

THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES AND THE PROFILE OF CONTEMPORARY ART MUSIC

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SUMMARY. Present-day economies see creativity as a commodity with a complex potential. Cultural industries are strategy elements for regional developments, being encouraged to evolve by accepting social, technological, and political influences. Since present-day art music must become integrated in a financeable system, several acceptability issues rise both from professional musicians, who have to face commercial compromises, and from the consuming public, who complain of the lack of specific educational methods. This article wishes to highlight the importance of creating means of communication between the real need of the public and the products exported by contemporary art music.

Keywords: creative industries, contemporary music, accessibility, *mindset*, entrepreneurship

Introduction

The syntagma “music industry” is as yet unclearly defined, even though more than half a century has passed since Adorno’s theories launched it into a widely researched context.² Current research stresses the necessity to approach this field from the perspective of the several sectors involved in it, each with various influences on the economic market, which include a variety of instruments employed for the administration and the dissemination of musical products:

“The music industry consists of a network involving the production, distribution, dissemination and consumption of music in a variety of forms, as well as the promotion of live music performance”³

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² Bălan, Oana Mihaela, *The Mystification of Adorno’s “Enlightenment” in Music Industries*, Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai, Musica. Dec. 2016, Vol. 61, Issue 2, p. 115-123.

³ Peter Tschmuck, Oxford Music Online – “Music Industry”, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.A2262804>

Integrating the idea of trading art and involving economic factors into acts of culture was not received as something natural that had to be incorporated into finite artistic products. Sales, the existence of distribution networks and the promotion of professional musical actions are still hard to understand nowadays and hard to manage by artists.

Nevertheless, seeking to change mindsets, the pioneers of musical entrepreneurship and the representatives of the music industry science are making constant efforts to train new generations of musicians to gain awareness of the major impact that the flow of economy has on the development of contemporary art.

Representative entities for the network of music industries

Besides the producer-musicians, who have behind them a historical and theoretical experience of several thousand years, the music industry sector also operates with a series of bodies which collaborate to produce and disseminate artistic outcomes, such as: “the sub-sector of conventional locations” (theatres, opera houses, philharmonics, concert halls), “music editors” (who publish music scores, perform audio-video recordings and issue licences), “bodies of collective administration of authors’ rights” (be they self-sufficient entities or departments integrated in the structures of organizations which deal with the dissemination of music productions), instrument makers, media channels (radio, television, internet), film, advertising, and gaming music producers, etc. who act interdependently and influence the entire process of cultural actions dissemination. This is a reality that we must understand, especially since each sectioning of the managerial subsystem for the production of contemporary culture has a specific and limited structure based on the rules it must follow.

Is music important for countries’ economies?

The report made in 2010 by the *United Nations Conference on Trade and Development* stressed that music is the main pillar in the development of cultural industries⁴, and amounts to over one million new employees in the European creative sector each year. Its influence on national economic flows is not at all negligible, and this has already been noticed by political forces permanently looking for high potential resources, which they support and integrate in massive regional development strategies. The refusal to integrate the field of art music in the entrepreneurial frameworks imposed at world level will eventually lead to the dissolution of any possibility culture has to survive and to support itself on its own.

⁴ http://unctad.org/en/docs/ditctab20103_en.pdf

Music was an economic asset long before the appearance of the “European globalization” trend. Ever since antiquity there is proof of music productions being sold:

“It is reported that the Greek poet Pindar sent 470 lyrics from his hometown Thebes to the tyrant Hieron in Sicily in the fifth century B.C. Pindar himself was not just a writer but also a kind of early music entrepreneur. Since lyric verses were usually accompanied by music performance and dance, Pindar also choreographed the dance for his odes. He was commissioned to stage performances in all parts of ancient Greece and was an ancient impresario in high demand. Pindar was an early example of an artist who was commissioned by wealthy and powerful patrons.”⁵

In the Middle Ages, the Catholic Church bestowed its patronage on music. With this mutation, schools and educational centres introduced music in their curricula and developed it as an independent branch of science. In the Renaissance, it migrated towards military services as well, and was then adopted by royal courts, where it was preserved all through the Baroque, providing new evidence on the entrepreneurial actions whose object were musical productions:

“The Habsburg Emperor Leopold I, a gifted composer himself, employed more than one hundred musicians, including performers and composers. When he married Margherita of Spain in 1666, he commissioned the Italian composer Antonio Cesti to write the opera *Il pomo d'oro*. It was staged over the course of two days, becoming an integral part of the marriage celebration that continued for a period of two years.”⁶

In mid-17th century, the first commercial opera, *Andromeda*, was written by Benedetto Ferrari and Francesca Manelli and staged during a carnival. Since then, official “court” operas and privatized “commercial operas” survived together for over a century. Ever since then, a difference could be noticed between the rigid system imposed by public institutions and the flexibility with which autonomous societies were able to develop. If, at that time, “public operas” were conducted according to princely bureaucracy, “private operas” were disseminated according to the Italian management model, which enabled them to easily penetrate societies all over Europe.

⁵ Peter Tschmuck, *The Economics of Music*, Agenda Publishing, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK, 2017, p. 21

⁶ *idem*, p. 25

In 1712, George Frideric Handel was appointed director of the Royal Academy of Music in London, a private institution that financed Italian operas. When the Academy could no longer give commissioned performances and went bankrupt, Handel invested all his savings into a private society that he managed together with John Jacob Heidegger, until 1733, when Farinelli's Opera of Nobility moved to London and bought all valuable artists. Handel's entrepreneurial spirit did not stop here, as he continued, in spite of these two failures, to act as impresario for businesses that sold concert-oratorios.

In 1750 a series of paid concerts started at a coffee house in Leipzig, given by Telemann and J. S. Bach, followed shortly afterwards by other locations in London that housed the concerts of Carl Friedrich Abel and Johann Christian Bach. These events inspired others as well to set up locations and organize this type of concerts in return for payment, so that at the beginning of the 19th century there was a very well developed network for the dissemination of private music.

The development of private music education services brought with it an unprecedented expansion for music instrument companies (pianos, harpsichords, clavichords), so that, in mid-19th century, Paris and Vienna firms were selling over a thousand pianos every year.

After the French Revolution, a large part of the royal orchestras were disbanded, forcing composers and performers to look for other livelihood sources. Locations with permanent concert seasons were thus established at the Leipziger Gewandhaus (1780), École Royale de Chant et de Déclamation in Paris (1793), Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Wien (1813), leading to the formation of the first philharmonic-type orchestras, which also organized master classes for people who did not have access to royal courts, but wanted to receive good-quality music education. In order to support the development of the same directions, specialized institutions were later inaugurated in London (the Royal Music Academy) and Leipzig (the Konservatorium der Musik under the patronage of Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy).

All this hustle of private networks also encouraged management actions, so that famous names such as Nicolo Paganini and Franz Liszt were sold to concert organizers at very high prices.

Then too, during an international scientific congress, the idea of the "Stimmungswalzer" was launched. The concept was rapidly adopted by entire Europe, and has ever since remained one of the most important emblems of Vienna, due to which Johann Strauss is still very intensely consumed nowadays.

Public space performances improved the life of composers, who started thinking that the efforts they were making in order to comply with the large number of commissions were not sufficiently well monitored and that the moral rights owed to them were only superficially protected. The market of the publishing houses that wrote and sold music scores became highly demanded and had to extend, just like, after Edison invented the phonograph in 1877 and Emile Berliner the gramophone a decade later, the audio recording productions and disc sales increased with tremendous speed. They also led to the emergence of specific authors' rights laws which were improved with the development of electronics and technology.

World War I blocked any form of music industries expansion by interrupting international communications, imposing institutional reforms and the rigorous supervision of new systems dictated by national authorities. Control societies appeared in this way: Deutsche Grammophon based in Germany, Columbia and Great Britain and Pathé Frères in France. After this period, the film industry adopted the new discoveries in the fields of electronics, establishing the first connections for film music producers and setting up specific studios with the necessary logistics for combining and processing high complexity videos.

The music record market also fluctuated after the ages of vinyl and audio cassettes businesses, until the compact disks took over the monopoly of business, impacting national economies. The step taken towards television advertising and digital channels forced producers to invest in new development strategies, in order to keep up with the competition of big computer companies.

The digital revolution has brought with it a series of confusions related to the system of values applied to musical products. Computers, originally designed to assist human work, have come to generate algorithms so subtle and so faithful to authentic creations that they are able to automatize artificial intelligence networks and replace authors based merely on a series of digitally generated calculations and structures. Thus, the mass of products grew and diversified at an overwhelming speed, providing musical supports for any type of activity (telephone ringtones, music tracks for software and computer games, advertisements, digitized variants of classical concerts):

“Digitization has not just changed the way is distributed but has also fundamentally reshaped the value-added network of the music business. Computer-and internet-related companies such as Apple, Amazon and

Google have become a highly significant part of the music business by launching music download stores and music-streaming services.”⁷

The science of musical entrepreneurship

Whereas until the end of the 20th century the science of music actions administration was implemented empirically, with the development of technology and the need of culture to keep up with the rapid rhythm of present-day trends, theories on musical industries management have risen to the next level.

One of the largest European projects, “Polifonia”⁸ investigated how European academic institutions in the music sector implement programmes specific to musical management and entrepreneurship, highlighting the importance of education in training competencies that can change the course of present-day music:

“Higher arts education institutions have not responded adequately to new career challenges. There is a mismatch between training and demands of the labor market... Today, entrepreneurial and arts management skills are a basic necessity for all future artists.”⁹

Research has shown that the Anglo-Saxon educational system trains entrepreneurial thinking from early ages. Primary and lower secondary music schools encourage students to engage in practical activities with a high degree of responsibility and offer interdisciplinary courses in management, business, financial education, and personal development, so that music students reach universities having a solid theoretical basis, which enables them to evolve well in any entrepreneurial sub-domain. Great Britain and Ireland are the most developed countries in the field of entrepreneurial music education, and offer entire Bachelor and master degree programs in music entrepreneurship in Liverpool, Edinburgh, Nottingham, Regent, Dublin, Cork.

The continental model applied in 64% of the music conservatoires in Austria, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland is highly esteemed today due to its practical approach of the proposed concepts, a feature highly valued by most specialists because of its closeness to the entrepreneurial spirit that imposes a clear and operative style.

⁷ Peter Tschmuck, *The Economics of Music*, Agenda Publishing, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK, 2017, p. 269

⁸ <https://www.aec-music.eu/polifonia/sub>

⁹ <https://www.aec-music.eu/musicalentrepreneurship>

Mediterranean and West-European countries are still reluctant towards the idea of accepting management in institutions of music education, as the great majority of financial education forms have no correspondent in the field of art, but rather in universities that teach economics, in the form of general disciplines.

In the sphere of practice, there is a better homogenization among European states, where almost all countries have at least one music distribution network for specialized ensembles.

In France for instance there is a preference for private orchestras, such as the one conducted by François Xavier Roth, consisting of graduates of the *Conservatoire de Paris*. The repertoire performed by “Les Siècles” before the public is very diverse, from old music to pop-rock, with syncretic and dynamic performances which clad the concert’s story in a pleasant and accessible appearance.

Another body that has survived in the era of these new demands and is still active and successful in the Netherlands is the AskoSchönberg ensemble, made up of two older groups, the Schönberg ensemble and the Asko ensemble, which, once merged, created a new strategy of access to the concert market according to the real requests of contemporary audiences. At the same time, in Scotland, the contemporary program music ensemble was established, aiming to offer music productions with a powerful Scottish substratum, to promote living composers by organizing concerts in unconventional spaces, including through internet broadcasting.

Private institutions which provide musical services generally concentrate on problems of communication between professionals and non-professionals, on constructing the necessary channels from the art of music, which is often interpreted as inaccessible, towards communities less familiar with this kind of productions. Nevertheless, the educational dimension remains a major goal of the actions undertaken by private ensembles, which is proven by the quality of the productions, the high standards of the performances, the use of early musical instruments when the repertoire requires it, the integration of contemporary compositions in almost all concerts and so on.

The last decades of the 20th century had a major impact on changing the viewpoint of many artists all over the world. An increasing number of conservatoire graduates are showing an entrepreneurial attitude and searching for solutions to work in the field in which they are educated. Chamber ensembles can be seen at various events, before other types of audiences and within other cultural contexts.

Present day music industries exist in an agglomerated and confusing context. The markets specific to art genres must interfere with

the so-called commercial areas in order to find their way to a new audience category, to analyse preferences and to develop specific strategies for educating and increase concert halls audiences. It is a difficult mission in terms of opening the road towards a new group of cultural consumers and accepting technological innovations which influence the quality of musical productions and dissemination, but particularly due to the mindset change that it resorts to.

Present day musicians have to face unknown administrative issues that they must solve investing time that they should reserve for creation. Hesitant attitudes regarding self-management have led over the past decades to the emergence of (most often) elite artist communities, which are no longer aware of the necessity to create a means of communication between producer-musicians and consumer-public.

Contemporary music art has come to constraint itself by resorting to abstract forms, hard to understand and accept, and almost impossible to sell. Unknown cultural goods and the markets that provide new products are regarded with hostility. A change is always easier if it can be related to something familiar, to a set of principles which art consumers have created based on their education and the features of the society they have lived in. A mass acceptance for contemporary art music can only take place if music itself is ready to make a series of compromises in order to enter the interest sphere of future audiences. The importance of the interference of culture, trade and consumers' needs in order to conform to a certain social level is one of the essential blockages which prevent the development of present day art:

“Such works of art, essentially manifestations of new and original ideas, may not be easily accepted by society initially; significant changes in norms of acceptability may be required before such works acquire market value, thus linking culture and commerce through market creation for radical original art works.”¹⁰

Conclusions

Cultural entrepreneurs are not a category of superficial producers, as one might think, but a class of intermediaries who understand the value of original art, which they adopt and process in order to be closer to the consumers' capacity to understand, conferring it new attributes and meanings, which are capable to create a system of offer and demand.

¹⁰ Mukti Khaire, *Culture and Commerce: The Value of Entrepreneurship in Creative Industries*, Stanford Business Books; 1 edition, 2017.

It is essential to highlight the fact that the society of today has needs of affiliation and, therefore, community mass influences are an integral part of educational processes. New markets that provide exclusively abstract products, as in the case of contemporary art music, without answering any declared need, are met with resistance.

The difficult relationship between professional musicians and the consuming public can have dramatic effects in the long term. A closed-profile system, such as the one of contemporary culture, which does not support the access of the masses through educational tools, is destined to fail, and all components which are not useful to national economies and are incapable to produce consumable goods shall receive less financial support and less encouragement to develop.

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