namely, how participants are represented both in acknowledgments and in advertising.

Ultimately, for online projects to actually attain their stated goal of greater inclusivity, their organizers and audiences may have to reconsider what they expect in terms of quality of audio and performance. Mads Damsbo, creative director of the World Online Orchestra, said that the full version (to be launched in May 2015) will aim to accept any videos, unedited, as long as they are not obvious attempts to “sabotage” the project.⁹⁷ Damsbo was insistent that even very noisy or unusual submissions would not be automatically eliminated, although their authors may be contacted to ask whether or not they would like to reconsider their submissions. When I pressed him about whether or not the project's curators would remove videos with poor audio quality, he said,

The fact is that we will never get great sound and video. It's not something we should be worried about. In many ways—and this is perhaps a bad thing—video quality is just not really good, and sound quality isn't really good, but we're getting used to it. We're getting used to watching things from iPhones and from webcams. And maybe it's not the actual sound experience that would be the carrying factor from this experience. Perhaps it would probably just be the feeling of creating these musical experiences through a lot of people's contributions around the world.⁹⁸

An emphasis on the experience of making and listening to music over the quality of the sound may have its own set of problems, but perhaps advances in cheap and widespread recording

⁹⁷ Mads Damsbo, interview with the author, March 19, 2015. A “beta” version of the project may be viewed at <http://www.worldonlineorchestra.com/> at the time of writing.

⁹⁸ Mads Damsbo, interview with the author, March 19, 2015.

technology will ameliorate these issues eventually. Until then, prioritizing the quality of an engaging musical experience over the quality of audio captured might result in a very different type of experience than those produced by many of the classical participatory projects undertaken thus far.

Promotion and Representation

In Chapter 1 I discussed some promotional materials from the Virtual Choir that advertised the diversity of its participants in terms of geographic location, skill level, and physical ability. But thousands of people have participated in the multiple instances of the Virtual Choir; not all of them can be represented in these materials, or even singled out and focused on in the video. When I first began researching the Virtual Choir in 2012, just after the completion of Virtual Choir 3: *Water Night*, I found that a common complaint in comments on the YouTube video for the final compilation video was that participants could not find their individual videos among the 3746 tracks included. All they had to prove that they had been involved in the choir was finding their names in the list of credits, a challenge in itself—in *Water Night*, the credits take just about as long to scroll by as the entire musical performance itself.⁹⁹ This continued to be a concern for participants with Virtual Choir 4: *Fly to Paradise*; in multiple forum threads on Whitacre’s website, participants expressed their concern that they could not see their videos in the gallery of submissions, the list of singers, the map with pins representing participants’ locations, or the final video.¹⁰⁰ Part of participants’ anxiety stems from wanting to check that their video has successfully been sent by the deadline, but another is making sure that they actually show up in permanent

⁹⁹ “Eric Whitacre’s Virtual Choir 3, ‘Water Night,’” uploaded April 2, 2012, accessed March 14, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V3rRaL-Czxw>.

¹⁰⁰ See for example, “Has the Video Been Successfully Submitted?” <http://ericwhitacre.com/forum/discussion/527/has-the-video-been-successfully-submitted>, “Not Included in List of Names/Map,” <http://ericwhitacre.com/forum/discussion/745/not-included-in-list-of-names-map>, and “Skyscraper Country Key,” <http://ericwhitacre.com/forum/discussion/890/skyscraper-country-key>. *Ericwhitacre.com* forum, first posted June and July 2013, accessed March 23, 2015.

records of those who participated. Their concern reflects a need for (self-)recognition, to feel represented in the final outcome. Recognition is necessary in order for many people to feel that they have participated fully.

Another issue is the manner in which participants are represented—is representation truthful and respectful, or does it essentialize participants in an effort to sell the participatory nature of the project? As part of promotion, several of the projects publish or emphasize select information about age, musical training or background, and even disability, as well as where project participants are from. These data are often provided to support the claim that the projects are inclusive, with participants representing a broad and diverse sample of the world's population. But a promotional emphasis on diversity can easily lead to misrepresentation, either of individuals or of the makeup of the entire group.

Patrick Chapman is a percussionist from South Carolina who auditioned for and won a spot in the first YouTube Symphony Orchestra. Chapman indicated that he had an overall positive experience in the ensemble, noting that he has benefitted professionally both from the personal connections he made in the orchestra and from the name recognition of the ensemble. He says that he wondered at the time why he might have been chosen out of all of the talented percussionists who had submitted videos. He finally concluded, after attending the live event in New York, that geographic diversity played some role in the decision:

I think it was fair, but I also think it had to do with, geographically, where you were from. Because—I mean, I guess it's just that I was really shocked, kind of surprised, like, “wow, they picked a guy from South Carolina to do this thing.” Because when I got there, [the percussion section] was me, a guy from Virginia, a French Canadian from Quebec, a girl from Hong Kong, and a girl from Japan. They wanted everyone from around the world to be involved in this thing. So it was very geographically located—I think that had something to do with the selection process as well, because they ended up having a really big mix of people.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Patrick Chapman, interview with the author, March 10, 2015.

It is difficult to know whether or not participants were in fact selected without any regard to their geographic origins—but Chapman’s conclusions were no doubt influenced by the way in which participants’ regional identities and origins were displayed prominently in promotional materials before and during the concert. Chapman recounts that each participant made a short introductory video, and that several of these were played during the final concert. An excerpt from Chapman’s video can be seen about six minutes into the Carnegie Hall performance video, as part of a two-and-a-half minute clip introducing the orchestra. He comes at the end of a string of participants announcing certain unusual characteristics—one works as a surgeon, one is only fifteen—and their places of origin, given as Bermuda, Portugal, Austria, Australia, and Columbia, South Carolina.¹⁰² Chapman is the only participant whose hometown or state is given and the only American whose origins are mentioned in this particular video clip, and he comes at the end of the list.¹⁰³ For me, as a native of the city of Columbia, the idea that it should cap off a list of places around the world (presented as almost foreign or exotic) is surprising—and my surprise echoes Chapman’s own in reaction to the fact that his introduction was played at all. But the inclusion of his video excerpt in this context supported his suspicions that his and others’ geographic locations contributed somehow to their selection.

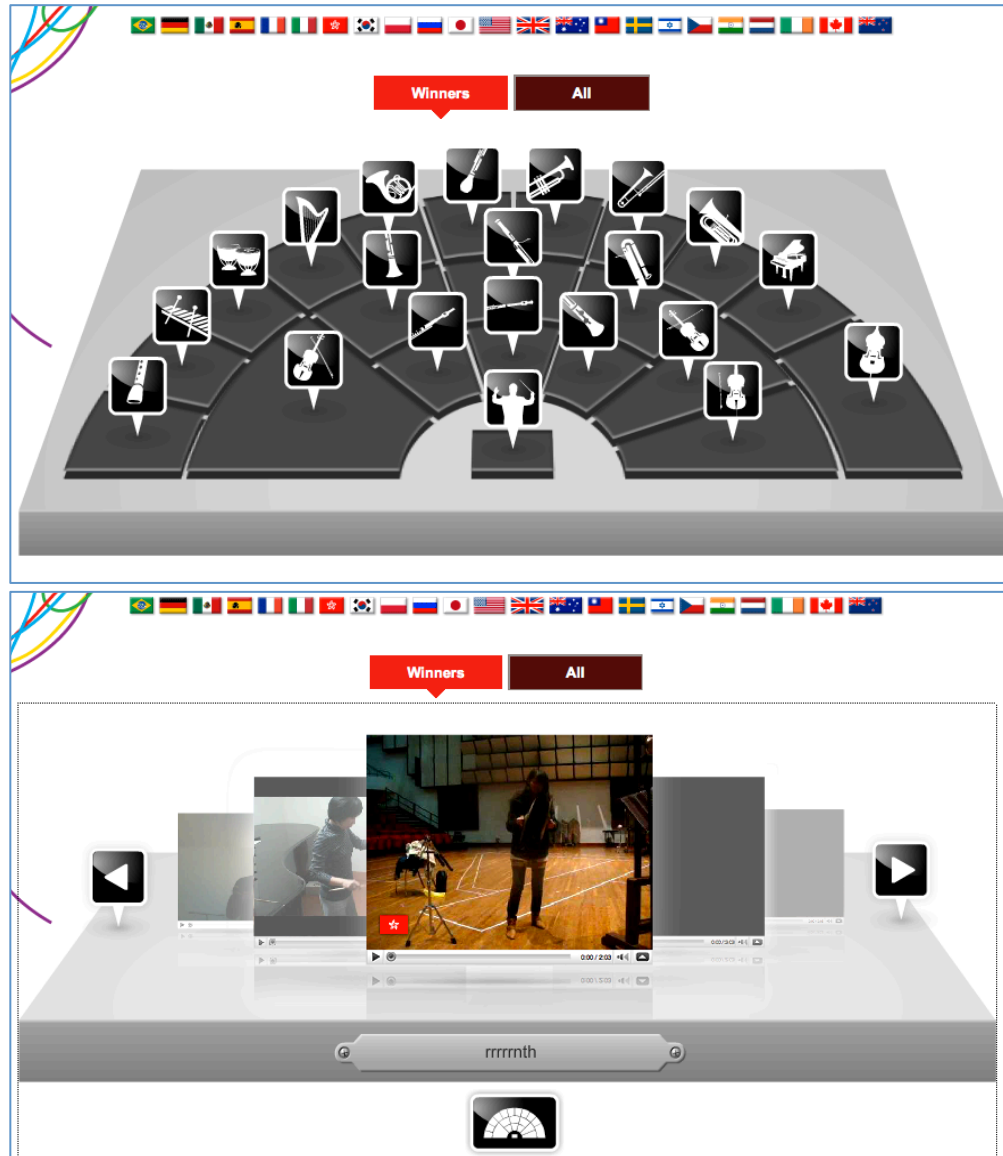
The way in which the YTSO performers were announced online also demonstrated this international promotional emphasis. When the winners were revealed on March 2, 2009, the symphony channel displayed a sort of map of a traditional orchestra (Fig. 2). Clicking on particular sections within the orchestra would pull up a stage, above which appeared the videos of the winners from that section. Viewers could then browse and view images taken from each

¹⁰² “Act One: YouTube Symphony Orchestra @ Carnegie Hall.” This excerpt occurs from 4:13 to 6:40.

¹⁰³ Chapman’s hometown is, in fact, Clover, South Carolina, but he gave it as Columbia in the video (he was attending the University of South Carolina in Columbia at the time).

winner's individual video—each of which was overlaid with a small flag representing the participant's home country.

Figure 2. Presentation of 2009 YTSO participants (full orchestra and percussion detail).



Based on these flags, Table 1 gives a breakdown of the participating countries, organized by the number of participants from those countries.¹⁰⁴ From 28 countries, there were a total of 92 musicians displayed on the site, over a third of whom were from the United States. Chapman's

¹⁰⁴ I have made these estimates based on the archived version of the site available archived on March 7, 2009 at <http://web.archive.org/web/20090307095908/http://www.youtube.com/user/symphony>, accessed March 23, 2015. The flags overlaying the videos are very small, and the colors are not consistent, so some error in my identification of flags is possible.

case is somewhat special because although his nation of origin was represented by an American flag, he felt as though his location in a particular part of the US actually mattered more to organizers than his status as a representative of the country as a whole. However, the online announcement did not differentiate between different states or cities within the US or any other country. The 2011 YTSO only increased this press focus on the globe-spanning origins of its members, profiling ten of the orchestra’s participants in professionally produced “Meet the Orchestra” videos; out of ten videos, two of the members profiled were from the United States (with a third living in the US at the time, but with his official country given as Venezuela).¹⁰⁵ But 42 of the 101 participants in the orchestra, including soloists, had their home country listed as the US—proportionally, twice as many as were profiled. 31 countries were represented in 2011, with a higher distribution of countries represented only by a single performer than in the 2009 orchestra (Table 2).¹⁰⁶

Table 1. Tally of participants in the live 2009 YouTube Symphony Orchestra.

Number of Participants	Countries Represented
32	United States
5	Canada
4	Australia, France, Germany
3	Austria, Czech Republic, Netherlands, Russia, Spain
2	Brazil, China, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Mexico, South Korea, United Kingdom
1	Belgium, Bermuda*, Colombia, Greece, Hong Kong*, Israel, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, Ukraine, Romania

* - Not a sovereign nation, but was represented with its own flag in the YTSO announcement.

¹⁰⁵ Carsman, “The YouTube Symphony.” These videos are still posted on the YTSO YouTube channel (<http://www.youtube.com/user/symphony>) as of March 24, 2015.

¹⁰⁶ Taken from “YTSO 2011 Members,” accessed March 24, 2015, <https://sites.google.com/site/ytso2011press/ytso2011-members>.

Table 2. Tally of participants in the live 2011 YouTube Symphony Orchestra.

Number of Participants	Countries Represented
42	United States
5	Canada, Italy
4	Australia, Russia, Spain
3	Brazil, Germany
2	Ecuador, Hong Kong*, Poland, Singapore, Taiwan, UK, Venezuela
1	Argentina, Belgium, China, Colombia, Denmark, France, Greece, Hungary, Malaysia, Mexico, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, South Korea, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine

* - Not a sovereign nation, but was represented separately in the YTSO press materials.

Separating participants into their countries of origin may seem benign enough, and the YTSO is not the only project to do so; the Virtual Choir has also prominently placed country counts for its various iterations on its website. However, when projects focus on the nationalities represented for promotional purposes, participants' identities are reduced to a single element in order to sell the project as inclusive in a geographic sense—a rhetorical strategy important to establishing the value of participatory projects, as discussed in Chapter 1. A similar process is at work when promotional materials suggest that particular participants are exceptional on the basis of age, their “overcoming” of physical impairments, or other parts of their identities: participants become statistics, marketing material for the very project that their musical work in part produces.

Finally, an emphasis on geographical diversity can also inadvertently contribute to misunderstandings and misrepresentations, especially concerning race and class. This point is best demonstrated through the case of Christy-Lyn Marais, a participant in the 2012 Virtual Choir. Marais was a student in her hometown of Cape Town, finishing a degree in occupational therapy, and had just moved in January 2012 to a small town called Ingwavuma in eastern South Africa to finish her studies with a required year of hospital service. Marais explained:

I decided that if I were going to be moving away for a year, I would like to make the most of that opportunity and move to a rural area and have a really different experience...and so the place I was living was a Zulu village, I suppose. And I was living on hospital grounds, not in a hut—because that's how people were living, without electricity, without running

water...[While I was there], I didn't really get a lot of opportunities to make music with others, especially the styles that I liked, so I started becoming really active on YouTube.¹⁰⁷

Marais had followed the virtual choir since 2010, but had not yet had a chance to participate as she was busy with her studies. When Virtual Choir 3 was announced, Marais had just moved and had limited internet access, using a 3G connection on her laptop and a pay-as-you-go data plan. After several failed attempts to record herself directly through the Virtual Choir site (each one costing her valuable data), she asked for advice from Virtual Choir members on the Virtual Choir Facebook page. She was finally able to upload her video through an alternative method—by posting it to YouTube, as participants in earlier versions of the project had done—for inclusion in the choir.¹⁰⁸

Not long after Marais submitted her video, Whitacre made various press statements describing the following Virtual Choir participant (previously cited in Chapter 1): “A woman in Zululand (Southern Africa) who had no internet access in her village. She spent two days uploading her video over her mobile phone.”¹⁰⁹ The account recognizably corresponds to Marais’s situation, but with some inaccuracies and simplifications. Marais recounted her surprise at encountering this version of her story:

I was really pleased that I was mentioned, and quite surprised. I guess I knew that my story was quite different, but I had never thought of exploiting [it] to get publicity, and so I was surprised when it happened by accident, I suppose...I remember hearing it once and just thinking, saying “You know what, I sound like a black Zulu woman...and that’s not who I am at all.”¹¹⁰

I do not mean to suggest that this misinterpretation was deliberate or malicious; Whitacre and his team appear to have learned about Marais’s experience second-hand through Virtual Choir

¹⁰⁷ Christy-Lyn Marais, interview with the author, April 9, 2015.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Whitacre, “Part of Something Larger than Ourselves.”

¹¹⁰ Christy-Lyn Marais, interview with the author, April 9, 2015.

volunteers, and she noted that she had never felt the need to contact Whitacre and correct his account.¹¹¹ At the same time, this example demonstrates how assumptions and conceptions about the lives of people outside of Western Europe and the United States can easily be find their way into promotional materials, hinting at the deeper-seated and less evident implications of relying on geography to demonstrate participant diversity.

The way in which participants are represented in musical presentation and press materials can influence their experiences as well as the way that others view the inclusivity of the project. People want to be fairly recognized for their contributions; it can make them uncomfortable to perceive that their involvement is considered more or less valuable on the basis of their background or identity, even as it will rarely be grounds for them to revoke their participation or to view the project negatively as a whole. Representation can also powerfully affect public perception of a project, even leading observers to overlook more subtle details about who was involved and how. And yet it is hard to imagine that every single online musical project could both be completely inclusive (accepting all applicants regardless of the number of submissions involved) and represent every single participant equally and fairly—particularly when a project is trying to sell or promote a product or service. This tension between inclusivity and commodification becomes an issue when projects are driven by the expectation of profit (whether immediate or eventual)—as they commonly are. The question of economics raises other issues of value and exchange, particularly with regards to the distribution of labor and benefit.

Labor and Benefit

All of the projects I am considering in this thesis rely on some kind of input or interaction from the audience, and so the organization of labor that drives them is commonly referred to as “crowdsourcing.” The Oxford English Dictionary dates the origin of the term to a 2006 article,

¹¹¹ Misunderstandings about Marais’s story were not limited to Whitacre’s statements, but were also common among members of the Virtual Choir community. She told me, “I got to the point where I just stopped correcting people, because they were so well-meaning but they just didn’t understand.” Ibid.

“The Rise of Crowdsourcing,” by Jeff Howe published in *Wired* magazine.¹¹² Howe’s approach to the topic (later expanded into a book entitled *Crowdsourcing: Why the Power of the Crowd is Driving the Future of Business*) is optimistic for the ability of crowdsourcing to benefit business practices, even as it notices downsides for people who rely on traditional labor for income such as freelance photographers. Howe devised the term as a portmanteau of the words “crowd” (his term for the general body of internet users) and “outsourcing,” and the article’s summary blurb is both explicit about that reference and complimentary of the practice it constitutes: “Remember outsourcing? Sending jobs to India and China is so 2003. The new pool of cheap labor: everyday people using their spare cycles to create content, solve problems, even do corporate R & D.”¹¹³

In the years since Howe’s article was published, crowdsourcing has been discussed in increasingly positive terms, providing possibilities for non-experts and amateurs to be involved and invested in the creation of a variety of cultural activities and commercial production. This rhetoric has expanded with the rise of Kickstarter and other crowdfunding websites, in which anyone can participate in various projects as a financial backer. The positive mentality surrounding crowdsourcing is exemplified by a widely viewed TEDTalk in which indie musician Amanda Palmer—whose 2012 campaign to record a new album has been the most highly funded music project on Kickstarter—promoted “the art of asking” for a variety of different types of help from fans in a new online age of music production.¹¹⁴ But Palmer herself has been criticized for exploitative business practices, including drawing on crowdsourcing to find backup musicians for

¹¹² “Crowdsourcing,” *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, accessed March 13, 2015, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/376403>.

¹¹³ Jeff Howe, “The Rise of Crowdsourcing,” *Wired* 14, no. 6 (June 2006). Accessed March 16, 2015. <http://archive.wired.com/wired/archive/14.06/crowds.html>.

¹¹⁴ Amanda Palmer, “The Art of Asking,” TED, delivered February 2013, accessed March 22, 2015, http://www.ted.com/talks/amanda_palmer_the_art_of_asking. TED gives the view count at over 6.6 million on this date. Palmer’s Kickstarter campaign (<https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/amandapalmer/amanda-palmer-the-new-record-art-book-and-tour>) raised nearly \$1.2 million, more than twice as much as the next highest music project (as of the time of writing).

her live Kickstarter-funded tour. In a 2012 blog post, she asked for performers to volunteer to perform at her shows, offering to “feed you beer, hug/high-five you up and down (pick your poison), give you merch, and thank you mightily for adding to the big noise we are planning to make.”¹¹⁵ Perhaps this request would have gone over well had she indicated that any performers would be welcome regardless of skill level, or that she was searching primarily for talented amateurs, but she specified:

you need to know how to ACTUALLY, REALLY PLAY YOUR INSTRUMENT! lessons in fifth grade do not count, so please include in your email some proof of that (a link to you playing on a real stage would be great, or a resume will do). just don't LIE...you'll be embarrassed if you show up for rehearsal and everyone's looking at you wondering why you can't actually play the trombone.¹¹⁶

Palmer later bowed to public pressure and agreed to compensate her performers, although she protested that she had provided a valuable experience and exposure for the musicians, and that her critics were reducing the freedom of performers to choose how they spent their time.¹¹⁷

Palmer's call for performers and the ensuing controversy speaks to a worry familiar to many musicians—the devaluing of musical labor, the expectation that a skill that has taken thousands of hours to develop should be provided at a very low cost simply because it is a cultural commodity, because it is perceived as enjoyable, or because the amount of time that will be involved in its presentation is very short. At the same time, Palmer's response to the controversy raises an intriguing point: perhaps it is enough to pay musicians in exposure (if only a shout-out from the stage) or emotional value—if, of course, the musicians are willing participants in that

¹¹⁵ Amanda Palmer, “WANTED: HORN-Y AND STRING-Y VOLUNTEERS FOR THE GRAND THEFT ORCHESTRA TOUR!!!!,” August 21, 2012, accessed March 22, 2015, <http://blog.amandapalmer.net/20120821/>.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ “An Open Letter in Response to Amy, Re: Musicians, Volunteering, and the Freedom to Choose,” September 14, 2012, <http://blog.amandapalmer.net/20120914/> was Palmer's original response (incidentally posted the same day as her show at the Cat's Cradle in Carrboro, NC, just down the street from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill). She announced she would pay backing musicians in her post “What We're Doing About the Crowdsourced Musicians. Also: We Charted at Motherfucking #10,” September 19, 2012, <http://blog.amandapalmer.net/20120919/>. Both accessed March 22, 2015.

exchange. But just as outsourcing can exploit people in areas of the world protected by less stringent labor laws, crowdsourcing has the potential to exploit those who work under its model as well, even if they are willing participants. An offer of a couple of beers and a pat on the back from a popular musician you admire in exchange for your labor may be more desirable than sitting at home on your couch and doing nothing—after all, if you do not accept her offer, someone else probably will—but that does not mean that it is an equal or just exchange.¹¹⁸

There are a number of questions to consider here. First, how do different parties benefit, and in different ways, from various musical projects? How do we judge which types of benefit are more valuable than others? Finally, how do things change when we consider that most participants in many participatory projects are amateurs, who do not have as much at stake in terms of their livelihood when it comes to compensation for musical performance?

As Kiri Miller points out, “[The term] ‘amateur’...draws our attention to motivation and affect: amateurs do things *because they want to*, not for material compensation or under duress.”¹¹⁹ It is true that amateurs participate in music-making under a different set of conditions than professionals do—that much is inherent in the most basic distinction between the two groups. A professional gets paid. But the line between amateur and professional can be blurry. If a musician is not paid in situations where other people performing a similar task at a similar level might be, does that mean that musician is only an amateur? That person clearly has to choose to perform, likely knowing that there is no financial return involved. But many aspiring professional musicians

¹¹⁸ This point represents a fruitful site for potential critical expansion, particularly in the way in which Palmer’s argument advocates a neoliberal collapse of “music as everyday experience and music as a form of compensated labor,” to take a phrase from Javier F. León’s preface to a special issue of *Culture, Theory and Critique* on “Music, Music Making, and Neoliberalism.” León goes on to advocate for (cautiously) accepting the conditions of this collapse in critical approaches to music; doing so helps explain, for example, the transaction that occurred between Palmer and the musicians that agreed to perform on her tour before she offered financial compensation. An extensive critique of the neoliberal logic at work in these exchanges would surely provide more satisfying answers than my brief mention here. Javier F. León, “Introduction: Music, Music Making, and Neoliberalism,” *Culture, Theory and Critique* 55, no. 2 (2014): 129–137.

¹¹⁹ Miller, *Playing Along*, 184.

take on jobs for free in hopes of getting exposure or networking; they may not yet have the right social or business connections to be reliably paid for their work. Finally, enjoyment and fair compensation for services provided are not mutually exclusive. If someone is significantly benefitting from someone else's musical performance, it is only equitable to offer some form of compensation to the performer.

With these considerations in mind, what do participants get out of involvement in online projects? From empirical examination, the most common form of benefit to participants is simply the emotional value of having participated or gaining new knowledge or skills. Sometimes, monetary compensation or other prizes (travel to an event, accommodations, and so on) are distributed; this happens often in the case of contests, but is very rare in other types of projects (outside of compensation for audio engineers, graphics and app designers, publicists, and other people involved at the organizational level). At other times, however, participants may benefit in terms of the social connections they make, the exposure they receive, or the prestige they accrue through their involvement with a project.

Although I have not carried out a methodical investigation of participant benefit, benefits to project organizers are often much more evident. Crudely speaking, this means that organizers consistently tend to experience more tangible and substantial benefits—for example, financial gains, significant press coverage and publicity, and subsequent high-profile collaborations or sponsorships. This does not mean that participants are not benefitting—one challenge of studying participant benefit (and a reason why it would benefit from additional, more in-depth investigation) is that most participants do not usually have any reason to publicly broadcast the benefits they receive, or in some cases any venue in which to do so. But when Eric Whitacre tells his fans that he is only involved in the Virtual Choir for the love of the labor and community, encouraging them to contribute their voices for the same cause, he neglects to mention that the project has given him significant professional opportunities: two high-profile TEDTalks, including

one featuring a live Virtual Choir collaboration with Skype; an installation of the Virtual Choir 3 video at Titanic Belfast museum in 2012; an impressive multimedia collaboration with Disney in the form of his piece *Glow*, performed by a “World of Color Honor Choir, inspired by the Virtual Choir” and displayed at Disney theme parks in the winter of 2013–2014; and the premiere of the Virtual Choir 4 video (accompanied by live singers) at the Coronation Festival Gala at Buckingham Palace in 2013. Virtual Choir 4 was supported by a Kickstarter project that raised \$122,555. Whitacre’s career was already strong before 2009—flourishing especially in choral and band music—but it is safe to say that the Virtual Choir launched him into the digital age.¹²⁰

Participant benefits are rarely as impressive, but they may be significant if the project is more selective. It is hard to imagine that participation in the Virtual Choir (at least for the typical participant, not selected as a soloist) would result in any major opportunities. Putting the Virtual Choir on your resume probably will not help you get a choral job, because anyone with access to the materials can participate. Competitions are a different issue—when the invitation to participate is limited to a select few, participation becomes more valued economically. Participants in the live ensemble of the 2009 YouTube Symphony Orchestra have likely experienced greater professional benefits from their involvement. For example, flutist Nina Perlove used the experience to help boost her online presence and now markets herself as the “Internet Flutist,” offering numerous free tutorials as well as online lessons at the price of \$150 per hour.¹²¹ Many other participants have likely benefitted in more traditional ways. Patrick Chapman noted that he had put the

¹²⁰ Whitacre has often been noted for his business savvy; even before the Virtual Choir was launched, he seems to have strategically decided to write band and choral pieces in order to make sure his music was frequently performed, and he self-published his music and negotiated deals with publishers that allowed him to retain significant copyright control. See Chloe Veltman, “Eric Whitacre Soars Beyond World of Classical Music,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 19, 2011, <http://articles.latimes.com/2011/jun/19/entertainment/la-ca-eric-whitacre-20110619/>; Brian Wise, “Whitacre, Inc.,” *Listen*, Spring 2013, <http://www.listenmusicmag.com/feature/whitacre-inc.php?page=1>.

¹²¹ “Teaching & Lessons,” Nina Perlove: “*The Internet Flutist*,” accessed March 25, 2015, <http://www.realfluteproject.com/web/page.aspx?title=Teaching+%26+Lessons>. Perlove was also involved in promotional videos for the 2011 YTSO.

experience on his resume, and employers had mentioned the experience to him as part of the reason they had hired him for percussion jobs; he will also attend graduate school in part due to an invitation by someone he met during his involvement.¹²²

Even the idea that contests can provide winners with “exposure,” or press or professional attention, is a troubled one. In launching his 2011 piano competition, composer David Lang presented it to applicants not only as a fun and unusual experience, but as a chance to get their performance work out as well. The winner of the contest would be given a trip to perform at new music venue (le) poisson rouge. In the promotional video, Lang suggested, “this might be a great opportunity for you to get your music seen by these judges;” this echoed the implicit suggestion that being offered a performance at (le) poisson rouge could be a reward in itself, both as a personal and professional experience.¹²³ But in the three years since the contest results were announced, Lang seems to have come out much better than contest winner Peter Poston in terms of exposure. The entire first page of results for a recent web search for “Peter Poston piano” direct to Lang’s competition.¹²⁴

The people who come up with the ideas for online projects often receive significantly more attention and benefit than the people who participate, but this does not always have to result in unfair practices. Darren Solomon, the creator of *In B-flat*, received widespread online coverage for his project. He also told me that he believes he has received a number of professional opportunities because of the project, although many of them are difficult to pin down as attributable specifically to his role as creator. He once was offered \$1000 to have *In B-flat* appear in

¹²² Patrick Chapman, interview with the author, March 10, 2015.

¹²³ “David Lang Explains his Piano Competition 2011,” uploaded October 27, 2011, accessed May 1, 2014, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BrmQqX_Qs5o.

¹²⁴ It is difficult to determine if “bubbling” (consulting cookies and/or past search history to predict relevance) has influenced my search results, but this statement is true of multiple sites—including sites that do not use bubbling in their determination of relevance. Search initially performed May 13, 2014; repeated March 25, 2015 with similar results.

a commercial; he accepted the offer, but did not want to keep the compensation for himself. Solomon told me he decided the amount of money that each participant would receive if he were to divide the money up was not worth the effort it would take to do so. Taking the name of his band, Science for Girls, to heart, he instead donated the entire sum to a NY organization that supports science education for girls and women.¹²⁵ Perhaps the most equitable solution would have been to divide the money among the performers, even with Solomon taking the largest cut (as the producer and an instrumentalist himself in several of the tracks). But nevertheless, Solomon draws a line—he is comfortable taking credit for his role as organizer, but uncomfortable financially benefitting from the use of other people’s musical material and performances while they go uncompensated. His actions offer a different example for how project organizers might consider the value of their labor relative to that of participants.

No arms are being twisted; no one is being coerced. Participants join in voluntarily, just as someone voluntarily donated \$10,000 to Whitacre’s Kickstarter fund because they agreed that receiving his baton (along with several other perks) and knowledge of having contributed to the project was a fair exchange for that amount.¹²⁶ At the same time, the labor practices involved in many of these projects bring to mind other current debates involving the value of musical labor at the intersection of music recording and online technologies. On-demand streaming services like Pandora and Spotify, for example, have received extensive public criticism for their compensation practices—even as some commentators still argue that exposure, ever difficult to quantify, is the

¹²⁵ Darren Solomon, interview with the author, February 27, 2015.

¹²⁶ “Virtual Choir 4: Bliss,” *Kickstarter*, posted December 15, 2015, accessed March 25, 2015, <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/2085483835/virtual-choir-4-bliss/description>. There is also a possibility that a group of people contributed to that sum, a relatively common practice on Kickstarter. There were no takers on the second highest perk: a contribution of \$7500 would have earned someone the signed backstage pass that Whitacre used to accept a Grammy for an album of his vocal compositions, *Light and Gold*, in 2012.

services' more valuable benefit to artists and songwriters.¹²⁷ Artists have argued that if their fans understood how little compensation artists receive from streaming sites, they might be more inclined to support services that more directly benefit the people behind the music. Similarly, if audiences thought more about the distribution of labor and benefit in many online projects, they may be less inclined to accept the claim that online music projects are inherently democratic.

Suggestions that online projects are democratic imply fairness of inclusion and representation, as well as the possibility of equitable exchange. My claims about inclusion, representation, and labor in production and promotion have much to do with fairness, but they are also about participation. Exclusion, tokenization, and exploitation are negative and often alienating experiences—and there is much room for further analysis of the economic relationships between project organizers and participants, as well as their experiential effects on participants. Drawing attention to the ways in which these negative experiences might be brought about draws attention to the ways in which online classical projects' claims can fall short—an issue of particular importance in a type of musical interaction that typically sells itself as offering an experience of participation and belonging.

¹²⁷ See for example, Douglas Wolk, "How Ashamed Should You Feel About Using Spotify?," *Slate*, August 21, 2013, accessed March 25, 2015, http://www.slate.com/articles/business/moneybox/2013/08/spotify_and_pandora_artist_payments_not_as_exploitative_as_they_re_made.2.html.

CONCLUSION

Throughout my research and thought about participatory online classical music, I return to one of Claire Bishop's central claims about participatory art, highlighted in *Artificial Hells*:

...Contemporary art's 'social' turn not only designates an orientation towards concrete goals in art, but also the critical perception that these are more substantial, 'real' and important than artistic experiences. At the same time, these perceived social achievements are never compared with actual (and innovative) social projects taking place outside the realm of art; they remain on the level of an emblematic ideal, and derive their critical value in opposition to more traditional, expressive, and object-based modes of artistic practice.¹²⁸

Participatory art (including participatory music) is not social action *per se*, and artists (musicians, composers) are not social workers. Including people in art is important, but to on a more critical level it should not be enough simply that they *are* included; it also matters *how* they are included and the experiences and artistic results that arise from their inclusion.

In terms of place of origin, race, nationality, age, and physical ability and characteristics, online classical musical projects' end results and promotional materials do not always accurately reflect the makeup of their constituents. If they did, perhaps this thesis would be entirely unnecessary; the underlying structural issues at play would be obvious, probably even offensively so. Pointing out that a number of non-Euro-descendants (or people from the Global South, people living with impairments, older people, people who had never made music before joining in) were involved in a classical project is not the same as actively working to include them on a wider level. The reason that we perceive certain individuals as more extraordinary participants in classical music is because there are actually real barriers to their participation, enacted by the conventions

¹²⁸ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 19.

and values of the cultural sphere of classical music as well as larger societal issues. Online musical projects may be democratic in the sense that participation is voluntary and open to a larger number of people than many other forms of classical music, but their democracies are plagued by many of the same structural issues that face democratic governments around the world.

As many scholars have argued, giving more people access to the internet does not in itself solve broader problems of economic, educational, and social access. Many real-world issues are mapped onto internet use—people’s awareness of certain types of opportunities, the kinds of information they encounter, the people with whom they socialize. These limitations affect music-making as well—joining together through music does not necessarily address larger problems of accessibility. A musical collaboration that audiences might judge as high quality by aesthetic standards does not always correspond to a high-quality social collaboration, as Louise Meintjes argued in her critique of Paul Simon’s *Graceland*.¹²⁹ Even though classical music is now made and spread via the internet, the determining factors in whether or not any given person will be interested in classical music still have much to do with socioeconomic status, family influence, and cultural sphere more than anything else.

At the same time, the internet can be a useful tool in solving problems when deployed strategically. Musical projects can also be positive tools, provided they are used well. Many of the projects considered in this thesis do serve valuable ends by creating experiences that give participants joy and a sense of belonging. Many others provide audiences with new knowledge or new ideas and methods for how to experience music. Even as I am critical of many of the projects’ claims, I recognize these benefits and sometimes even find myself in awe of my own experiences with them.

¹²⁹ Louise Meintjes, “Paul Simon’s *Graceland*, South Africa, and the Mediation of Musical Meaning,” *Ethnomusicology* 34, no. 1 (1990): 37–73.

Critically assessing the validity of the claims of participatory online music is the first step; determining some course of present or future action is the next. So—keeping in mind that it is impossible to predict the future—here are a few notes for possibilities. The possibilities that excite me the most in terms of design and use of online musical projects are those of experimentation, engagement, and creativity. These possibilities tend to diminish as soon as the project privileges a commercial goal for many of the reasons outlined throughout this document, chief among them the historical, aesthetic, and economic pressures of judging submissions on the basis of musical ability and sound quality. I am cautiously optimistic for the opportunities for exploration that future developments will afford. For example, Mads Damsbo told me that the new World Online Orchestra (to be launched in May 2015) will be expanded so that users can upload their own videos. Each new video contributes to a chain, with each chain growing out of the original recordings of the individual parts of the second movement of Beethoven’s Symphony No. 7. Video chains will result from a user responding to and remixing previous users’ uploads; Damsbo offered the hypothetical situation of someone responding to a violin part from the symphony with an original synthesizer composition, creating a new “generation” of performance.¹³⁰ This “generational” approach has the potential to deemphasize the idea of the coherent work as Beethoven originally conceived it, in favor of offering new possibilities based on creative interaction. It will also be interesting to watch as improvements to latency and internet connection speeds make it possible to create music online in real time, without noticeable delays. But as technologies—and our uses of them—progress, it is still important to keep issues of equality of access, fairness and distortion of representation, and compensation and recognition of labor in mind.

In this thesis, I presented a number of disparate online musical events as a trend in which participation in classical music is encouraged through use of the internet. I have explored some

¹³⁰ Mads Damsbo, interview with the author, March 19, 2015.

circumstances and challenges surrounding this trend—barriers to access and participation, the role of the body in online performance, strategies of representation, the value of musical labor—while acknowledging the value of many of the projects to their participants. These analytical considerations can be applied to any number of online classical music projects, including those to come in the near future, and many of them can apply to non-classical music projects as well. As new practices of music-making on the internet continue to develop, they will provide ample opportunity to consider these issues in new light.

APPENDIX: LIST OF PROJECTS CONSIDERED

The following projects are broken into three categories: compiled performances, performance and composition contests, and other engagement. “Compiled performances” are projects that ask participants to prepare individual tracks or videos to be used in the creation of an aggregate performance; although they may be selective, inclusion in the final product is an end in itself. “Performance and composition contests” involve a more selective approach, in which a prize (money, travel, etc.) is awarded to musical outcomes judged most deserving of selection; prize-winners are also usually rewarded with inclusion in some sort of musical presentation. “Other engagement” includes interactive audience outreach and other projects that do not fall into the other two categories.

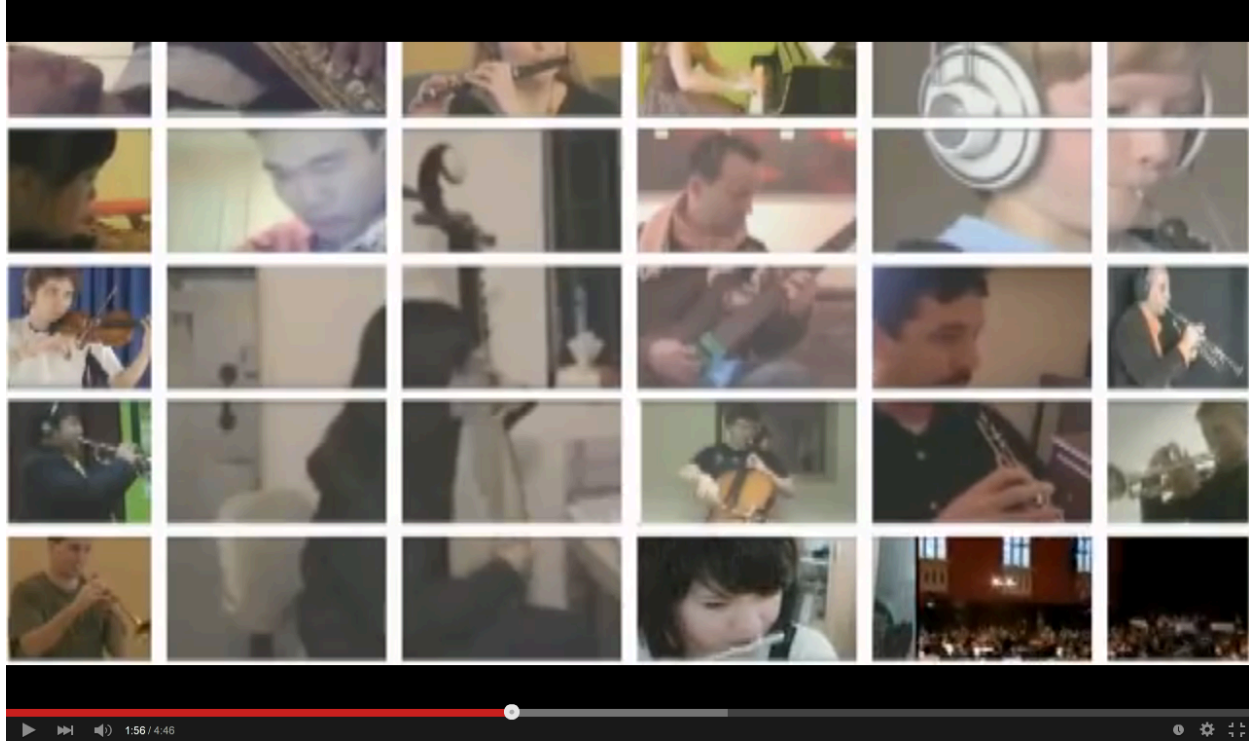
I have not included mobile (phone or tablet) applications (apps) I see as intended primarily for personal use, by which I mean they are constructed without the capacity to perform one of the following function: capturing performance, sharing performance, or exploring others’ creations. Although individual users could certainly decide to use these apps as participatory media, I argue that they are personal, rather than collective, experimentation.

Projects are listed chronologically within each category based on the date on which they were initially announced (for ongoing projects) or the date of performance (for discrete events).

I. Compiled Performances

YouTube Symphony Orchestra (mashup), 2008–09

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oC4FAyg64OI>



Screenshot from “‘The Internet Symphony’ Global Mash Up,” uploaded April 14, 2009, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oC4FAyg64OI>.

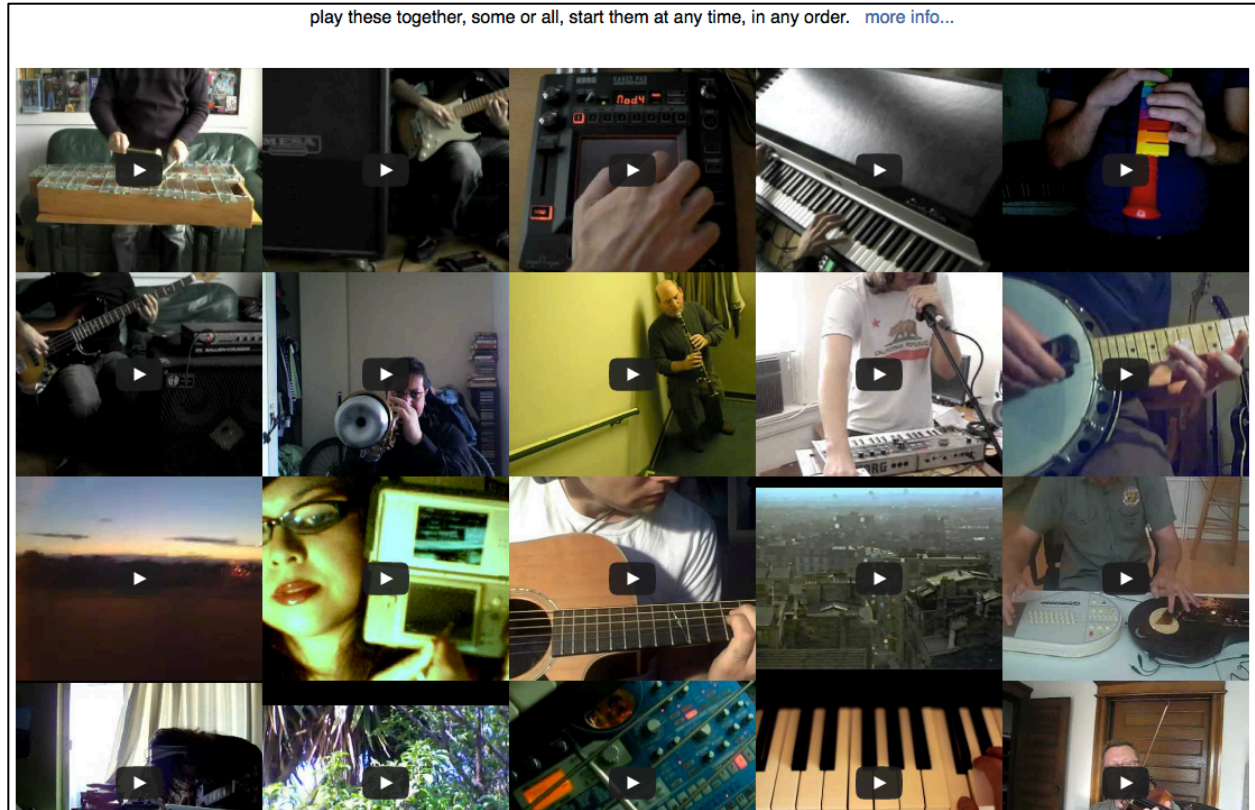
The YouTube Symphony Orchestra (YTSO) consisted of two major components: a live ensemble that performed in April 2009 in Carnegie Hall (detailed below under “Performance and Composition Contests”); and a mashup video performance of Tan Dun’s piece *Internet Symphony, Eroica*, composed specifically for the YTSO. The YTSO was announced in late 2008, and submissions for both categories of performance were accepted through January 31, 2009. Although selection criteria were provided for the live performance in the official rules, none were given for the mashup.¹³¹ Participants were particularly encouraged to submit videos featuring instruments not originally included in Tan’s score (although they could also perform any of the provided orchestral parts).¹³² The mashup video was premiered at the live YTSO Carnegie Hall performance, on April 15, 2009. The video features numerous performers playing both traditional orchestral instruments as well as many others including saw, guitars (acoustic, classical, electric, bass), recorder, sho, pipa, toy piano, melodica, harmonica, and voice.

¹³¹ “YouTube Symphony Orchestra Official Rules.”

¹³² “Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) About the YouTube Symphony Orchestra,” accessed May 2, 2014, archived October 13, 2009 at <https://web.archive.org/web/20090131065519/http://www.google.com/intl/en/landing/ytsymphony/faq.pdf>.

In B-flat, 2009

<http://www.inbflat.net/>



Screenshot from <http://www.inbflat.net/>.

In B-flat is a website featuring twenty embedded YouTube videos, all based on a set of instructions provided by its creator, Darren Solomon. Visitors are directed to “play these together, some or all, start them at any time, in any order.”¹³³ Solomon had the idea for the project in late 2008 or early 2009, after noticing it was possible to play multiple embedded YouTube videos simultaneously. On January 22, 2009, Solomon revealed the concept on his blog, accompanied by six videos (five of which featured himself performing); and he announced the full “In Bb 2.0” site three months later.¹³⁴ The final version of the site includes his five original videos as well as fifteen others. Solomon described the project to me as an open, collaborative composition, involving not only the performers but visitors to the website who choose to listen as well; the piece’s title explicitly alludes to Terry Riley’s *In C* (1964).

¹³³ “In Bb 2.0.”

¹³⁴ Darren Solomon, “In Bb,” January 22, 2009, <http://www.scienceforgirls.net/blog/?p=223>, and “Feel Like Sharin’,” April 29, 2009, <http://www.scienceforgirls.net/blog/?p=631>.

Eric Whitacre's Virtual Choir, 2009–present

<http://ericwhitacre.com/the-virtual-choir/>



Screenshot from "Eric Whitacre's Virtual Choir 2.0, 'Sleep,'" uploaded April 6, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6WhWDCw3Mng>.

Composer Eric Whitacre proposed the first version of his Virtual Choir—dubbed the *Sleep* experiment—in May 2009. Whitacre called for participants to upload videos of themselves singing an individual vocal part of his choral piece *Sleep* (2000), using a specific recording to coordinate timings.¹³⁵ The *Sleep* experiment involved 117 performers, including one participant who had created a conducting track (a practice that Whitacre himself would adopt in future videos), and was produced by volunteer Scott Haines, an amateur sound editor and fan of Whitacre's music. Whitacre has since coordinated four additional Virtual Choir videos, beginning with a 2010 performance of Whitacre's piece *Lux Aurumque* that included 243 video submissions. The next video in 2011—labeled "Virtual Choir 2.0" and consisting of a new performance of *Sleep*—included a significantly higher number of videos (2052 in total) and was professionally produced by audio and animation teams. Two further professionally produced performances followed: "Virtual Choir 3: *Water Night*," (2012; 3746 videos) and "Virtual Choir 4: *Fly*" (2013; 8049 videos).¹³⁶ Virtual Choir 4 was funded via Kickstarter, with a total of \$122,550 raised by

¹³⁵ This recording was recorded by the British vocal ensemble Polyphony and could be either purchased or freely streamed online. See Eric Whitacre, "Oh My God, Oh My God, I Just Had the Coolest Idea!," Ericwhitacre.com Blog, published May 15, 2009, accessed November 15, 2012, <http://ericwhitacre.com/blog/oh-my-god-oh-my-god-i-just-had-the-coolest-idea>.

¹³⁶ Some participants upload multiple videos of themselves performing different parts. With the exception of the early "experiment," the figures I have given are of the number of videos, not of the number of participants.

nearly 2000 supporters.¹³⁷ Whitacre has presented the Virtual Choir videos at TEDTalks, the Titanic Belfast museum, and Buckingham Palace. The concept has also lent its name to Whitacre's collaborations with Disney and UNICEF (though he does not present these as official parts of the VC project). The Virtual Choir has also inspired numerous spin-offs that largely maintain the original format of Whitacre's videos even as they involve the use of different repertoire.¹³⁸

World Online Orchestra (Copenhagen Philharmonic Orchestra), 2013–present

<http://worldonlineorchestra.com/>



Screenshot from “World Online Orchestra,” <http://www.worldonlineorchestra.com/>.

The World Online Orchestra is a project of the Copenhagen Philharmonic, Danish media organization Makropol, and Canadian design group Helios Design Labs. A “beta” version of the site was launched in 2013, allowing listeners to explore a number of videos of musicians performing individual parts to Ludwig van Beethoven’s Symphony No. 7, listening to them alone or combining them into small groups. Each video also includes a short description of where it was filmed and why, along with the performer’s name and instrument. A Kickstarter campaign to expand the project was successfully funded with \$30,537 in February 2014,¹³⁹ and the project has also been funded by the EU and the Arts Council of Denmark.¹⁴⁰ The launch for the updated site is

¹³⁷ “Virtual Choir 4: Bliss,” Kickstarter.

¹³⁸ These include a performance by the South Dakota Music Educators Association’s “Middle School Virtual Choir” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MMJBTRGHAg8>) and Polish composer Jakub Neske’s “‘Mironczarnia’ Virtual Choir” (http://j.neske.eu/virtualchoir/o_projekcie.htm).

¹³⁹ “World Online Orchestra by Helios Design Labs,” Kickstarter, accessed April 11, 2015, <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/905074956/world-online-orchestra/description>. Although the Kickstarter was hosted by a Canadian organization, this amount appears to be given in US dollars.

¹⁴⁰ “World Online Orchestra,” accessed February 25, 2015, <http://www.worldonlineorchestra.com/>.

scheduled for May 13, 2015.¹⁴¹ The new version is planned to allow web users to upload their own musical performances.¹⁴² The full version of the site is only available through the Google Chrome browser at the time of writing.

II. Performance and Composition Contests

YouTube Symphony Orchestra (live ensemble), 2009/2011

<http://www.youtube.com/user/symphony/>



Screenshot from “Act One: YouTube Symphony Orchestra @ Carnegie Hall,” uploaded April 16, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ueJcRmfweSM>.

In addition to a mashup video compiled from YouTube user submissions (see description under “Compiled Performances” above), the YouTube Symphony Orchestra (YTSO) featured a live orchestral performance at Carnegie Hall on April 15, 2009. Participants in this ensemble were selected from audition videos they had posted online, in which they performed standard repertoire and orchestral excerpts that had entered into the public domain. Participant entries were judged by professional orchestral musicians, including conductor Michael Tilson Thomas, according to a set of criteria emphasizing “interpretation of the public domain composition, musicianship, vitality of performance, originality of performance, [and] evaluation of the performance of the whole.”¹⁴³ A total of 92 musicians were selected for the orchestra.¹⁴⁴ Its finale

¹⁴¹ “Copenhagen Phil – World Orchestra Online Concert,” accessed April 11, 2015, <http://www.copenhagenphil.dk/konserter/2015/5/13/world-online-orchestra-live>.

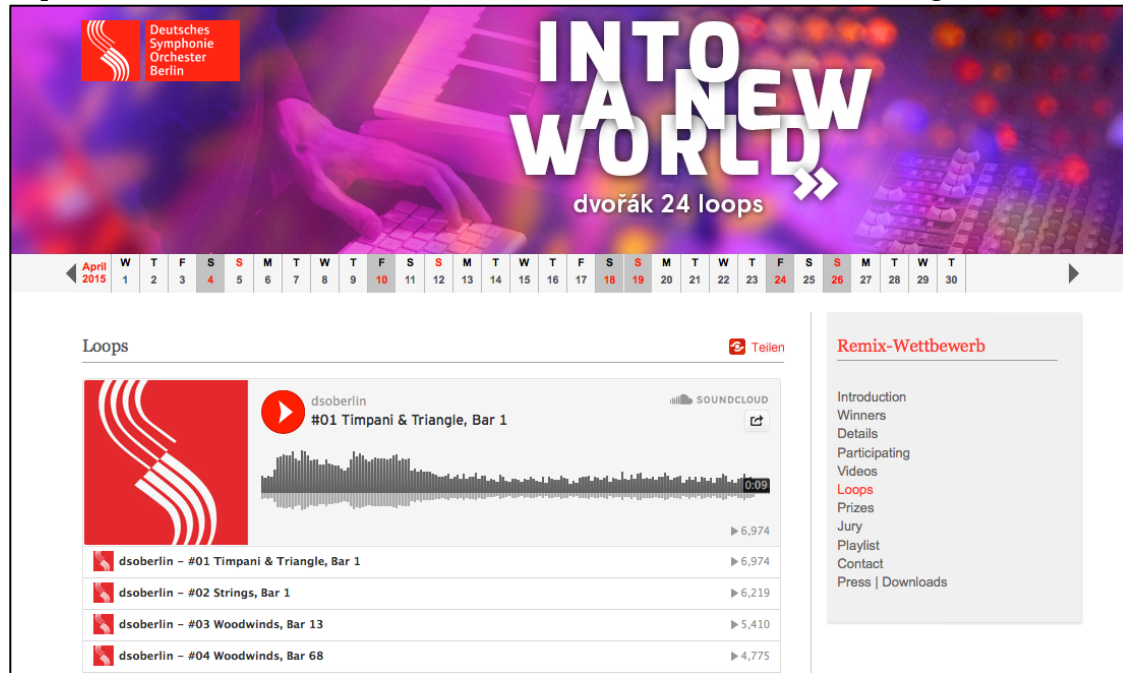
¹⁴² Mads Damsbo, interview with the author, March 19, 2015.

¹⁴³ “YouTube Symphony Orchestra Official Rules.” I have been unable to recover a copy of the official repertoire list, but references to this list can be found throughout the official rules and FAQ.

performance in Carnegie Hall featured videos profiling its members along with several guest performances and a live performance (by the YTSO) of Tan Dun's *Internet Symphony, Eroica*. The live ensemble was reprised in 2011, with corporate sponsorship by Hyundai, and a final performance was held at the Sydney Opera House on March 21, 2011 with a similar concert format (with notably higher production value, especially for artist video profiles). 101 musicians were selected.

Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin "Into a New World" Remix Competition, 2013–14

http://www.dso-berlin.de/content/e36466/e54173/e54177/index_eng.html



Screenshot from "Into a New World" Loops page, where users could download excerpts from the third movement of Antonín Dvořák's Ninth Symphony, http://www.dso-berlin.de/content/e36466/e54173/e54789/index_eng.html.

In 2013, the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin (DSO) announced a competition in which participants would create symphonic remixes by downloading and arranging "loops" recorded by the orchestra, excerpted from the third movement of Antonín Dvořák's Symphony No. 9, "From the New World." Selections were judged by a jury consisting of panelists from the a number of different musical worlds: Cornelius Meister, conductor of the Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra; members of techno project Brandt Brauer Frick; Ben Westbeech, who one page of the website describes as a "singer-songwriter and cellist" but who is also active as a DJ in the house genre; and Tobias Rapp, a DJ and music editor at *Der Spiegel*.¹⁴⁵ Prizes consisted of a microphone set, Ableton software, and a Soundcloud pro account.¹⁴⁶ Four winners were selected: Julian Mannarini, (first prize, described as "a Frenchman living in Berlin"), Radu Chiriac (second prize, from Paris), and

¹⁴⁴ Participant count varies across various sources; I am using the same data both for the 2009 and 2011 orchestras that I used for my participant tallies in Chapter 3.

¹⁴⁵ "Prizes," accessed April 10, 2015, http://www.dso-berlin.de/content/e36466/e54173/e54183/index_eng.html.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

Oscar Finch and Josh Guinta (tied for third prize, from Toronto and Brooklyn respectively).¹⁴⁷ The DSO compiled a Soundcloud playlist of over a hundred other tracks of other entries, which is featured on a page of the contest website.¹⁴⁸

David Lang Piano Competition

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BrmQqX_Qs5o (announcement video)



Screenshot from “David Lang Explains his Piano Competition 2011,” uploaded October 27, 2011, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BrmQqX_Qs5o.

Composer David Lang’s piano competition, launched in November 2011, called for applicants to upload videos of themselves performing “wed,” a movement from Lang’s *memory pieces* (1992) for solo piano. The winner of the competition would receive a paid trip to New York City, with accommodations and a two-day honorarium, to perform “wed” and co-premiere a four-hand piano piece at a release party for a new album of Lang’s music at notable new music venue (le poisson rouge).¹⁴⁹ Lang described the competition as a creative dialogue; in a YouTube announcement, he said: “...[‘wed’] is a piece which is open to a lot of different ways of approaching it...I think that there are so many ways that one can play a piece of music, and find something in it, and find your way through. As a composer, sometimes it feels very fascistic to say

¹⁴⁷ I have included geographical location following the manner in which the DSO does on their site. “The Winners of DSO’s Remix Competition,” accessed April 10, 2015, http://www.dso-berlin.de/content/e36466/e54173/e56644/index_eng.html.

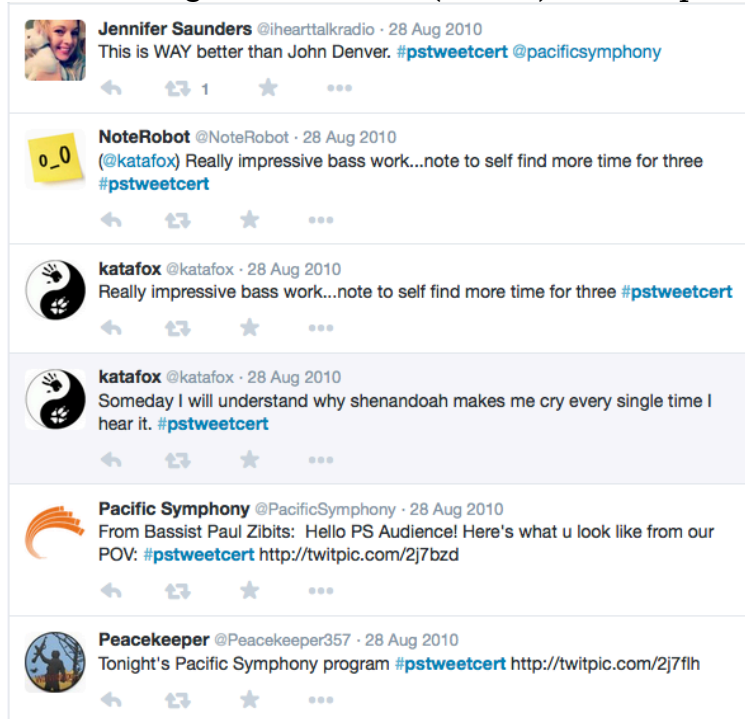
¹⁴⁸ The playlist is currently available at <https://soundcloud.com/groups/dso-remix-competition-dvorak-24-loops>.

¹⁴⁹ See official contest rules, archived at <https://web.archive.org/web/20111119154029/http://www.redpoppymusic.com/rules/official-rules.pdf>. Accessed May 2, 2014.

which one is right.”¹⁵⁰ Many performers seemed to take Lang’s description as license to modify the piece; various submissions incorporated creative techniques not written in the score including use of prepared piano, plucking the piano strings, and performing on electric guitar.¹⁵¹ However, Lang and his judges selected a more traditional performance, submitted by Peter Poston, as the winning entry.¹⁵² The final concert took place at (le) poisson rouge on May 6, 2012.

III. Other Engagement:

Live-Tweeting at Performances (various), c. 2009–present



Screenshot from live-tweet session by the Pacific Symphony, August 28, 2010.

A number of orchestras, opera companies, and diverse other classical performers and ensembles have encouraged their audiences to discuss performances in real time over the social media platform Twitter, a practice commonly known as live-tweeting.¹⁵³ The earliest mention I have

¹⁵⁰ “David Lang Explains his Piano Competition 2011.”

¹⁵¹ These entries can be found, respectively, at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TII9UdE73sI>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0nuSlrj3nZ0>; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sS_OTuZSgcI.

¹⁵² “David Lang – wed,” uploaded December 31, 2011, accessed May 3, 2014, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HuOtLBKscuY>.

¹⁵³ Additional examples include the Pacific Symphony in 2010 (Timothy Mangan, “Pacific Symphony to Tweet During Live Concert,” *The Orange County Register*, August 19, 2010, <http://www.ocregister.com/articles/symphony-262901-time-music.html>); the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra in 2011 (Beenish Ahmed, “Tweet Seats Come to Theaters,” <http://www.npr.org/blogs/monkeysee/2011/12/12/143576328/tweet-seats-come-to-theaters-but-can-patrons-plug-in-without-tuning-out>); Opera Philadelphia in 2014 (David Patrick Stearns, “Smartphone App, Tweet Seats Add Interactivity to

found of live-tweeting at a classical performance is a July 30, 2009 concert by the National Symphony Orchestra (based in Washington, DC), in which associate conductor Emil de Cou prepared a series of explanatory tweets about Beethoven's Sixth Symphony and encouraged concert attendees to follow along and respond.¹⁵⁴ This model is similar to traditional program notes, with the advantage that they can be synchronized with the timing of the performance itself. Live-tweeting is not always guided by a set of scripted notes on the part of concert organizers; it is sometimes simply an open invitation to audience members to post their comments. In some instances, members of the audience who would like to use social media during the performance are limited to a particular spot in the concert hall so that the screen glow from their devices will not bother other listeners; some organizations have referred to these sections as "tweet seats."¹⁵⁵

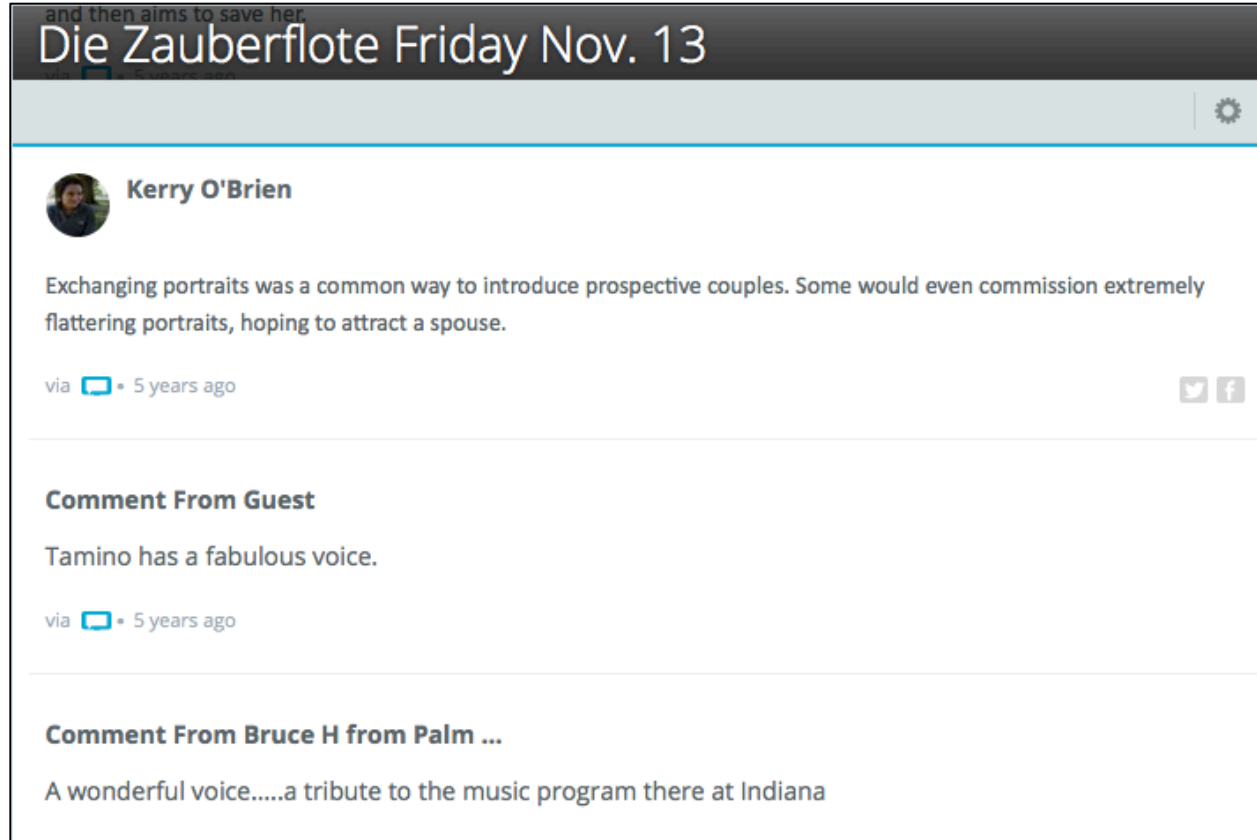
Philadelphia Concert Halls," WQXR, November 20, 2014, <http://www.wqxr.org/story/smartphone-app-tweet-seats/>); among many others.

¹⁵⁴ "NSO to Live Twitter Performance of Beethoven."

¹⁵⁵ Ahmed, "Tweet Seats Come to Theaters."

Indiana University Opera Live Blogging, c. 2009–present

<http://music.indiana.edu/iумusiclive/streaming/> (when active)



Screenshot from archive of live blog comments by Kerry O'Brien and Nik Taylor for W.A. Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, November 13, 2009.

Since the beginning of the opera “live blogging” program in 2009, Indiana University (IU) musicology graduate students have researched and written scripts to accompany select live online broadcasts of the university’s opera productions.¹⁵⁶ While viewers/listeners watch/hear a stream of a live opera performance, they can open the chat box in a separate browser window to participate in the live blog conversation. The graduate student moderators time the release of their scripts to the live action of the opera, while responding to audience comments and questions. Audience members can comment in the chat room (although comments must be approved before they appear) and participate in polls and quizzes that designed by the moderators. Based on my own experience of writing and viewing live blogs, as well as discussion with former and current IU musicology graduate student colleagues, most scripts tend to be somewhat humorous. Authors often plan for many members of their audience to be unfamiliar with the opera (often focusing on musical or textual details like leitmotifs and tropes while reinforcing plot details), but will also try to include a few in-depth observations, historical details, and notes on production history to keep more familiar listeners engaged.

¹⁵⁶ The first IU live blog was for a performance of Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte* (see screencap), written and executed by Kerry O’Brien and Nik Taylor. Kerry O’Brien, correspondence with the author, April 11, 2015. Professor Konrad Strauss, director of Recording Arts at Indiana University (who also developed and oversees the IU Music Live streaming program), provided technical support.

KUHA and Houston Symphony “Air Conducting” contest, 2013

<https://web.archive.org/web/20130317180333/http://www.classical917.org/contest>



Screenshot from “Jonathan conducting to Richard Strauss’ “Also sprach Zarathustra,”” uploaded April 7, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sgekZjXuH8>.

In 2013, Houston radio station KUHA (“Classical 91.7”) and the Houston Symphony hosted a contest in which participants uploaded videos of themselves conducting for the chance to win a prize of \$300 and the opportunity to conduct the Symphony in concert.¹⁵⁷ Seven-year-old Jonathan Okseniuk (already of viral video fame from a video his parents recorded of him conducting to Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony when he was only three) won the competition and led the orchestra in a performance of John Philip Sousa’s *The Stars and Stripes Forever* at a family concert in July 2013.¹⁵⁸ Associate conductor Robert Franz was shocked at Okseniuk’s commanding conducting performance at such a young age, and described him as gifted and exceptional for his age in a blog post about the concert titled “The ‘Mozart Effect.’”¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ I have not found an official start date for the competition, but the entry period ended May 2, 2013. “Air Conducting Contest,” QuKKu, accessed April 5, 2015, <https://web.archive.org/web/20130427084702/http://qukku.com/contests/Air-ConductingContest64>.

¹⁵⁸ “3 Year Old Jonathan Conducting to the 4th Movement of Beethoven's 5th Symphony,” uploaded March 15, 2010, accessed April 5, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0REJ-lCGiKU>.

¹⁵⁹ Robert Franz, “The ‘Mozart Effect,’” *Houston Symphony Blog*, July 12, 2013, accessed April 5, 2015, <http://houstonsymphonyblog.org/07/12/the-mozart-effect/>.

Tweetfonie, 2014

<http://www.tweetfonie.de/>

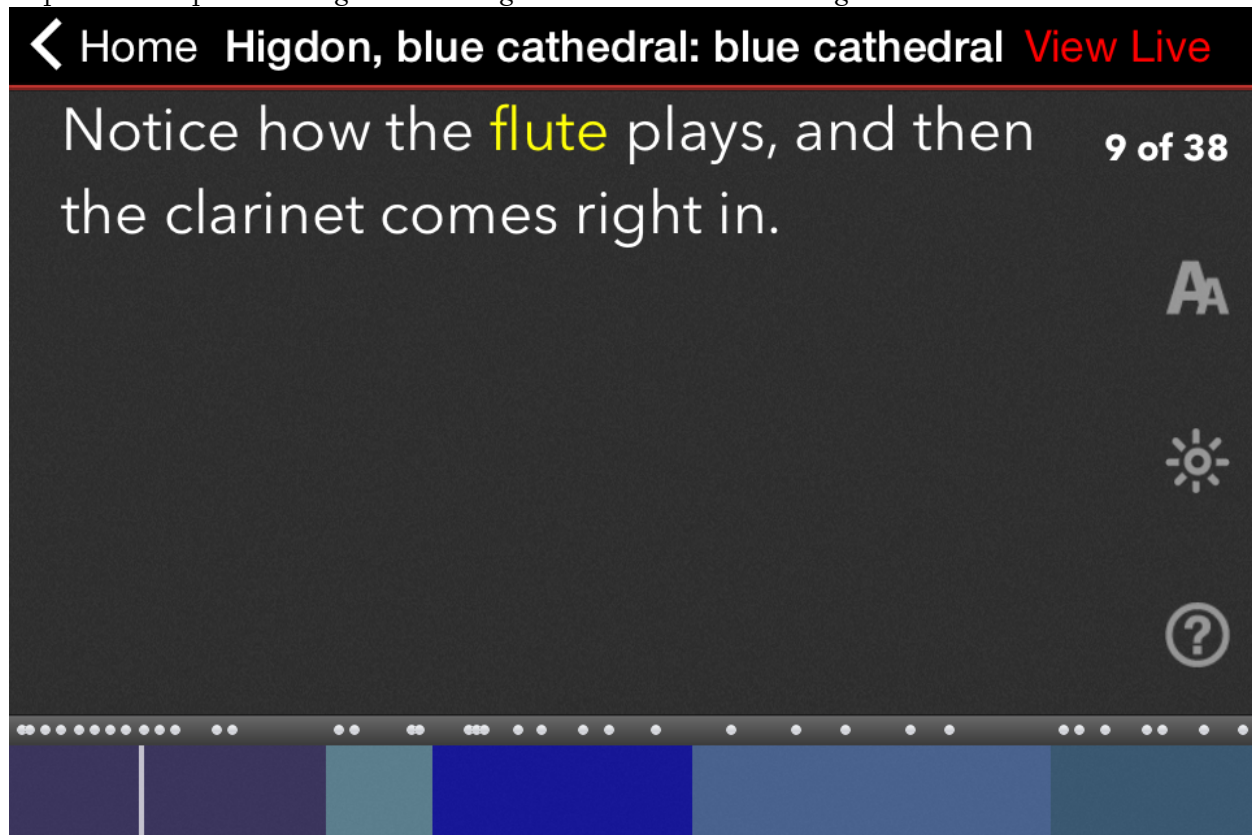


Screenshot of Anhaltische Philharmonie Dessau performing a Tweetfonie composition, from “@CRUIXENTFlo ‘Passejada’ composed by Ferran Cruixent,” uploaded March 17, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KBld7aq0q8A>.

The Tweetfonie was held as a part of the Kurt Weill Fest held in 2014 in Dessau, Germany in 2014. Its website allowed participants to submit a melody over Twitter, with a submission period of a single day (March 2, 2014); melodies could be composed on the Tweetphonie website through the use of a virtual piano keyboard or through a special notation system. A team of composers arranged select melodies for full orchestra, and on March 3, members of the Anhaltische Philharmonie Dessau (the festival’s artists-in-residence) sightread the compositions. The performances were streamed live and were subsequently uploaded to YouTube, giving both credit to the Twitter users that composed the melodies and the composers that gave the pieces their finished forms.

LiveNote, Philadelphia Orchestra, 2014–present

<https://www.philorch.org/introducing-livenote%E2%84%A2-nights#/>



Screenshot from LiveNote app (offline version), displaying notes for Jennifer Higdon's *blue cathedral* (2000) written by Roger Wight.

Introduced in 2014, LiveNote is an app offered by the Philadelphia Orchestra that serves as real-time program notes in synchronization with live performances. LiveNote allows the user either to follow along with the performance or to scroll through the notes at leisure. The app was designed to be unobtrusive to concert-goers who do not wish to use it, with mostly light gray text against a dark background.¹⁶⁰ It is currently used in conjunction with a special performance series called “LiveNote nights,” which features shorter concerts (one hour, with no intermission) with earlier start times and reduced, uniform ticket prices of \$25. The app provides quick controls for changing text size and screen brightness. Yellow text links to glossary entries stored within the app. The full glossary is also available from the home screen, as are a copy of the program notes that are printed in the physical program. When a LiveNote concert is going on, the app can be activated by connecting to a special wireless network within Verizon Hall. There is also an offline version, which offers notes for a limited number of past pieces. At the time of writing, the app can be downloaded for free for iOS or Android, and it can be used with iPhones, iPads, and Android-enabled devices.

¹⁶⁰ “Introducing LiveNote™ Nights.”

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