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'Wherever You Are Whenever You Want': Captivating and Encouraging Music Experiences when Symphony Orchestra Performances are Provided Online

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This article examines how ideas about music and music listening are articulated and what listening practices are constructed when symphony orchestras provide concert performances through streaming services. This is achieved by paying attention to how listening situations connected to symphony orchestras' digital performances are characterized, how the audience is positioned in relation to the performances and the involved musicians, and furthermore to how the music is represented in text, images and verbal statements. The empirical data comprises the streaming service platforms, and supporting materials, of two concert institutions, London Symphony Orchestra (LSO) and Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra (GSO), and was gathered during spring 2020, i.e. when concert halls were closed in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The article demonstrates how online listening practices are characterized as disconnected from constraints of time and space, and free for anyone to use, anytime and for almost any reason, yet also as strongly connected to temporal and spatial dimensions. Furthermore, it demonstrates how the listening practices connected to online symphonic performances are constructed in line with discourses on music as a health resource or as a mood enhancer and emotional regulator, but also in line with romantic aesthetic ideals. Even if the romantic aspects are less explicit, and thus could be perceived to be challenged, such ideals seem to remain uncontested as long as they are combined with more recent discourses on music.

Introduction

During spring 2020, when public music events were cancelled as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic, many artists, concert promoters, and cultural organisations began using digital channels to broadcast performances. In some cases, the concerts were meant to pay tribute to healthcare professionals, such as an event organized by Lady Gaga in collaboration with WHO, which was live-streamed on social media platforms like Facebook and YouTube (Lady Gaga, 2020). In other cases, musical performances were arranged with the ambition to strengthen and encourage people affected by the pandemic, such as a concert featuring Andrea Bocelli that was live-streamed from the Cathedral of Milan on 12 April 2020 (Bocelli, 2020). For concert institutions that were forced to suspend their public activities, the possibility of maintaining contact with their audiences was a strong incentive to engage in digital broadcasting. One such event was the virtual 'At-Home Gala' arranged by the Metropolitan Opera in New York, featuring 'more than 40 artists performing in a live stream from their homes all around the world' (Metropolitan Opera, 2020).

The lockdowns that followed the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic also made online concerts the principal mode of engagement for many symphony orchestras, who at that time expanded their range of online concerts, either by making available previously recorded concerts in their archives or by offering live-streamed performances. The London Symphony Orchestra (LSO) and the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra (GSO) were among the symphony orchestras that increased their music distribution using already established streaming services, and it is these services that will constitute the empirical focus for this article. The article examines how ideas about music and music listening are articulated and what listening practices are constructed when symphony orchestras provide concerts through streaming services. Theoretically, it is framed within a discourse-analytical approach, according to which language is viewed as constructive rather than descriptive, that meaning is believed to be constituted when expressed through speech acts, and that patterns established by these processes may be related to historically and collectively constructed discourses (Foucault, 1970). From this point of view, discourse is considered to be something contestable and changeable rather than fixed and stable. The theoretical approach furthermore embraces a view on discourses and power as being closely interconnected, and a belief that power relations can be identified by reading how people position themselves or are being positioned in a given situation (Foucault, 1982). From this theoretical perspective, attention is given to how listening situations connected to two orchestras' digital performances are characterized, how the audience is positioned in relation to the performances, how the music is represented in text, images and

verbal statements, and furthermore to how ideas about music and music listening are negotiated and redefined, but also maintained and reinforced.

The study underpinning this article mainly took place during April–June 2020, and was inevitably affected by the lockdowns related to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. When the concert halls had to close their doors, the number of digital concerts made available on the orchestras' websites increased significantly. And while GSO used its streaming service GSOplay (accessible on their webpage and as a smartphone application) LSO broadcast archive concerts on its YouTube channel with links from a newly created 'Always playing' page on its website. By means of these digital channels, LSO and GSO distributed previously recorded archive concerts, newly produced introductions to those concerts, and recorded interviews with musicians and conductors. On a few occasions during April and May 2020, GSO also chose to live-stream concerts from the concert hall stage. These concerts that were arranged in compliance with current recommendations on the maximum number of people gathered in the same area, and so took place without an audience 'in the room'.

The use of digital channels to provide symphony orchestra concerts is also viewed in this study as grounded in contemporary globalized, digitized and mediatized cultures, and is understood 'as permeated by the media, to the extent that the media may no longer be conceived as being separated from cultural and social institutions' (Hjarvard, 2013: 2). The mediatization of today's society has also impacted the conditions for cultural consumption, and during the last decades streaming services and social media have become increasingly intertwined with everyday life (Cochoy et al., 2017). Since mediatization furthermore can be understood as related to cultural modernization, a process characterized by the dissolution of traditions and redefinition of norms of cultural and aesthetic value (Ziehe, 2004), streaming services can also be understood as an arena for establishing redefined listening ideals as well as aesthetic norms. Furthermore, in light of how increased participation and interactivity are identified as consequences of digitized media (Jenkins, 2018), attention will also be given to how the relationship between the musicians, conductors, and soloist on the one hand, and the audience and different audience groups, on the other, are characterized.

Research on digitized music consumption describes how listening, when accessible through mp3 files and by streaming services, can be characterized as 'ubiquitous' (Kassabian, 2013), that is, a form of listening usually interconnected with other activities of everyday life (Hagberg and Kjellberg, 2017). Digital music consumption is sometimes also described as a resource for the listeners, who by creating so-called 'mood' playlists adjust and regulate specific situations or emotional moods (Nealon, 2018). But in relation to classical music there are also examples of research challenging

the idea that mediatization and digital distribution make music equally accessible to everyone, regardless of class, age, nationality, etc. (Crawford et al., 2014; Tan 2016; Rautiainen-Keskustalo and Raudakoski, 2019; Bull, 2019). Such a problematization stresses the historic and present-day relationships between classical music and perceptions of social position (Crawford et. al., 2014; Bull, 2019).

In order to understand possible discursive shifts regarding ideas about music and music listening, this analysis also takes into account such aesthetic ideals and ideas about music listening that developed in connection with the institutionalization and canonization of symphonic music during the 19th century. This is achieved by paying attention to how the concert halls from the 19th century onward have been constructed acoustically to improve conditions for the reception of the musical performance and ensure attentive listening (Tewinkel, 2018; Tkaczyk and Weinzierl, 2018; Zur Nieden, 2018). And because of how the 'idea of music listening as a practice in itself was inseparably linked to the emphatic recognition of music as art in the nineteenth century, with the concert hall most clearly representing the ascent of music listening' (Thorau and Ziemer, 2018: 1), it is reasonable to expect that the disconnection from the concert hall environment disrupts established listening ideals and aesthetic values in one way or another.

According to Thorau and Ziemer (2018), a specific kind of music-listening practice was established along with the emergence of a concert-hall culture, one that idealized concentrated and attentive listening to musical structures. This attentive listening ideal was in turn highly related to the romantic aesthetic idea of absolute music (Dahlhaus 1989a), and to the shift from what Lydia Goehr (1992: 153) discusses in terms of 'a *transcendent* move' which she characterises as 'a shift from the worldly and particular to the spiritual and universal' and to a '*formalist* move that which brought meaning from music's outside to its inside'. Mark Evan Bonds (2018: 1) further argues that this shift in aesthetic ideals during the 19th century generated a 'new attitude toward the act of listening to music', and that from then on, listening was characterized as 'an active process requiring a certain investment of energies', and a view emerged of the work of music as something that might 'pose a challenge of some kind to its auditors'. The appearance around the same time of booklets of programme notes at classical music concerts, first in Britain from the middle of the 19th century (Bashford, 2018), and shortly after that in other parts of Europe and in North America, can be explained in so far as they functioned as 'accompanying the auditive experience and… [served as] guided perception for the conception of music listening' (Thorau, 2018: 2). Together with concert hall rituals that were established at that time, they provided a service to the listeners, helping them to perform the kind of attentive listening that was expected of them.

In order to examine how discourses on Western art music are articulated and how aesthetic norms are constructed, contested, negotiated and even maintained, this analysis is directed towards recognizing elements in texts and images promoting the orchestras' online activities. The data collected for this article is drawn from material published on GSO's and LSO's websites, on their smartphone applications or on social media during the period March to October 2020. A multimodal discourse-analysis model has been used accordingly, giving attention to rhetorical expressions and frequently occurring words, as well as to examining how semiotic resources are used and organized (Machin and Mayr, 2012). The method of analysis is in this respect also inspired by Stuart Hall's view that cultural meaning is constructed through a combination of linguistic and symbolic representations (Hall, 2013).

Negotiating Spatiality and Temporality

In the texts describing LSO's and GSO's streaming services, and also in the promotion of specific concerts, temporal and spatial dimensions of the listening practice are frequently stated. References to time and space are either made by emphasizing the disconnection between the listening situation and the performance, or, on the contrary, by stressing temporality and spatiality as specifically important. In the following section time and space will be discussed both in relation to the attentive listening ideal characterizing canonized symphonic orchestra performances and concert-hall practices, and in relation to contemporary discourses on subjectivity, music consumption and power.

The disconnection between the concert experience and the time/space dimension

When listening situations are described as disconnected from the performance occasion, this is done by pointing to the possibility to choose when and where to experience a specific concert programme. On GSO's website this is expressed as follows: 'GSOplay is easy to use and generates both relaxation and emotional experiences – anywhere and anytime' (GSOplay, n.d.). A similar statement is articulated on GSO's smartphone app:

> Enjoy the Swedish National Orchestra when and where it suits you. Stream the concerts recorded live at Gothenburg Concert Hall. The app is filled with up-to-date contents and via push notifications you will be notified when there are new concerts to watch! (GSOplay smartphone app, n.d.)

The description of online music performances as available for listeners to engage with wherever or whenever they wish to regulate emotional states or counteract stress can be understood as constructing listening practice as an individualized event detached from its social and cultural context. Rather than promoting the sort of attentive listening

identified by Tewinkel (2018) and Thorau and Ziemer (2018) as characteristic of concert hall practices developed during the 19th century, individualized listening practice seems to serve as a resource for regulating specific situations, activities or moods. This can also be seen as related to the shift from 'listening to physical records or CDs' to listening 'by the MP3 playlist and the internet stream' that, according to Nealon (2018: 109–110), provides resources to organize individual and social life as it disciplines a listener oriented towards creating specific 'scapes' to confirm particular states of mind, i.e. a relaxation-scape etc. Since this way of using music has 'become the mundane reality of our MP3-packed lives' it has changed music's function into 'something that allows us to make our way through distributed fields of fluid subjectivity, surfing the modulations of late-late capitalist life, deploying just the right kind and levels of attention, focus, and distraction' (Nealon, 2018: 110–111). But, as can be seen in other excerpts, the listening practices created in relation to the online performances are not constructed solely as an individual activity, but as a social activity potentially able to connect people. The social dimension is particularly accentuated in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic, and with reference to social distancing, as is stressed in following excerpt from LSO's webpage:

> We know that music can bring comfort, hope and community in difficult times, and our mission remains to ensure that this is available to everyone, everywhere (…) We will provide digital programme notes and we hope that you will be able to sit down and watch at the same time as friends and family, wherever you are. (LSO, n.d.)

This excerpt emphasizes a different aspect of individualized listening to the previous examples. Here individualized listening is rather described as being forced upon people by the situation, and is associated with a situation of loneliness caused by the lockdown. But unlike the idealized self-selected listening emphasized earlier, this form of solitary listening should instead be counteracted. It is suggested that this can done by organizing listening occasions 'at the same time as family and friends', despite one's spatial disconnection from them, and by describing how music can serve as a resource for strengthening and encouraging people. In the following example, the inconvenience caused by the isolation can also be understood as compensated by music's inherent and unifying power:

> Due to the corona pandemic, concerts with the musicians of the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra are closed to the public for the time being. But as a testimony to music's inherent and unifying power, even more concerts are available on GSOplay.

By referring to music's inherent potential to unify people and stressing the collective dimension of the listening practice, the above excerpt appears to construct symphonic music as neutral art form and the listening situation as something everyone have equal access to. This also means that the listening situation is constructed as a 'shared space' that Rautiainen-Keskustalo and Raudaskoski (2019: 477) identifies and problematizes in relation to an initiative aiming to provide streamed symphonic concerts to seniors and prison inmates. Yet even if the ambition of the initiative was to '*include* "less fortunate" people and establish a new kind of *connection* between them and the "normal" society', various degrees of distance remained (ibid.: 471). Although the relationship between the concert organisers and the audience of LSO's and GSO's streamed performances is less asymmetric than that explored in Rautiainen-Keskustalo and Raudaskoski's study, constructing a shared space by asserting music's potential to function as a 'unifying power' can be problematized in relation to how social position and engagement in classical music culture is intertwined, as for example Crawford et al. (2014) and Bull (2019) point out.

Regardless of whether digital concerts are considered to be an individualized or a social activity, they might be understood as constructed in line with a neoliberal view on music and the arts 'as a service available to anyone' (Rautiainen-Keskustalo and Raudaskoski, 2019: 471), and furthermore as offering whatever meaning is suitable in a specific situation and whatever mood, emotional state, situation or experience that might need to be regulated by the individual (Nealon, 2018). Emphasizing that the listening activity takes place 'anywhere' and 'anytime', without mentioning by what means music could be listened to, amounts to constructing what is characterized as ubiquitous listening (Kassabian, 2013) as a possible way of engaging with digitized music as attentive listening, that is, the form of listening historically advocated in relation to classical music (cf. Tewinkel, 2018; Zur Nieden, 2018; Tkaczyk and Weinzierl, 2018). This interpretation is also motivated by the fact that the aesthetic dimension of music listening is very rarely articulated. The only time the aesthetic dimension of the listening experience is targeted, and attentiveness to the music encouraged (even if only implicitly), is when the listening experience is described as best being achieved with 'a really good sound system or top-quality earphones' (GSOplay, n.d.). After all, why would a high quality sound system or earphones be recommended unless melodic, harmonic and rhythmic details but also dynamic variations are assumed to be important? In that respect the digital concert hall can be considered as negotiating temporal and spatial dimensions of the listening experience, but also as challenging aesthetic ideas surrounding the listening practices.

Emphasizing temporal and spatial dimensions

Alongside the many examples of how online listening experiences might be constructed as detached from time and space, reference is also frequently made to spatiality and temporality when promoting the symphonic concerts broadcast by both GSO and LSO. The time and space dimension is mentioned, for example, in relation to online performances when archive concerts, recorded on their respective home-stages, i.e. the Gothenburg Concert Hall and the Barbican Centre, are provided on the orchestras' online platforms. These videos usually combine close-ups of specific musicians or conductors with views of different sections of the orchestra or of the entire orchestra on the stage from a distance. The portrayals of the orchestra musicians, the conductors and the soloists are thus enacted in a way that emphasizes the location, i.e. the main stage in the concert hall.

Another example of accentuating the spatial dimension can be found in the introduction to an archive concert published on LSO's YouTube channel and promoted on their website during the lockdown. The presenter welcomes the audience in the foyer surrounded by mingling concertgoers. At the end of the introduction, the presenter invites the audience to take their seats in the concert hall (LSO, 2020a). In contrast to the 'wherever and whenever you want' rhetoric discussed in the previous section, here the concert hall is highlighted as *the* place for attending a symphony performance. The spatial dimension is further underscored, this time from somewhere else than the concert hall, in another concert introduction promoting Berlioz's Romeo and Juliet, recorded in 2013 and published on LSO's YouTube channel in May 2020. In his ten-minute introduction, the choir conductor Simon Halsey, standing outside his front door, invites the audience in:

> Welcome to Always Playing, the LSO's online platform. It's where we're meeting with you while the Covid-19 crisis is at its height, and where we have to stay home. Let me tell you about tonight's concert. Why don't you come on in? (LSO, 2020b).

Compared to the introductions taking place at the Barbican Centre, the spatial dimension is articulated differently here. As Halsey speaks about his relationship to the composer and the musical work, this is done alternatively from his home office in front of bookshelves, from his piano chair and from his living room sofa. In each of the rooms, aesthetic symbols such as paintings on the walls and a discrete flower arrangement in the background are highlighted in a manner that emphasizes this 'living room concert hall' as a space for aesthetically focused listening to take place. In combination with how Halsey promotes the music and the composer, the aesthetic listening space can be understood as constructed in line with the attentive-listening

ideal described by Goehr (1992) as prevalent in the art music world since the early 1800s, one that demands concentrated and attentive listening to musical structures (see also Bonds, 2018; Thorau and Ziemer, 2018). In lieu of written programme notes, to prepare the audience to listen in this way (Bashford, 2018; Thorau, 2018), the characteristics of the piece are instead mediated by Halsey in what could be described as a form of verbal programme description. However, the invitation to Halsey's home also illustrates the connection between aesthetic preferences and social class, as cultural capital is manifested through well-stocked bookshelves, a piano and paintings on the walls (c.f. Crawford et al., 2014; Bull, 2019).

In addition to the spatial dimension, aspects of temporality are also referred to in some situations, such as when scheduling concerts. This was done, for example, when creating a timetable for publishing new archive concerts on the orchestra's online platforms during the period of closure in spring 2020. At that time both LSO and GSO released concert recordings from their respective archives twice a week, LSO on Sundays and Thursdays on their YouTube channel, and GSO on Tuesdays and Fridays on their website. The temporal dimension is further emphasized when the accessibility of the concerts is limited. While LSO's concerts are available for 24 hours, most of GSO's concerts can be experienced for 30 days. Limiting the availability in this way is a somewhat contradictory approach to the idea of accessing performances 'anywhere and anytime'. Regulating when access to a concert performance is made available, and restricting the possibility to experience it to a defined time span, might instead be seen as constructing a 'shared listening space' (Rautiainen-Keskustalo and Raudaskoski, 2019).

Temporal and spatial dimensions came to the fore for GSO when, in April 2020, they started broadcasting live-streamed concerts, performing chamber music pieces or symphonic works that were rearranged to comply with the Swedish Public Health Authority's recommendation to avoid crowds of more than 50 people. Since these concerts were not recorded, and thus are strictly limited in time, they can be recognized as something close to 'regular concert performances'. The border between a live performance and an online concert has never been clearer than in this situation, as it also leads to a destabilization of how a symphonic concert performance is defined. During one of the streamed concerts in May 2020, a member of the audience asked: 'When will you perform again?' in the live-chat where listeners are invited to comment. The orchestra manager of GSO, Andreas Lindahl, responded: 'We are actually performing right now' (GSOplay, 2020a). But even if live-streamed performances are here said to be real concerts, just like any others, it seems from this example that the principles for what constitutes a symphonic performance are challenged when the performance is provided via digital media.

The alternating under- and overemphasizing of the significance of place and time for the concert experience can be understood as an ongoing negotiation regarding both listening as an activity, and what characterizes a concert performance. Because the digitized concerts are, in many ways, disconnected from place and time, they can be viewed as challenging the aforementioned ideal of attentive listening. As long as the musical performance is listened to in the concert hall, where the design 'is optimized to ensure that the reception of the musical performance still aims at heightening attentiveness' (Tewinkel, 2018), the number of distractions can be minimized. But when the concert can be experienced anywhere and anytime, the listening practice becomes a more open space where different listening ideals become equally permissible.

Negotiated Audience Positions and Redefined Relationship Between Audience and Performers

Another focus of this article is to examine how the audience is positioned vis-à-vis online performances and how the relationship is established between the audience and the symphony orchestra through a combination of texts, video-recorded concert introductions and social media. One of the audience positions identified in the texts is the *global-network position*, which can be illustrated by how the audiences of online performances are described on GSOplay in the following way: 'The visitors come from all over the world: enthusiasts and specialists with a passion for classical music searching for the best online music experiences on the Internet'. A similar way of characterizing the audience is evident on LSO's web platform:

> In the coming weeks we will use our online channels to share videos of performances, articles, interviews and playlists. We invite you to join us and to connect with other music-lovers around the world. (LSO, n.d.)

The international character of the audience is further stressed in the comment field, where people comment on the concerts in different languages during GSO's live-streamed events from May 2020. In his introduction to the concert, alternating between Swedish and English, orchestra manager Andreas Lindahl points out how the audience is spread over the whole world, saying: 'We are happy to have listeners from Peru, Hong Kong, Istanbul and the USA. We are really happy to have you here' (GSOplay, 2020a). The comments section serves an important role in establishing the audience as an international collective, with members stating the geographical location where they are taking part in the concert. In order to illustrate how the audience also responds in both Swedish and English (sometimes also in Spanish and other languages) the following excerpt has been reproduced in the languages in which the comments were written:

hi from Rome (...) Poland with you (...) This broadcast is fantastic. Thank you from Boston (...) Thank you for keeping me sane, great playing: from Toronto Canada (...) Hello everyone and thank you from Edinburgh (...) Hello from Portugal. Beautiful sound. Thanks. (...) As a citizen of Gothenburg I am so proud of our Symphony Orchestra of Gothenburg (...) I'm sitting a few kilometers away from the concert hall in Gothenburg. Thank you for bringing this into my living room when we can't come and listen to you there. (...) Jag blir så glad att få lyssna på härlig musik hemma. Hälsningar från Norrköping (...) Cheers from Hisingen. (...) Tack så mycket och applåder från Rom (GSOplay, 2020a)

The depiction of the audience as a global network of music enthusiasts and as 'spread over the world', as well as the way this image being confirmed by audience members when positioning themselves geographically in the comments, can be related to how the online concerts are said to be available to everyone everywhere, i.e. as disconnected from time and space. This means that the concert situation, using Anthony Giddens' (1990) terminology, can be characterized as 'disembedded', i.e. as lifted 'from its local context of interaction' and restructured 'across indefinite spans of time-space' (ibid.: 21). However, more relevant here than defining and characterizing the concert situation and the relations involved, is a focus on what relations between the audience and the orchestra or concert producer emerge from a disembedded concert performance. Ethnomusicologist Shzr Ee Tan's problematization of the aspiration to create a democratic musical playing field (2016) raises the question of whether the global audience of online symphony orchestra performances is truly globally accessible. Moreover, audiences of online symphonic performances are presented as having equal access and even equal interest in the music performed, through the construction of a listening situation that is class and ethnicity neutral, which upholds a view of Western art music as universal (Tan, 2016; see also Nettl, 1983; Bergman et al., 2016).

Another audience position identified from the analysis of presentations made in texts published on the websites or in introductions to pre-recorded or live-streamed concert performances is the *broad-audience position.* This position might be seen as connected to the articulation of 'everyone' as potentially engaged with streamed symphony orchestra music. However, constructing an image of the audience as including all people might be problematized with reference to Gary Crawford et al. (2014) who, in a study of audience responses to a smartphone app used by a symphony orchestra in the UK, found that content published on the app primarily reached people already attending the orchestra's concerts. The emphasis on 'everyone' as potentially being engaged with streamed symphony orchestra performances might also be challenged on the basis of how different age groups are characterized in relation to streamed

concerts. While GSOplay states that its streaming service has the ambition to: 'reach a broad audience and attract visitors of all ages', LSO specifically acknowledges young people as an age group to 'keep busy'.

> Join us online for a programme of full-length concerts twice a week, artist inter-views, playlists to keep you motivated at home, activities to keep young music fans busy and much much more (LSO, n.d.).

Figure 1: 'When you get unexpected visit', GSO Facebook post, 28 April 2020, 21:12. Photographer: Brita Norrman Prytz. Published by permission of Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra (GSO Facebook, 2020a).

That such language highlights young music fans as a specific group in connection to streamed concert performances might be seen as relating to perceptions of this audience as especially knowledgeable and competent media users (Tapscott, 2009). Elderly people, on the other hand, are never highlighted as an age group in relation to online performances, but instead are mentioned as the target group of live performances arranged specifically for them by GSO during the pandemic. The Facebook post to the left describes how Karin, a subscriber and concertgoer for 50 years, is given a surprise in the form of a quartet performing outside her window (**Figure 1**). Another post from a similar home-visit event shows how 90-year-old Ingrid received a special performance in a garden near her retirement home (**Figure 2**).

One reading of the Facebook posts is that the orchestra is performing social responsibility in a crisis situation, and realizing its ambition to offer music to people especially affected by the isolation. Even if the idea of music's inherent power to unite and encourage people in difficult times is not stated explicitly, it is certainly implied in social media portrayals and

Figure 2: 'A glimpse from a home-visit.', GSO Facebook post, 11 May 2020, 21:17. Photographer: Johan Stern. Published by permission of Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra (GSO Facebook, 2020b).

descriptions. The investment in 'at home concerts' aimed specifically at the elderly audience during the pandemic can furthermore be seen as the orchestra acknowledging and recognizing particularly loyal concertgoers. The fact that GSO has been dedicating additional attention to this category can be understood as the orchestra dealing with potential economic consequences when the relationship with their audience is at stake.

As noted in the discussions in the earlier part of this article, providing online symphony performances also establishes more points of contact for communication and interaction between the audience and performers. There are many instances of listeners being invited to comment on the live–streamed event and ask questions of the orchestra manager, or being encouraged by Simon Halsey 'to join on YouTube and to quiz members of the orchestra and the choir about anything they like' (LSO, 2020b) in the performance of Berlioz's *Romeo and Juliet.* The relationship between the audience and the musicians is strengthened due to online offerings of 'extra material' in the form of interviews with soloists and conductors, making it possible to get acquainted with the actors involved. A similar description is found on GSOplay: 'You're able to be part of unique moments when the chemistry between conductor, musicians and audience is at its best' at the same time as the backstage films enable the audience to 'get acquainted with the orchestra, musicians, conductors and soloists.' The connection between the audience and the persons involved in music performances is further manifested by the description of the LSO in terms of a 'family' to which the audience can get access and even become part of:

> And at this time, we can't do that live, but we are thrilled that we have this great archive that we can share with you. And by you watching the concert tonight you are already supporting us and becoming part of our family. Even at this time of crisis LSO remains very busy. Our discovery project, our education department is really hard at work with our discovery choirs…. If you feel you could support us to get our music always playing, please go to lso.co.uk/support and any amount you can give us will keep that music playing. (LSO, 2020a)

However on the basis of this statement, which is also repeated in texts published on LSO's webpage and in the introductions to several of the orchestra's archive performances, being part of the 'family' seems to be conditioned on a willingness to provide the orchestra with financial support. This is of course understandable, given the strained financial situation of many orchestras. But, regardless of the underlying motivations, it positions audience members as consumers, and the relationship between the audience and the performers becomes a kind of transactional 'business affair' (Kolb, 2000). However, considering the opportunities for interaction offered to the audience, and how the audience is encouraged to engage in discussions and ask questions about the concerts, the audience might also be seen as positioned in line with what Don Tapscott and Anthony Williams (2006) refer to as 'prosumers', i.e. as a combination of consumers and producers, even if they do not have an impact on what kind of music should be performed. Even though this type of active listening position does not emphasize attentive listening in a way that is reminiscent of the 19th-century romantic listening ideal (Goehr, 1992; Bonds, 2018), it does acknowledge and encourage the listener's engagement with the listening situation.

Negotiated Meanings of Symphonic Music

In the previous sections, two distinct ways of representing music have been highlighted, the first of which describes music as having an 'inherent power' able to compensate for inconveniences, and help to alleviate the stresses, related to the lockdowns in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. From this perspective, music is a resource that can 'encourage people in difficult times', 'connect people', and 'bring comfort, hope and community'; and as stated on GSO's web page, this is based on an expectation that 'captivating music experiences have a strengthening and encouraging effect in these times' (GSOplay). The second way of representing music mentioned previously is connected to its role as a mood enhancer or emotional regulator, for example when it is described as potentially generating 'both relaxation and emotional experiences'. In the discussion that follows, these two views of music will be explored in greater detail, alongside other representations of music.

That music is emphasized as able to compensate for the inconveniences caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and described as a resource for wellbeing might be understood as connected to what can be called a 'music-as-a-health-resource discourse', a discourse taken as a starting point by researchers dealing with aspects of wellbeing in connection with musical activities (cf. McDonald et al., 2012; Boyce-Tillman, 2014). However, this idea is also frequently highlighted in relation to healthcare contexts, where 'music on prescription' is promoted as a method for improving mental health (Ferguson, 2019). And even if it has been brought up in relation to the pandemic during spring 2020, this idea is used by orchestras across a number of other situations, as for example in a Facebook post published by GSO in October 2020 where music is described as something that 'might strengthen our health' and is said to be 'a huge source of power that can move us to tears and make us want to move our legs'. In other words, music is here emphasized as having the potential to serve as a mood enhancer or emotional regulator, and thus is constructed in line with the idea of music as a provider of health, even if no reference is made to the pandemic. Furthermore, music's role as a mood enhancer is not specifically mentioned in relation to online performances, but rather in the regular programme offered by the Gothenburg Concert Hall. For example it was evidently a consideration in the 2019–2020 season, when yoga concerts were arranged on a few occasions under the direction of musician and yoga teacher Lene Skonedal. At these events, the audience was invited to participate in a yoga session to music performed by a string quartet consisting of musicians from GSO, with yoga mats placed on the floor in the foyer. On 2 February 2020, a yoga concert entitled 'Awakening' was performed, and the promotional text for the event stressed the ambition of 'awakening the body and the senses out of winter with yin yoga' (GSO). The concert was also described as providing a possibility to breathe together and 'create new energy and maybe new patterns for spring', and the audience furthermore welcomed to listen with their 'whole body' (ibid). When the concert hall was forced to suspend their public activities in April 2020, the yoga concerts were moved to GSOplay and the audience was encouraged to do yoga while listening to the performance being streamed from the stage of the concert hall. This was arranged in the form of a film, directed by 'Yoga Line', of a one-hour yoga session staged and published on GSOplay to the accompaniment of a string quartet. With the bodily dimension ever-present in the promotional material for the event, especially its focus on breath techniques, the performance can be understood as providing an hour of relaxation. By extension, this resonates with the idea of music as a recourse for wellbeing and a provider of bodily balance (Boyce-Tillman, 2014). Another way to understand the rhetoric about music as a force with the potential to strengthen people or influence their emotions is constructed in line with Nealon's idea of music-scapes; i.e. it can be understood as a

resource for organizing and regulating everyday experiences. From such a perspective, the promise of relaxation and mood-enhancement can be linked to demands for self-regulation that, according to Nealon, characterize the 'neoliberal consumer society of today' where 'bio power' has replaced discipline as the governing principle (Nealon, 2018: 9).

In addition to the representations of music explored so far, music is also legitimized in a diametrically opposed way in connection to the orchestra's streaming services. For example, the five images from GSOplay's smartphone application illustrate a musical experience that references romantic musical ideals. The common theme across the five images is that concert chairs are pictured as having been removed from the concert hall and placed in a different setting. In the first image (**Figure 3**), the chair is lifted up towards the celling and is lit from above with what could be described as a heavenly light and surrounded by flying white doves. In the second picture (**Figure 4**), one of the usually red chairs has been upholstered with coloured feathers and placed in the foreground of a forest environment. In the third image (**Figure 5**), a firebird holds the chair in its claws while flying high above an urban environment, and in the fourth image (**Figure 6**), several chairs are placed in a long row on a cable car for transport between two mountain peaks, recalling an alpine environment. Finally, in the fifth image (**Figure 7**), a chair is pictured together with dolphins jumping into a calm sea in front of a sky coloured by the sunset.
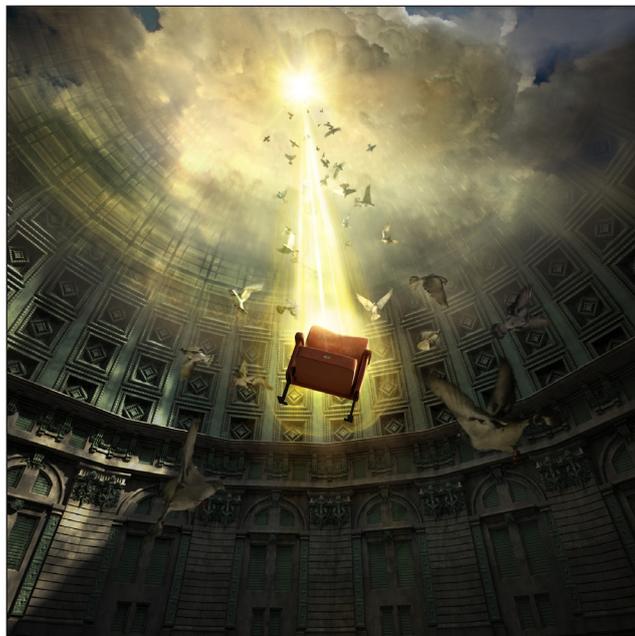

Figure 3: Up-lifted concert hall chair, GSO smartphone app. Illustration: Thomas Feiner; published by permission of Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra.

Figure 4: Upholstered concert hall chair, GSO smartphone app. Illustration: Thomas Feiner; published by permission of Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra.

Figure 5: Firebird flying with a concert hall chair, GSO smartphone app. Illustration: Thomas Feiner; published by permission of Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra.

Figure 6: Concert hall chairs placed in a cable car, GSO smartphone app. Illustration: Thomas Feiner; published by permission of Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra.
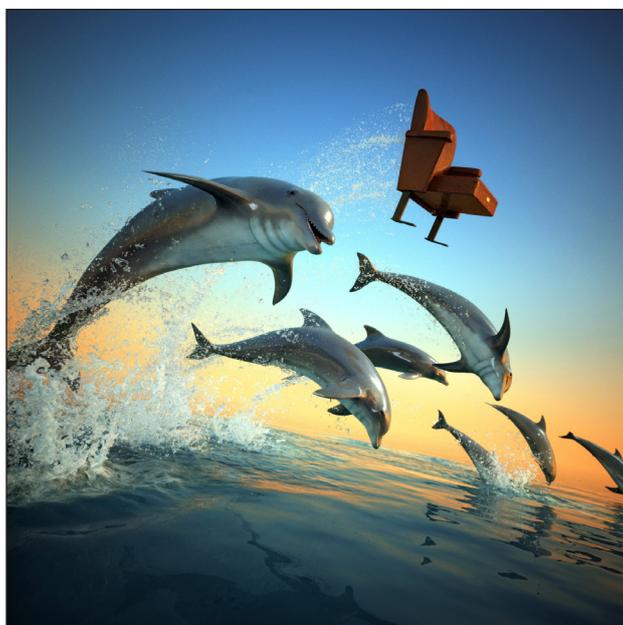

Figure 7: Concert hall chair jumping with dolphins, GSO smartphone app. Illustration: Thomas Feiner; published by permission of Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra.

One way to understand these images is that they position the listener, as an expression of music's inherent power, as transported to a transcendental experience which is in line with romantic aesthetic ideals stressing the metaphysical qualities of canonized, Western, symphonic music (Dahlhaus, 1989b; Goehr, 1992). This interpretation is not least motivated by layers of religious symbolism such as the white doves and heavenly light, which, following Bonds' argument (1997), can be seen as an emphasizing aesthetic ideas articulated by music philosophers of the early 19th century who 'consistently portrayed music as the reflection of a higher, spiritual world' (405). Another reading of the images is that they refer to nature or experiences in the natural world, such as when the chair is situated in a forest, or when it is pictured together with jumping dolphins in front of a sunset. From such a perspective, music can be seen as representing or even embracing earth-bound or natural qualities, i.e. as being the opposite of a spiritual experience. The images could further be understood as emphasizing music as a gateway to adventure, or as a bearer of potentially unexpected, breath-taking and amazing experiences, as in the picture with the chairs placed together in the cableway, or in the image with the firebird flying over the evening-lit city with the chair in its claws. However, the point here is not to isolate one or several meanings that are represented in the music, but rather to acknowledge how different meanings are constructed and related to each other. For instance, when a romantic view of musical qualities and an understanding of music as an experience or as a resource for relaxation are intertwined.

How, then, might the different interpretative possibilities that arise when analysing the images on the smartphone app, or when musical meaning is characterized in other pictures or texts, be dealt with? One way could be to acknowledge this plurality of meaning in terms of an ongoing negotiation characterized by ambiguity about what musical value that should be considered the most given one in this specific context of symphonic online performances. Another way to understand the plurality of meaning might be to view it as anchored within a neoliberal cultural-political paradigm (Rautiainen-Keskustalo and Raudaskoski, 2019), and furthermore as offering whatever meaning is suitable in a specific situation, or that suits whatever mood, emotional state, situation or experience that might need to be regulated by the individual (Nealon, 2018).

Concluding Remarks

So, what conclusions can be drawn concerning how listening ideals and norms of aesthetic value are challenged or maintained in connection with symphonic performances provided by streaming services? As has been demonstrated in this article,

online listening practices are on the one hand characterized as disconnected from constraints of time and space, presented as free for anyone to use, anytime and for almost any reason. Not least, the music provided to the listener is said to be available for the purposes of relaxation, especially in response to stressful or lonely circumstances when one is in a difficult situation. Perhaps more surprisingly, however, is that the listening practices surrounding online performances are also presented as strongly connected to the temporal and spatial dimensions. As such, these are constructed in line with ideas of attentive listening established in relation to the emergence of concert hall culture and the formation of a canonized symphony orchestra repertoire (Tewinkel, 2018, Zur Nieden, 2018, Tkaczyk and Weinzierl, 2018). And even if listening practices connected to online symphony orchestra performances first and foremost are constructed in line with discourses on music as a health resource or a mood enhancer and emotional regulator, it has also been demonstrated how attentive listening ideals and representations of music connected to romantic aesthetic ideals are maintained. But since the romantic aesthetic ideals are less openly expressed in connection with symphonic online performances, they could be understood as negotiated and challenged by an individualistic, neoliberal view on cultural meaning (Nealon, 2018). However, it seems that romantic aesthetic ideals continue to legitimate symphonic concerts in the contemporary digitized concert hall, at least as long as these ideals are combined with more recent discourses on music.

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Competing Interests

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