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Abstract:

Composers of “serious” music (rather than “popular”) music face a particular challenge in becoming well established in their careers: Key intermediaries that disseminate such serious music (i.e., orchestras) have historically emphasized dead composers from the past (the “classics”). We focus here on this career challenge by analyzing US orchestral repertoires during the 2005-2006 season. While the classics still dominate orchestral repertoires in general, large orchestras in the New York City metropolitan area—as well as well as small orchestras across the country with specialized repertoires or numerous premiers—are amenable to the performance of living composers.

INTRODUCTION

Those individuals who author such things as music, literature and film (i.e., creative personnel) face a number of challenges in securing professional careers that are both stable and long. Certain scholarship approaches these challenges by pointing to various stages in these careers, whereby movement from one stage to the next can be difficult if not unattainable for many (Craig & Dubois 2010; see Lincoln & Allen, this volume; Pralong & Gombault, this volume; Skov, this volume; Stoyanova & Grugulis, this volume). One important stage involves launching such professional careers. This is not as easy as it sounds because the number of hopefuls can far exceed the number who actually secure paid work (Menger 1999). Some handle this initial logjam by choosing to be amateurs rather than professionals, opting out of stages that mark a professional career (Jeffri 2008; Jeffri et al. 2011). For those who successfully negotiate the first stage, they still face a number of challenges in reaching another important stage—that of being “established,” wherein they

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attain some regularity in their work opportunities (Craig & Dubois 2010). For instance, among those who help create a single film (e.g., actors, composers, directors), many never have the opportunity to create subsequent films—ending their professional careers shortly after “breaking in” and never moving on to this second stage (e.g., Baker & Faulkner 1991; Faulkner 1983; Zuckerman et al. 2003).

Those that reach the stage of being established then face the uphill climb to becoming “well established”—a stage at which they are widely known and highly regarded within and beyond their particular creative community (Craig & Dubois 2010; see Jones, this volume). One stream of research finds that only a fraction of creative personnel attains widespread acclaim (e.g., Allen & Lincoln 2004; Schmutz 2005; see Lincoln & Allen, this volume). This acclaim often depends on the actions of “intermediaries” that stand between creative personnel and their ultimate audience—such as critics, academics, and organizations (e.g., museums, orchestras) that actively choose to elevate some creative personnel over others. The work of intermediaries can unfold across considerable stretches of time, and it can bear little relation to the original success of the creative personnel in question. Novelist Zora Neal Hurston enjoyed little financial or critical success during her lifetime, but decades later—due partly to the efforts of noted author Alice Walker and shifting standards of evaluation among academics—she is now considered a major figure in American literature (Corse & Griffin 1997). Similarly, among a cohort of visual artists from the 1910s, their odds of being featured a century later in university curricula increased greatly with the exposure provided by a particular intermediary—the Museum of Modern of Modern Art: the number of exhibitions granted them by MoMA during the mid-1900s increased the number of pages devoted to these particular artists in 21st century textbooks (Braden 2009). Thus, the acclaim of creative personnel can take years to grow, and it can extend beyond the lifespan of particular personnel.
The posthumous acclaim of creative personnel has a particularly great impact in fields that are described as “high culture” (e.g., literature, orchestral music, opera, theater)—wherein the value of “art for art’s sake” purportedly takes precedence over entertainment and profit (Craig & Dubois 2010; DiMaggio 1982, 1992). This impact is fostered by the respective canons found in each high culture field. “Canon” refers to ongoing explanations by important intermediaries about what constitutes great art. In offering such explanations—which are evolving, if not contested—these intermediaries often emphasize a select number of creators from an earlier era, showing how such individuals have both stood the test of time and have fundamentally shaped their art’s historical development (DeNora 1991; Dowd 2011; Schmutz 2005). Within high culture fields, living personnel are not only jostling with their contemporaries for opportunities, they are also competing for the attention and resources that flow to the “classic” works of a few creators from the (distant) past (Craig & Dubois 2010; Dowd 2011).

While much research has focused on each of the three broad stages listed above, relatively little addresses the implications that the well-established creators who are now dead hold for those established creators who are very much alive. This chapter fills that gap by addressing the U.S. field of orchestral music—one in which challenges to the living are especially apparent and long discussed (Dowd 2011). The common moniker for this field (“classical music”) suggests an overwhelming emphasis on such celebrated composers as Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven—all of whom were active in the 18th century (Dowd et al. 2002). Composers and observers alike have noted the ramifications of this. “Musical art, as we hear it in our day, suffers if anything from an overdose of masterworks, an obsessive fixation on the glories of the past,” wrote Aaron Copland (1963: 42), a famed composer. “This narrows the range of our musical experience and tends to suffocate interest in the present.” Living composers, observed one musicologist, “…have had to compete with the
music of the past for performances and for the affection of players and listeners. It is a contest in which the reigning champions have an overwhelming advantage, for the orchestral repertoire is very crowded and the classics have enormous prestige…” (Burkholder 2006: 410).

The American emphasis on the classics is not simply due to a dearth of living composers. While there is no exhaustive master-list of orchestral composers, various sources indicate that they have numbered in the hundreds, if not the thousands, across the years. In the early to mid 1900s, Eastman School of Music offered performances of more than a thousand compositions penned by some 400 U.S. composers (Hanson 1951). Later that century, Felton (1978) identified and surveyed more than 1500 active composers associated with the American Music Center—an organization representing the professional interests of composers engaged in “serious” (rather than “popular”) music. Those composers authored some 1500 compositions in 1974 alone, with more than 250 written for orchestras. At the turn of this century, the American Music Center represented more than 2000 composers, while another entity—the American Composer’s Forum—was associated with some 1700 composers. Additional analyses revealed that such composer organizations likely represent about half of all serious composers active in the U.S. during the early 2000s—with a substantial portion composing for orchestras (Jeffri 2008).

Composers in the U.S. have long faced considerable difficulties in securing a full-time living from composition alone—despite often possessing relatively high levels of education and / or much specialized training (Copland 1933; Felton 1978; Jeffri 2008; Nash 1970). Among the 1347 US composers surveyed by Jeffri (2008)—those characterized as “serious” rather than as “popular”—three-quarters of them self-identified as professional composers, with 90% of these professionals having college degrees and nearly 75% having graduate degrees. Yet, only 10% of these professional earned their income primarily from
composition, with 8% earning all their income in that fashion. That income was not particularly great, with more than half of these professionals earning $60,000 a year or less and slightly more than 20% annually earning $20,000 or less. Despite such economic challenges, these professionals were more concerned, as a group, with getting their work out for consideration and with securing performances of their music than with the state of their finances. As Frank Zappa (1989: 197) once wrote after detailing the frustrations and costs he incurred in securing orchestral performances for his compositions: “Before an audience can tell whether or not it likes a piece, it needs to listen to it. Before it can listen to it, it has to know that it exists. In order for it to exist in a form in which it can be heard (not just on paper), it has to be performed…”

Composers have not been passive in the face of such challenges. Aside from taking on additional work—e.g., teaching, as nearly half of professional composers now do (Jeffri 2008)—some have collectively worked to promote their music. In the early to mid 1900s, for instance, they founded composer organizations, launched publishing endeavors, created festivals, and started periodicals that championed their music (Cameron 1996; Dowd et al. 2004; Oja 2000). Their efforts apparently had some success, as major orchestras of the day did occasionally perform the music of those still-breathing—with a few notably championing the music of certain living composers (Arian 1971; Hanson 1951; Mueller 1951; Tawa 1984). Since the mid 1900s, some U.S. orchestras have made a concerted effort to perform contemporary music. This includes the commissioning and / or debuting of new compositions, the securing of composers-in-residence, and outright specialization in new music (Craven 1987; Hart 1973; Jeffri 2008; Scholz 2001).

This attention to contemporary music can pose both benefits and costs for orchestras. For orchestras offering a broad range of musical works (“generalists”), incorporating new music into their repertoires allows them to claim both aesthetic vibrancy and relevance for
contemporary life (DiMaggio and Stenberg 1985a; Gilmore 1993; Scholz 2001). For orchestras targeting a distinctive audience with a narrow range of works (“specialists”), a focus on new music fits easily with an avant-garde aesthetic, providing a well-specified mission and (possibly) a ready-made constituency found in and around universities and bohemian enclaves (Cameron 1996; Gilmore 1987, 1988; Oja 2000). However, when faced with unfamiliar works, orchestral musicians can require more rehearsal time than is the case for those classics with which they are well acquainted—particularly when the new music is challenging both stylistically and technically (Felton 1978; Gilmore 1993; Schuller 1962). In addition, new music can also involve higher costs for copyright and printed music (Felton 198; Tawa 1984). Finally, new music can be costly given its potential for alienating those audiences who are expecting the familiar (Arian 1971; Felton 1978; Maitlis and Lawrence 2003).

The above benefits and costs are relevant for the careers of living composers—particularly for becoming widely known (“well-established”) like their deceased counterparts (see Jeffri 2008). What Copland (1933: 88) wrote many years ago arguably applies to the present: “Contemporary music could only find its way to the larger musical public through the agency of the symphony orchestra.” Thus, this chapter quantitatively analyzes a range of factors that could shape the extent to which orchestras feature the music of living composers. We do so by considering the repertoires that U.S. orchestras offered during the 2005-2006 season. While most of these 313 orchestras still feature composers that are long dead, certain factors facilitate their attention to living composers—including their programming strategy (generalist vs. specialist). But first, we discuss scholarship that offers a number of hypotheses regarding which types of orchestras are likely to follow this emphasis on the past and which ones are likely to innovate by way of contemporary music.
ORCHESTRAS AND COMPOSERS IN THE CURRENT U.S.

Our focus resonates with studies that address the programming choices of performing arts organizations (e.g., symphony orchestras, opera companies, resident theaters). As Boerner (2004) notes, their choices unfold along three dimensions—the extent to which an organization offers programming that is distinctive from its counterparts (originality vs. conformity), the extent to which it offers a broad range of programming (specialization vs. generalism), and the extent to which it emphasizes recent works and creators (contemporary vs. classic). The studies mentioned below each grapple with one or more of these dimensions. Consequently, we draw upon them for hypotheses—which we group into three broad categories—regarding the types of orchestras amenable to the performance of living composers.

Community Context and Innovation

Symphony orchestras and other performance arts organizations can face the difficult, if not contradictory, missions of celebrating the classics while also introducing audiences to contemporary creators—with the latter an important type of innovation, but one that runs the risk of alienating the audience (DiMaggio & Stenberg 1985a; Martorella 1977; Pierce 2000). Hence, DiMaggio and Stenberg (1985b: 112) lament, “Case studies of performing arts organizations have illustrated vividly the extent to which such organizations may become prisoners of audience demand, mortgaging their participants’ artistic aspirations in the interest of organizational survival.”

Yet DiMaggio and Stenberg (1985b) expect that certain types of communities are more conducive to adventurous programming than others. They hypothesize that innovative arts organizations are found in locales containing a large population, a sizable number of highly educated individuals, and a large share of individuals engaged in
managerial and professional occupations. Their predictions make sense given research on arts audience. For instance, Flanagan (2008) finds that attendance at U.S. orchestra concerts is positively associated with population size: the bigger the city, the bigger the audience. Meanwhile, high status individuals—those with much education and/or much occupational prestige—have historically formed the core audience for performing arts organizations in the U.S. (DiMaggio & Useem 1978). In a similar vein, others hypothesize that locales conducive to innovation are marked by high levels of resident income (another marker of high status individuals) and a large share of residents who are students, as the latter provide a ready audience for the educational missions of many performing arts organizations (Blau 1989; O’Hagan and Neligan 2005; Pierce 2000). Considering next the attributes of a single American locale, DiMaggio and Stenberg (1985b) hypothesize that New York City is unusually conducive to adventuresome programming given its unique confluence of a sizable and educated audience base, a large supply of creative personnel, and a vast range of performing arts organizations—all of which provides an infrastructure supporting experimentation that is unmatched elsewhere in the U.S. O’Hagan and Neligan (2005) offer a similar hypothesis when noting that London likely fosters more innovative programming than elsewhere in the U.K.

Despite their intuitiveness, these hypotheses have faced problems when applied in empirical research. Studies of programming originality among resident theaters (Blau 1989; DiMaggio & Stenberg 1985b; O’Hagan & Neligan 2005) and opera houses (Pierce 2000) do not find statistically significant support for all the community hypotheses. When one or more do prove significant, they nevertheless offer little explanatory power and have led to mixed results (Castaner & Campos 2002). For instance, DiMaggio and Stenberg (1985b) and Pierce (2000) both find that central cities (New York and London, respectively) foster innovative programming more than other locales, while Blau (1989: 122) finds that this central city
effect disappears when considering residents’ income for all communities in which theaters are located. As she asserts, “Rich people, not rich cities foster innovation…” Finally, all of these studies do not examine how the number of competing organizations in a given community could also shape programming choices (Castaner & Campos 2002).

**Organizational Attributes and Innovation**

If community context shapes how performing arts organizations balance both classic and contemporary offerings, so may particular attributes of those organizations. Researchers typically approach this possibility by considering two general types of attributes. On the one hand, some performance arts organizations are less reliant than others on ticket sales (i.e., earned income). Such “autonomy from the market” may help arts organizations avoid being captive to conservative audience demand (DiMaggio & Stenberg 1985b). Some offer this hypothesis in light of national comparisons—positing that relatively low public funding for the arts leads to less innovative programming in the U.S. than in Canada or Europe (Heilbrun 2001; Martorella 1977, 1985). Others offer it while pointing to the financial situation of individual organizations. For instance, adventurous programming may flourish among organizations receiving a healthy amount of unearned income, such as government funding (Blau 1989; DiMaggio & Stenberg 1985b; O’Hagan & Neligan 2005; Pierce 2000). Such innovation may also occur for individual organizations that are not freestanding but “embedded” in larger organizations (e.g., university orchestras), having substantial financial support beyond the box-office (DiMaggio 2006; Martorella 1985). On the other hand, some performing arts organizations are more established than others. Given their resources and reputations, one hypothesis is that those organizations could have more freedom to innovate than their less established counterparts; for instance, they may be able to absorb costs associated with contemporary works, and they may be able to persuade loyal audiences to
tolerate the unfamiliar (DiMaggio & Stenberg 1985b; Pierce 2000). However, another hypothesis is that established organizations are more conservative rather than innovative in their programming choices. This is because the process of becoming established—what DiMaggio & Stenberg (1985b) label “institutionalization”—involves such things as (a) age, whereby older organizations are less attuned to recent creators and developments than their younger counterparts; and (b) size, whereby larger organizations have commitments (e.g., filling vast venues) that make innovation risky (Blau 1989; DiMaggio & Stenberg 1985a, 1985b; Martorella 1977, 1985; O’Hagan & Neligan 2003).

Research on contemporary arts organizations has not addressed another organizational attribute—that of productivity. Historical research finds that as U.S. orchestras performed more works in a season, they greatly expanded the range of composers addressed, adding new composers to their repertoires; however, many of these “new” composers were deceased composers receiving their debuts in America (Dowd 2011; Dowd et al. 2002; Kremp 2010). Given this historical pattern, we hypothesize that heightened productivity for contemporary orchestras will result in increased attention to composers of the past rather than the present.

The testing of these organizational hypotheses is not without problems. This is partly because market autonomy and institutionalization are complex attributes that are not likely to be captured by a single indicator. Consequently, researchers have relied on a variety of indicators to assess the respective impact of both attributes on programming choices. However, these indicators have provided little explanatory power, with many of them proving to be insignificant predictors of innovation. Some speculate this is because the indicators are intertwined (e.g., highly correlated) and, in turn, capturing similar things while sometimes rendering each other statistically insignificant (Blau 1989; O’Hagan & Neligan 2005). For instance, the size of a performing arts organization may well capture both its autonomy from the market and its extent of institutionalization (DiMaggio & Stenberg 1985b). Problems also
flow from the mixed results that have occurred (Castaner & Campos 2002). While some studies find that large opera houses, orchestras and theaters are less innovative than small ones (DiMaggio & Stenberg 1985b; Gilmore 1987, 1988; Martorella 1977, 1985; O’Hagan & Neligan 2005), one study of opera companies finds the opposite (Pierce 2000). Furthermore, while short-lived orchestras and resident theaters may be more innovative in programming than their long-lived counterparts (DiMaggio & Stenberg 1985a; Heilbrun 2001), some find that it is not aging per se that leads to conservative programming (Blau 1989; DiMaggio & Stenberg 1985a, 1985b).

Programming Strategies and Innovation

Innovation may also be shaped by the strategies by which performing arts organizations operate (see Dowd 2004). Heeding such strategies may help overcome the difficulties associated with the previous hypotheses. However, many of the studies cited above are more suggestive than revealing on this point. This chapter moves into new terrain by examining the respective impact of programming strategies on a particular type of innovation—the performance of living composers.

Two hypotheses deal with strategies (i.e., programming choices) that Boerner (2004) identifies—conformity and specialization. DiMaggio and Stenberg (1985b) suggest that institutionalization also entails conformity for performing arts organizations: as they become established, they likely adhere to field-wide expectations regarding how to operate and what to perform. While they and other researchers treat performance conformity as an outcome to inspect (Heilbrun 2001; O’Hagan & Neligan 2005; Pierce 2000), we use it here as a predictor. In particular, we hypothesize that orchestras that are conformist in their programming strategies will also feature relatively few performances by living composers. This makes sense given the orchestral field’s longstanding emphasis on the past rather than
the present (see Dowd et al. 2002; Kremp 2010). DiMaggio (2006) notes an entirely different strategy—the specialization that makes performing arts organizations distinct from others in their field. In terms of orchestras, this distinctiveness manifests not only in unusual ways of operating but also in a propensity to feature underemphasized, if not “risky,” music that many organizations do not address—especially that of contemporary composers who are not yet well-established (Gilmore 1987, 1988; Khodyakov 2007). We thus hypothesize that orchestras pursuing specialist strategies will also feature relatively more performances of living composers. That said, we recognize that some orchestras may specialize not in contemporary music but, instead, in music from an earlier time.

Two hypotheses stem from research addressing the situation of contemporary U.S. orchestras—particularly in how they seek to engage audiences via their programming. Gilmore (1993) argues that some orchestras strategically use premieres to balance the programming of the classic and the contemporary. Their spectacle allows orchestras to show that they are aware of cutting-edge developments and to generate goodwill among audiences, as the latter know that the performance of a new piece is a special, yet passing, occurrence. Hence, we hypothesize that the more orchestras make use of the premier strategy, the more they will perform the works of living composers. Other observers note another strategy that has apparently grown pronounced in recent years—that of miscellany (DiMaggio 2006). Some orchestras supposedly pursue this strategy to draw in audiences—hoping to entice them by relying on well-known excerpts, mixing the classics with popular works, and / or combining the old with the new as part of “themed” concerts (Dowd 2011; Glynn 2002; Peterson & Rossman 2008). This miscellany strategy could limit the opportunities provided to serious composers, especially if they are competing for attention with Hollywood soundtrack composers, jazz musicians, and others—as well as with the well-established composers of years gone by.
DATA AND METHOD

To test our hypotheses—and thus learn about career opportunities for living composers—we turn to repertoire data generously provided by the League of American Orchestras. Formerly known as the American Symphony Orchestra League, it is the preeminent body representing orchestras on the continent (see Hart 1973; LAO 2011). The League supplied us with information about the performances of more than 70,000 pieces from the 2000-2001 to 2006-2007 seasons—including the title of the piece, the composer and orchestra responsible for performance, as well as the type (e.g., university orchestra) and budget classification of each orchestra. As this is the first installment in a larger project, we begin here with a single season before complicating matters by dealing with temporal patterns across multiple seasons—following the example of DiMaggio and Stenberg (1985a, 1985b). Due to data issues in certain seasons—such as missing performance data for some major orchestras and spotty coverage of smaller orchestras—we focus on the one we deem to be most complete in its coverage, the 2005-2006 season. Once we selected that season, we further pruned the performances that we consider. Sensitive to national differences in funding for the arts (Heilbrun 2001; Martorella 1977, 1985), we included neither seven Canadian orchestras reporting during this season nor a Swiss orchestra touring in U.S. We neither included seven orchestras performing only a single piece, as we need multiple performances to distinguish specialization from generalism. Finally, we did not include a music festival. Thus, we eventually assess 7570 performances by 313 orchestras during the 2005-2006 season.

2 Flanagan (2008) notes that orchestras can fail to report in a given year when undergoing “extraordinary circumstances” (e.g., labor difficulties or management change).
The LAO repertoire data are notable for their sheer coverage—ranging from a host of small orchestras to those majors that have been operation for years. This represents a considerable step forward over past studies addressing only the repertoires of major orchestras (Dowd et al. 2002; Kremp 2010). That said, we still had to supplement this repertoire data for purposes of our study. The LAO data do not provide any biographical information on the composers performed. To assess the situation of living versus dead composers, we had to track down the birth and death years of the 639 performed during the season—relying extensively on such sources as the *Grove Music Dictionary, Oxford Music Dictionary*, as well as a host of textbooks, periodicals, websites and the like. Following Heilbrun (2004), we also categorized deceased composers as “20th Century” if born after 1880, “19th Century” if born after 1780 and before 1881, and “18th Century” if born after 1680 and before 1781.

We also turned to other data sources to assess the community context in which orchestras reside for the 2005-2006 season. Given that the season spans two years—with no reported performance occurring earlier than September—we draw on the 2005 American Community Survey (ACS) compiled by the U.S. Census Bureau. After identifying the standard metropolitan area (or micro-area) in which each orchestra is located during the 2005-2006 season, we used the ACS to gauge (1) the population size of that area, (2) the percentage of the population having at least a bachelor’s degree, (3) the percentage of the workforce aged 16+ employed in managerial and professional occupations, (4) the median household income of that area, and (5) the percentage of the population enrolled in school of any type. The only difficulty occurs in terms of managerial-professional occupations: the 2005 ACS does not provide information for the smallest communities; hence, those percentages are missing for 11 orchestras. After gathering this community information from the ACS, it was easy to identify the number of orchestras operating in the New York City...
metropolitan area and the number of orchestras “competing” in a given metropolitan area. Note, that in our analysis, we take the natural log of both population size and median income to address issues of skewness (Neter et al. 1983).

The LAO repertoire data say little about the organizational attributes of orchestras. While it would be helpful to have direct financial information (e.g., extent and type of nonearned income), this information can be hard to access given reasons of confidentiality (Heilbrun 2001). As was the case with an earlier study of LAO repertoire data (Heilbrun 2004), we too lack the type of detailed funding information that some studies have for performing arts organizations (e.g., O’Hagan & Neligan 2005). Nevertheless, we can address two types of orchestras that are somewhat removed from the pressures of the box-office: university-college orchestras and youth orchestras. Both are notable in that their musicians are not salaried, and both are self-identified in the LAO repertoire data. While the LAO data reveal the orchestra responsible for the performance of each piece during 2005-2006, they are silent on the age of orchestra. We found this information by resorting to various sources (e.g., journalistic accounts, webpages of orchestras). While we are not able to identify the age of six of the 313 orchestras, we do fare better than some studies that lack age information for all the arts organizations considered (e.g., O’Hagan & Neligan 2005). The LAO data are better suited for assessing another aspect of institutionalization—size. During the 2005-2006 season, the League classified orchestras into “tiers” on the basis of their annual operating budget and other related factors. In general, Tier 1 and Tier 2 orchestras have budgets that range from more than $5.5 million to nearly $15 million in the 2005-2006 season, while all other tiers have smaller budgets, sometimes dropping to less than $15,000 (personal correspondence, 2008). We combine Tiers 1 and 2 into a group denoting “large” orchestras.

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3 One important study does gain access to financial information contained in confidential LAO reports (Flanagan 2008). However, it only has that information for the large orchestras and it lacks the repertoire data.
and Tiers 3 through 8 marking “small” ones. Finally, we measure productivity by simply noting the number of pieces performed by each orchestra, which the LAO data nicely provide.

The advantages associated with the LAO data come to the fore when addressing programming strategies—especially as they allow for rigorous measurement and comparison. We measure conformist strategies by way of an index used in previous studies (DiMaggio and Stenberg 1985a, 1985b; Heilbrun 2001; O’Hagan & Neligan 2005). Conceptually, this index measures the extent to which a given orchestra overlaps with others in terms of composers performed. Statistically, for all composers performed by a given orchestra, the conformity index is average number of times that other orchestras perform those very composers. High values for this index indicates that many orchestras are performing the exact same composers as a given orchestra (conformity), whereas low numbers indicate that a given orchestra is distinctive in terms of composers performed (originality). We measure it in two fashions—a conformity index for the large orchestras only and a conformity index for all the orchestras in the sample, both large and small. We do this because large organizations typically serve as a reference group for each other while also defining the field that small organizations confront (Dowd 2004). We measure specialist strategies by way of the Herfindahl index (see DiMaggio & Stenberg 1985a; Dowd et al. 2002; Heilbrun 2001). Conceptually, this index gauges the extent to which a few composers dominate the repertoire of a given orchestra. Statistically, it does so first by calculating the percentage of performances devoted to each composer (e.g., 40%; 40%; 20%); then, squaring those percentages and summing them (e.g., 1600+1600+400=3600); and finally dividing the sum by 100 (e.g., 36). Thus, a high Herfindahl value indicates a heavy reliance on a few composers, if not a single composer (specialization), where a low value indicates that a given orchestra features a wide range of composers (generalism). From the LAO repertoire data, we
gauge the miscellany strategy by coding as such any performance whose title includes the terms “excerpt,” “selection,” and “medley”—capturing specific “snippets” of works performed along complete works. We assess premiere strategies by drawing upon the LAO’s website that lists all the national and world premieres occurring among its members during the 2005-2006 season.

Our main outcome of interest—our dependent variable—is the percentage of performance that each orchestra devotes to living composers in the 2005-05 season. Given its continuous and cross-sectional nature of this dependent variable, we rely on OLS regression for assessing the relative impact of the various independent variables. This technique also allows for an easy assessment of explanatory power offered by a collection of predictors (via the adjusted-$R^2$ measure) and ways to ensure that particular independent variables are not highly correlated (via the VIF measure) (Neter et al. 1983).

RESULTS

What constitutes “classical music” in the United States is not fixed in stone, yet it nevertheless shows some stability across the decades—raising barriers for those living composers who seeking performance by orchestras (Dowd 2011). Table 10.1 supports this view. When comparing the most performed composers of the 2005-2006 season to those most performed in the early to mid 1900s (see Table 2 in Dowd et al. 2002), there is little change—other than a slight shift in the rankings (e.g., Mozart now topping Beethoven) and Shostakovich now replacing Wagner among the Top 5. Furthermore, the Top 5 in the early 21st century collectively account for roughly the same percentage of performances as they did in the middle decades of the 20th century (see Table 2 in Dowd et al. 2002). Additional calculations show that 88.5% of all performances in 2005-2006 are devoted to dead composers. What counts as the “past” is growing increasingly long, as well. Although a slight
presence in current repertoires, the Top 5 pre-18\textsuperscript{th} century composers somewhat rival the Top 5 living composers in terms of performance (1.4\% vs. 2.3\%), and the top composer of this ancient group (Vivaldi) receives 67 performances in 2005-2006, while the top living composer (Tower) receives only 59.

[TABLE 10.1 ABOUT HERE]

Perhaps Table 10.1 reveals favorable conditions for living composers—as the 313 of them comprise nearly a half of all performed composers. As Heilbrun (2004) notes, such large numbers are actually not as positive as they appear because the field of orchestral music has long engaged in a process of winnowing out a few from the many living composers (see Mueller 1951; Weber 2001). Thus, the top 18\textsuperscript{th} century composers in Table 10.1 do not exhaust all of those once active but instead represent the tiny number (31) still receiving attention centuries later; the same process will likely play out for the 313 living composers, leaving but a fraction in the later orchestral repertoires. Considerable differences in opportunities are also at play. Of the 639 composers performed during the 2005-2006 season, 291 receive only 1 performance, and the average number of performances is 12; in contrast, Mozart accounts for 813 performances and Beethoven for 528. The situation is more daunting for the living—particularly as they compete with the well-established composers from the past. More than half of the living composers (176) receive only 1 performance during this season, while their average number of performances is 3.

Barriers do exist for living composers, but they are not insurmountable, as suggested by Table 10.1. First, the prominence of 20\textsuperscript{th} century composers shows that living composers can gain their way into concert halls. Although the Top 5 of this group are now deceased, they did enjoy some success while alive, and they continue to be a presence in the decades following their demise—now approaching the consideration that orchestras devote to the Top 5 of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century (8.4\% of performances vs. 14.2\%). They also have gained renown that
extends beyond the concert hall. In addition to winning the prestigious Pulitzer Prize and Guggenheim Fellowship, Copland enjoyed some exposure as a Hollywood soundtrack composer—earning an Academy Award nomination for *Of Mice and Men*, as well as an award from the National Board of Review (Bick 2005; Bishop 2005). The other Top 5 of the 20th century secured widespread recognition, too—with Gershwin and Stravinsky even finding their way into Bourdieu’s (1984) famous survey of French tastes. Second, the Top 5 of the living composers reveal that such things as critical accolades, funding, and affiliations—while not guarantees of success—can nevertheless help. For instance, they too have collectively secured such things as the Pulitzer (Adams, Corigliano, Higdon), the Guggenheim (Corigliano, Higdon, Tower), grants from the National Endowment for the Arts (Corigliano, Tower) and Grammy Awards (Adams, Corigliano, Higdon, Tower, and Williams). Tower likely secured the top spot in 2005-2006 because of funding received for her composition, *Made in America*—which debuted in 2005, and involved the LAO and Ford Motor Company (among others), as well as contributions from 65 orchestras (Jeffri 2008). Corigliano, Higdon, and Tower all have academic positions, which likely connect them to the serious music scene (see Gilmore 1987, 1988), and Adams has served as a composer-in-residence with the San Francisco orchestra (among other things). While Corigliano extends the tradition of serious music composers being involved in film soundtracks—such as *Altered States* and *The Red Violin*—the presence of John Williams among the Top 5 raises a cautionary note. Arguably the leading soundtrack composer in recent decades (see Faulkner 1983), he is in the Top 5 mostly because of numerous performances of *E.T.*, *Harry Potter*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *Star Wars*, and other filmic music. Thus, he may be the best anecdote

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4 This discussion partly draws on the personal webpages of the composers. Half of the living composers in our dataset have personal webpages.
for the presence of miscellany in contemporary repertoires—whereby orchestras mix Hollywood with Haydn, Hindemith and Higdon.

While traits of individual composers play a role in the attention that they receive—such as their awards and connections—other factors do as well. Indeed, we posit that the patterns contained in Table 10.1 can, and should, also be explained by considering what types of orchestras are disposed to feature the music of living composers. Before testing those hypotheses, we offer two points of information. First, in our preliminary analysis, we find that one organizational attribute—orchestral size—is relevant not simply on its own but also in how it combines with other factors (see DiMaggio & Stenberg 1985b). Consequently, we do not treat it as a single variable; instead, we split the analysis into one examining large orchestras (budgets exceeding $5.5 million) and another on small orchestras. This allows us to disentangle aspects of size from other aspects of the orchestras (e.g., their age). Second, in exploring our dependent variable—the percentage of living composers performed by a given orchestra—we find it helpful to compare this outcome to other types of composers performed. In terms of our main dependent variable, Table 10.2 shows that all large orchestras address the works of living composers—but are limited in the degree to which they do so. In contrast, some small orchestras completely ignore the music of living composers, while other small orchestras play nothing but this most recent music. This shows the merit of splitting the analysis by size and, of course, the merits of explaining of the choices of these intermediaries.

[TABLE 10.2 ABOUT HERE]

Table 10.3 presents our regression analysis for the large orchestras. Each vertical column contains a distinct regression model, while reading from left to right allows a comparison of how a given predictor impinges on the performance of various types of composers—with significant effects denoted by stars and bold font. Table 10.3 reveals two
important omissions: the lack of nearly all the community context variables (except NYC) and the absence of the organizational age variable. First, apart from the NYC variable, none of the community context variables attain significance either individually or in combination with all of the variables in Tables 10.3 and 10.4. Furthermore, their respective insignificance did not result from high correlations among them and other variables. While past studies of arts organizations find limited effects of community context on programming choices (e.g., DiMaggio & Stenberg 1985b), we join Heilbrun (2004) in finding no effect of such factors on recent orchestral repertoires—with the exception of our NYC variable. For the sake of parsimony, we do not include these consistently insignificant variables in Tables 10.3 and 10.4. This is not to say that community context has no relevance for the operation and programming of orchestras, but rather, it has little to offer in explaining the specific types of programming considered in these two tables. Second, we find that organizational age has no bearing on the programming choices of large orchestras, but it does play out in various ways for small orchestras. We thus include it only in Table 10.4.

[TABLE 10.3 ABOUT HERE]

Table 10.3 shows a number of factors that significantly predict the performance of both living and dead composers. The explanatory power it contains compares very favorably to previous studies—with models explaining some 17 to 42 percent of the variation. Consistent with predictions regarding the importance of a central city for innovation (DiMaggio & Stenberg 1985b; O’Hagan & Neligan 2005), large orchestras located in the New York metropolitan area are distinctive in featuring a higher percentage of living composers. However, being located in NYC has no significant bearing on any other programming choice—including the percentage of 20th century composers. The impact of this locale is thus not about the performance of relatively recent music composed by the dead and living (e.g., Copland and Corigliano), but instead, it is specifically about the performance of
music by the living. This is consistent with the view of New York City as a vibrant and up-to-the-minute scene for serious music (see Gilmore 1987, 1988; Oja 2000). But this view is complicated by the finding that large, rather than small, orchestras are conduits for this scene: the NYC variable, like all the other context variables, has no significant bearing on the programming choices of the small orchestras (see Table 10.4).

While one organizational attribute (age) is insignificant for large orchestras, another one (productivity) shows palpable effects in Table 10.3. In fact, the standardized coefficient (-.720) indicates that productivity has the strongest impact: the more performances a large orchestra offers during the season, the less it features the music of living composers. Looking to the right of the table (the -.515 coefficient), it is clear that increased productivity also dampens the performance of 20th century composers (both living and dead)—indicating that productivity moves large orchestras away from contemporary works, in general, and towards 18th century composers, as shown by the .416 coefficient in column 3.

Table 10.3 also shows the utility of heeding program strategies. As large orchestras make programming choices that conform with the choices of their counterparts, that leads them away from both living and 20th century composers, as shown by the negative coefficients in the first (-.691) and last (-.538) columns. Meanwhile, increasing conformity among large orchestras leads them toward relatively more performances of 19th century composers, as shown by the positive coefficient in the fourth column (.548). If this conformity is a sign of adhering to field-wide expectations, as DiMaggio & Stenberg (1985b) suggest, those expectations are clearly concentrated on the past for large orchestras—although not to the extent that it is for small orchestras (see below). The large orchestras are not as specialized as their small counterparts (see Table 10.2); nevertheless, to the extent that they do focus on particular composers in their programming, that too pushes them away from living composers, as shown by the significant coefficient of -.257. Interestingly enough,
increasing specialization also reduces the relative number of performances they give both to 20th and 19th century composers (see the coefficients of -.270 and -.539, respectively).

Instead, as the coefficient in the 3rd column shows (.721), specialization for these large orchestras entails a greater share of 18th century composers—celebrating the likes of Bach, Beethoven, Handel, Haydn, and Mozart. The remaining strategies have no significant relationship with the percentage of living composers performed, but they are revealing in other ways. A rising number of premieres, be they national or world, does not boost performances for recent music, but it does work against the already limited share of performances that large orchestras devote to the oldest group of composers (see -.354 in column 2; see also Table 10.2). Meanwhile, the use of excerpts and snippets seems to be a way that large orchestras can bolster their emphasis on 19th century composers (see the .194 coefficient in column 4).

While Table 10.2 shows that small orchestras are quite varied in their programming choices, Table 10.4 shows that organizational attributes and programming strategies do fairly well in accounting for that variety—as shown by adjusted R²s that range from 17 to 43%. While age has no relevance for whether they perform living composers, those small orchestras that are older do feature a great proportion of 19th century composers (.163 in column 4), and a lesser proportion of pre-18th and 18th century composers (-.116 and -.157 respectively). Like their large counterparts, increased productivity among small orchestras reduces the share of performances given to living composers (-.180 in column 1) and 20th century composers (-.211 in column 5). However, its effects are somewhat more consistent for this group—with rising productivity stimulating the percentage of performances devoted to the composers of the distant past—both pre-18th and 18th century (.432 and .464, respectively), while restricting this percentage for all composers who come after the 18th century. As for autonomy from the market—captured by those orchestras embedded in
institutions of higher education, as well as those for amateur youth—it is not associated with innovation. In fact, neither type of orchestra has a significantly higher share of performances devoted to living composers, let alone to 20th century composers. Instead, university orchestras emphasize a higher share of 18th century composers (.105), while youth orchestras gravitate toward 19th century composers (.111) and away from 18th century composers (-.099). Perhaps the educational mission of these orchestras matters more than their autonomy from the market—with both emphasizing the classics for instructional purposes (see Arian 1971). Of course, lacking any detailed information on nonearned income for both large and small orchestras, the present results are far from definitive in terms of market autonomy.

Programming strategies prove to be important predictors for small orchestras, as well. To the extent that they conform to the choices of all other orchestras, that works against the share of performances that they provide for living composers (-.535 in column 1) and 20th century composers (-.495 in column 5)—as well as for “ancient” composers (-.185 in column 2). Instead, their conformity means that they offer a large share of those classics at the core of the field—the composers of the 18th and 19th centuries (.490 and .118, respectively). However, small orchestras are distinct from large orchestras in terms of their various types of specialization. This is particularly important for living composers—as specialization by small orchestras leads them to perform a greater share of those individuals (.294 in column 1). That is not the only type of specialization: when some small orchestras emphasize a limited range of composers, that can also be associated with either a greater share of 18th century composers (.259 in column 3) or of pre-18th century composers (.206 in column 2).

Regarding the latter, small orchestras are more involved in the music of these ancient composers than the large orchestras, so their specialization is particularly important for that

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5 There are examples of youth and university orchestras performing the music of living composers. So, it is not necessarily beyond their technical abilities to do so (e.g. Jeffri 2008; Smith 1983).
group of composers (see Table 10.2). Meanwhile, specialization has no impact on the performance of 20th century composers. The latter group are aided, however, by premiere strategies among small orchestras—with a rising number of national / world premieres leading to a greater share of performances afforded 20th century composers, in general, and living composers in particular (.132 and .259, respectively). The use of the premier strategy, in turn, takes performances away from 19th century composers (-.192 in column 4), while the use of excerpts and other miscellany take performances away from the composers of the most distant past (-.146 in column 2).

**CONCLUSIONS**

There is no shortage of writings about individual composers. Those texts—which include (auto)biographies, academic and journalistic articles, and encyclopedia entries—give important insights into the trajectories of their lives and, as a result, give some sense of how they respectively navigated their creative careers. While important and instructive resources, such writings run two risks. First, they often focus on those composers who are deemed important in some form or fashion—be it aesthetically, critically, and / or historically. Consequently, they can give a perspective on creative careers that underemphasize the challenges that prevent many from becoming novice professionals or that prevent movement into stages of being established and well-established professionals (Braden 2009; Craig & Dubois 2010; Menger 1999). Second, those writings on individual composers can sometimes gloss over the supra-individual factors that are at play in the broader field—such as classifications that favor a particular type of creator (e.g., the “classic”) and the collective enactment of those classifications by important intermediaries (Allen & Lincoln 2004; DeNora 1991; Roy & Dowd 2010; Schmutz 2005).
We offer this chapter not as a replacement for biographies and other writings on composers—but as a complement. In doing so, we seek to highlight how particular intermediaries can provide tremendous opportunities for some and extremely limited ones for others, examining the repertoires of 313 American orchestras during the 2005-2006 season. Given the historical classification of “classics” in this field, these orchestras tend to favor deceased composers overwhelmingly. Indeed, there is a tremendous convergence among both large and small orchestras in terms of programming choices; the more that a particular orchestra adheres to such collective choices, then the greater the share of performances that it devotes either to 19th century composers (large orchestra) or to 18th and 19th century composers (small orchestras). For orchestras of both sizes, such conformity also results in a smaller share of performances given to composers of the recent past (the 20th century) and to those that are still alive. A similar pattern occurs in terms of productivity. As both small and orchestras expand the number of pieces that they perform, the additional numbers benefit the performance of 18th century composers (large orchestras) or pre-18th and 18th century performers (small orchestras). Meanwhile, for orchestras of both sizes, such enhanced productivity actually dampens the share of performances devoted to living composers. These results reveal the zero-sum competition that can occur between living and dead composers—with orchestral resources flowing to well-established composers of the past at the expense of living composers. Small wonder, then, that 313 living composers account for some 12% of all performances during 2005-2006, while 326 dead composers account for 88%.

While the orchestral field as a whole may seem completely aligned against the interests of living composers, our analysis reveals factors that could help novice and established composers become well-established, which we summarize in terms of suggestions. Regarding location, there is no particular region of the country that is particularly conducive to the orchestral performance of living composers, nor are bigger
cities superior to small cities in this regard. The one exception is that New York City is more receptive to living composers than any other place in the U.S.—most notably, the three large orchestras that are located in that metro area. Getting their recognition would be particularly beneficial. As for large orchestras outside of the NYC metro area, living composers should approach those that perform relatively few works and that proclaim a distinctive approach that diverges from the common offerings of other major orchestras. Other than such large orchestras, certain types of small orchestras are especially amenable to contemporary music—and it does not matter whether they are located within or beyond New York City. What does matter is that they too pursue a mission of distinctive programming, that they specialize in contemporary music, and that they have a healthy number of national and world premieres. Finding a small orchestra that does all three is especially useful.

Yet even if living composers follow all these suggestions, there still is the well-known issue of repeat performances. Most of the living composers enjoyed only one performance during the 2005-2006 season. Here, then, is where individual attributes likely come into play. While our focus in this chapter has been on aggregate patterns, we did make mention of certain things that could facilitate multiple performances—including the securing of critical accolades and crucial connections within the orchestral field and beyond (Allen & Lincoln 2004; Schmutz 2005; see Jones, this volume; Lincoln & Allen, this volume). Of course, such attributes as gender, race, and nationality can matter greatly (Braden 2009; Roy & Dowd 2010; see Elkhoff et al., this volume; Wagner, this volume). For instance, the majority of US orchestral performances from 1842 to 1969 (93%; Dowd 2011)—as well as during the 2005-2006 season (84%)—were devoted to composers from beyond the US. Moreover, living composers associated with universities may experience different career opportunities and trajectories than do those without an academic post (see Gilmore 1987, 1988). The next phase of this project, then, will address that type of interplay between orchestras and composers—
noting which types of living composers are most likely to move beyond the single performance. Until then, we encourage consideration of how creative careers are not only shaped by what individual creators do during the course of their lives but also by what others do with the works during and beyond the lives of these creators.

REFERENCES


Hanson, Howard. 1951. *Music in Contemporary Civilization.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Composer</th>
<th>Top 5 Composers of a Given Type and Their Respective Percentages of All Performances</th>
<th>Combined % for Top 5 Composers of a Given Type</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Composers</td>
<td>Mozart (10.7); Beethoven (7.0); Tchaikovsky (4.3); Brahms (3.6); Shostakovich (2.4)</td>
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<td>Living Composers</td>
<td>Joan Tower (0.8); John Adams (0.5); John Williams (0.5); John Corigliano (0.3); Jennifer Higdon (0.3)</td>
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* The above percentages are in reference to 7570 performances by 313 orchestras.

^ The total number of “All Composers” = 639; “Pre-18th Century” = 13; “18th Century” = 31; “19th Century” = 136; “20th Century” = 453; and “Living Composers” = 313.
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<td>Minimum</td>
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<td><strong>Small Orchestras (N=263)</strong></td>
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<td>% of 19th Century Composers</td>
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<td>% of 20th Century Composers</td>
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<td>OLS REGRESSION ON THE REPERTOIRE CHOICES OF LARGE U.S. ORCHESTRAS, 2005-2006</td>
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<td>Specialization</td>
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<td>Adjusted R²</td>
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*p < .05; *p < .01** (one-tailed tests)

Standardized coefficients shown to facilitate comparison
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<tr>
<th>TABLE 10.4</th>
<th>OLS REGRESSION ON THE REPERTOIRE CHOICES OF SMALL U.S. ORCHESTRAS, 2005-2006</th>
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<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
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*p < .05; *p < .01** (one-tailed tests)

Standardized coefficients shown to facilitate comparison

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⁶ We are missing information on the age of six orchestras—hence, the N is 257, not 263.