

# A familiar repertoire will attract concert audiences, at least in the short term

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This research was conducted by **Jeffrey Pompe, Lawrence Tamburri and Johnathan Munn** at **Francis Marion University, USA**

## Summary

This paper reports the results of an analysis into the box office data of 47 major symphony orchestras in the US between the years 2001 and 2007. They found that a more standard repertoire increased audiences, as did increased spending on advertising and broadcasting, and reductions in ticket price. Local factors also made a difference (eg an older local population led to a larger audience). The authors do not simply suggest programming familiar and safe works, as they suspect this will lead to a stagnation of the musical offer and ultimately a decrease in audience numbers.

## American audiences for classical music have been declining since the 1980s

The steepest declines have occurred in the last decade. Audiences have also been getting older. Over this period the number of concerts by the 47 orchestras remained stable and the average ticket price has increased in line with general inflation (by 15 per cent).

## A large proportion of the music played by the symphony orchestras is from nineteenth century composers

A key objective for the research was to address the question of whether a new and unfamiliar repertoire would increase or decrease audience numbers. They created a Repertoire Conventinality Index (RCI): the average number of the

times that one work performed by one of the orchestras was performed by all orchestras in the dataset.

## The data were provided by the League of American Orchestras

The analysis looked at 269 performances by the 47 orchestras over a seven year period. The factors that featured in their calculations related to the specific performance (including what type of instrument the soloist played, the work's RCI, average ticket price, how much was spent on advertising) the orchestra itself (including its age, how much it paid in wages) and the size and demographic profile of the area.

### Keywords

**USA** **audience** **Classical Music** **music** **box office**

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