



Presentation of the Project

In this project, the notion of audience development applies principally to listeners in concert and performance halls or public spaces; this does not by any means preclude efforts to understand the influence of digital audio media on the cultural practices of music-lovers. The statistics concerning music in Quebec seem to indicate an increase in concert attendance since the late 1990s. In reality, however, the situation is more complicated (Fortier, 2012). The cited statistics are global figures, and they do not distinguish between musical genres or different kinds of concerts.

The data on attendance levels for classical music actually show a downward trend, perhaps indicating the end of cultural democratization (Garon, 2006). Presently, there is a lack of thorough social mapping of the attendance habits and the characteristics of music-lovers (Gomart, 2000) in Quebec, in contrast to other countries (like France, England, and Germany) where sufficient studies have been conducted to elucidate the composition of contemporary audiences and the concert attendance habits within different social classes (Lahire, 2004). The DPMQ project seeks to address this lacuna that has become problematic for music organizations, including our partner institutions. These studies are a logical consequence of state involvement in matters of artistic production: such is the case in France, for example. Having supported the development of the arts (particularly the production of works of art), the cultural milieu and the state work together to increase cultural consumption, with the awareness that, particularly in certain sectors of the performing arts, audiences are decreasing or, at best, steady. “Audience development” is therefore an intervention model that corresponds to the second phase of state intervention in the cultural field.

This second phase has coincided with a movement to expand cultural practices across social and political divisions (Fleury, 2008 [2006]). It was thus in this context that we witnessed the appearance of the cultural omnivore (that is, the manifestation of a marked eclecticism in the cultural practices of the educated classes), as theorized by Peterson and Kern (1996), and which succeeded the figure of the intellectual snob. Although the statistics on musical audiences provide us with a means of measuring the attendance figures in concert halls, they do not allow us to create a thorough social morphology of the listeners according to those variables that permit precise characterization: age, sex, education level, place of residence, marital status, social and professional status, motivations, and modes of cultural transmission. Once this morphology has been established, we will have a more precise picture of the social, economic, and cultural features of musical audiences, and therefore can better situate them within the socio-economic conditions in Quebec.



It will thus be possible:

1. to define certain ideal “types”;
2. to understand the true evolution of musical audiences (classical music, contemporary music, world music) concurrently with the influence of certain social, economic, cultural, and political variables;
3. to understand how musical taste is transmitted to children.

For example, the results might shed light on the importance of economic factors in purchasing tickets or in bringing along a child, or on the geographic origins and social classes of music-lovers who frequent the institutions participating in the study. These results will also allow the State to develop a more coherent approach for supporting the cultural sector, which otherwise can be difficult to justify to a populace that increasingly demands direct returns on public investments. Providing resources for the dissemination of music implies that attendance for the event in question should be higher. However, audience development practices are not predictably successful, nor are they necessarily adapted to the specific conditions of the artistic milieu or to the social fabric (in a more global sense). This is particularly true in a context where so little is known about the musical audiences in Quebec – their habits, motivations, preferences, and influences – in short, the interpretive communities (Esquenazi, 2007) through which the audience evolves and situates itself. A case in point: a significant segment of audience development is devoted to short-term marketing as part of the dominant philosophy – the systematic “commodification” of art. This means that audience development occurs most often through activities of “recognition” of the cultural product, rather than true investment in the social connections that sustain cultural attendance practices beginning in childhood.

In 1996, the government published the second part of Quebec’s cultural policy (1992). The document was entitled, “Remettre l’art au monde (Bring art back into existence),” and redefined the role of the state, stipulating that it should widen its cultural action to embrace “new concerns, thus opening up toward issues that are as important as creation and production, but that have been hitherto considered more peripheral” (p. 9). This related principally to issues of access to performances and the conditions of dissemination of the performing arts in Quebec. Since then, there have been very few new initiatives undertaken to comprehend and promote audience development, particularly in the music sector, besides some sporadic measures to promote the circulation of performances in Quebec, even though the qualitative research had been carried out, say, in contemporary art (Bellavance, Valex and Ratté, 2004).



Objectives

The DPMQ project approaches the issue of musical audience development through a combination of scientific research (the sociological and musical analysis of organizational structures) and the practical knowledge from our partners in the field.

This partnership between the research community and the artistic community has the following objectives:

1. to understand the dynamics that guide the connections between audiences and different kinds of music;
2. to devise new methods and techniques for audience development based on the concept of the work's value.

Our hypothesis is that the listener's appropriation of the work is fundamental for establishing an audience. This essential connection is based on both musical and sociological considerations (Frith, 1996). Our goal is to understand the conditions that give rise to the creation of value and the impact that a certain value might have: for example, the role of admiration (Heinich, 1991). By taking into consideration the audience's estimation of value, it is possible to develop a comprehensive approach to audience development based on a reassessment of musical mediation activities (those that concern explanatory commentary on music, such as lectures, pre-concert talks, blogs, interactive websites, program notes, didactic material) specific to each of our partners. Centering audience development on the musical work thus constitutes the third phase of a formerly two-part process: an initial phase of "traditional marketing" (advertisements, special offers, discounts, etc.), which today often causes an information overload, and a second phase that involves audience education, accompanied by "educational marketing" strategies (lectures, concerts with commentary, interviews with the artists, backstage visits, etc.) that do not always succeed as envisioned. The third phase would thus reintroduce, at the heart of audience development activities, the musical work and its iconic properties, which must surpass those of the artist who holds most of the attraction (according to the star system). In order to accomplish this feat, the relationship between the audience and the musical works must be fully understood.

To achieve these objectives, the DPMQ project comprises 3 phases:

1. **The first phase is theoretical and historical.** An in-depth consideration of the concept of the audience, developed through the use of theoretical tools culled from literature in musicology, sociology, economics, and history, will help to formulate fieldwork hypotheses, as well as to establish categorical principles and the experimental framework. The notion of musical taste, for example, and the



- vast literature on the topic will be used to assess the impact of socioeconomic factors, along with the consideration of cultural transmission and the role of education (Singly, 1996). Likewise, the influence of technology establishes the pertinence of listening to music in a concert as a physiological and psychological auditory reality (Small, 1998). It is thus also important to understand how musical audiences have developed in the West during the second half of the twentieth century and the concrete institutional strategies that have contributed to their development. The historical phase seeks to write the history of musical audience development in Quebec from 1990, the moment when the Quebec government created the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec and reinforced its support for musical production.
2. **The second phase requires fieldwork at the partner institutions.** The fieldwork will be conducted in two stages. In the first, the researcher will fill out an observation grid to understand better the three successive stages of the concert: the launch, the event, and the fallout. In the second stage, the audience members are questioned verbally on their motivations, habits, and knowledge, and the means of communication utilized to bring them to the music and those that they might also use with their acquaintances (Octobre and Jauneau, 2008); in other words, the necessary indicators to define ideal types from the concert-going public in Quebec. Certain concepts drawn from sociology of listening will delineate the field study: the importance of cultural mediation (Hennion, 1993), sociability during the event (Fleury, 2008 [2006]), the creation of a bond or misapprehension once the event is over (Pedler, 2004), and the forms of habits, belonging, and passion perceived in their discourse (Hennion, 2004). These surveys will be developed and based on preexisting models, and will consolidate the studies conducted in Quebec over the last 35 years (Garon, 2006) in addition to the knowledge accumulated in the first phase of this research project.
 3. **The third phase of the project experiments with new forms of musical mediation in tandem with the partner institutions** who will apply the strategies to their activities. The mediation interventions will be derived from the combination of the results from the first two phases of the research study as well as the expertise acquired by the partner institutions.

Consider, for example, the study of mediation activities directed specifically toward young audiences and their parents. The analysis of experimental results will produce concrete suggestions for musical mediation activities in addition to recommendations regarding audience development practices; these should be applied in the decades to come not only by organizations in Quebec's music sector but also in those cultural policies that play a leading role in the sustainability of audiences.



Hypotheses and methodology

Hypotheses

Given that the knowledge that we have of listening habits and concert attendance in Quebec are limited to the global figures compiled by the Observatoire de la culture and general facts on cultural consumption (Garon, 2006), without any correlation to empirical research, our first hypothesis stipulates that audience development activities are based on activities whose effectiveness is neither optimal nor even predictable:

1. Audience development activities are based on partial knowledge of their audience: the audience is not a monolithic object of study and should rather be approached in a manner that acknowledges its plurality and diversity. If the socio-economic profile of the audience is partially known, how about the psychological profile or the emotional functioning of the classes that are represented in the audience?;
2. These activities are not based on a thorough understanding of the development of musical taste and cultural transmission;
3. Neither are they based on a thorough understanding of the musical expertise required for a concert, which varies in accordance with the repertoire, the place, and the circumstances;
4. They do not or rarely take into consideration past experiences in the field unless they occur within the same institution that has kept records of data and studies for its own operations. With this in mind, the study needs to produce a broader vision of an issue that goes beyond corporate interests and power struggles;
5. These activities do not evolve in accordance with different modes of dissemination, mediation, and consumption of music, including the contribution of new technologies (Bourreau and Gensollen, 2006) and the staging of new experiments such as real-time commentary or the influence of social networks in the reception of musical works.

Our second hypothesis is that musical audience development will not be effective unless it is subjected to an ethnographic investigation in partnership with representative music institutions and the venues of dissemination. Like all cultural institutions, these organizations possess internal guides and information that can be used by the researcher for the development of a field study and for suggesting experimental frameworks. However, this information must be scrutinized using conceptual tools intended for listening practices (the role of listening devices, forms of attachment, selection habits, etc.) and correlated with information collected in theoretical and empirical research, which will provide a comprehensive vision of the issue while acknowledging the complex reality of the multiplicity inherent in musical audiences.



Our third hypothesis is focused on realities of the field. Audience development activities could increase audience numbers and encourage new attendance habits – even long-term commitment to the institutions – if they were better supervised, coordinated, and understood. It is therefore imperative to define the ideal “types” that comprise an audience of music-lovers today, along with a consideration of generational realities. For example, for the younger generation, aged 20 to 40, the hypothesis is that attendance in concert halls depends on the *momentum* created around an event (the “buzz”), which is generated in traditional media, but also increasingly through social networks. This consumer, surrounded by cultural abundance, is much more fickle than those from previous generations, and needs to be better understood. For the moment, this hypothesis steers us toward defining an archetype who identifies as “festive,” and who notably confers importance to an event according to its media presence and the value it has been assigned (Bourgeon-Renault and Filser, 2010). On the other side of the spectrum, it appears that audience development for baby-boomers and seniors has reached a saturation point, a situation that this study will document. Other concerns include the presence of culturally-diverse communities within the public of music-lovers and the receptiveness of current audiences toward diversity (Ollivier, 2008). Our hypothesis maintains that, when there is a notable absence of this kind of public in concert halls, measures should be taken to encourage increased attendance; these range from programming issues (the inclusion of new musical repertoires) to the institution’s capacity to marshal substantial resources (for targeted advertising and appropriate mediation activities).

Methodology

The DPMQ project combines approaches from musicology (history and the aesthetics of musical taste), socio-musicology (analyses and studies of sociological data), and musical production and management (audience development activities). To respond to the questions posed in the first phase of the project, the first methodological step establishes the recent history of musical audiences and the notion of audience development. Having demonstrated the lack of qualitative figures regarding musical audiences in Quebec, the second phase of the project requires a second methodological step: this involves carrying out fieldwork, compiling data from the interviews with audience members, and developing logical conceptual tools. There will be three different kinds of methodological tools used to carry out this research: field observation with an appropriate grid, a survey questionnaire, and semi-directed interviews that allow the interviewers to adapt their discourse according to the kind of information sought. In each case, the audiences will be contacted according to four modalities: the connections they have formed with the institutions, the musical works, and mediation, in addition to traditional socio-economic indicators, such as age, sex, education level, social and professional categories, etc. The third phase of the project involves another methodological step, characterized by a more pragmatic approach to the field; this includes the adaptation and creation of new activities of musical mediation that consider the nature of the works given in concert and the socio-



cultural particularities of the targeted audience. While already present for the first two phases of the project, the partner institutions' presence becomes essential for the third phase, as the combination of their experience and the knowledge of the research team will allow us to devise new activities.

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