Symphonies in the stacks: how libraries can aid in classical music's revitalization

Abstract: Classical music as an art form is as vibrant and engaging as it has always been, but it is steadily losing its ability to connect to the greater community. It is an industry like any other, and must keep itself relevant in order to remain afloat. Libraries have faced many of same challenges but, unlike the classical music world, they have had far more success in adapting to new technologies and adopting new models of operation. Classical music must learn to do the same. Collaboration with libraries is a fundamental first step in accomplishing this. This paper examines some of the ways collaboration is already taking place, and suggests ways it can further aid audience revitalization through providing access to classical music to the library community.

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Introduction

At the TED 2008 conference, Boston Philharmonic conductor Benjamin Zander (2008) gave a talk on the transformative power of classical music. He took his audience through listening and understanding a Chopin prelude in an attempt to address the "wide gulf between those who understand, love and are passionate about classical music, and those who have no relationship to it at all" (Zander, 2008). His attempt was largely successful, and he attributed this to a difference in approach from the majority of the music profession. If 3% of the population likes classical music, most of the classical music world would only aspire to shift this number up a percent. How much more successful would this be, Zander wonders, if the approach were instead: "everybody loves classical music -- they just haven't found out about it yet" (Zander, 2008)?

Here lies the heart of the problem facing the classical music world: the music is as vibrant and engaging as it has always been, but its ability to connect to communities and convince the modern world of its relevance has been steadily diminishing. Album sales are down, classical music stations are slowly fading out of existence, concert audiences are getting smaller and older, and media continues to shift classical music further and further from cultural focus (Vanhoenacker, 2014). Part of the problem is the plethora of cheap entertainment of overwhelming variety that makes concert hall seats - expensive by comparison - difficult to fill. However, the more prevalent issue is that the classical music world is only now realizing the issue exists and attempting to address it. In order to address this issue, classical music organizations should look towards, and aim to collaborate with, another institution that continues to make itself relevant and that can provide opportunities for promotion: the library, and more specifically, the public library. Libraries have managed to weather the changes brought on by the modern digital age by continuously adapting to the communities they serve. This has primarily been a shift from providing access to information mostly in the form of books to providing access to technology, programs and services, and a space for community engagement. All of these services provided by libraries are extremely valuable to the struggling classical music world, because what classical music needs is an access point to the community.

This article seeks to examine some opportunities for libraries to assist in promoting classical music to the public. The article begins with a brief look at classical music's history and a discussion of some of the issues plaguing the genre today, followed by a review of what has been written on these issues and their potential remedies. It will then discuss potential opportunities for collaboration between classical music

communities and the libraries that support them. Such opportunities include providing spaces for performances, facilitating discovery of classical music through education and resources, and drastically increasing access to materials through digitization efforts and collaboration between institutions. Through the use of case studies that examine the efforts of one particularly successful public library (the Central branch of Halifax Public Libraries) and of three digitization projects (the Naxos Music Library, Bach Digital, and the International Music Score Library Project), this article will highlight initiatives that have already succeeded in bringing music to the public, and discuss opportunities for further progress. Libraries have the potential to be vital tools for classical music's revitalization — the opportunity simply has to be seized.

Classical music: A brief history

Classical music's difficulties in shaking off its past is ingrained in the genre itself. Each period continued to venerate the composers of the period that had come before. This became especially prevalent with the emergence of atonal music in the early twentieth century. Critics of the time were extremely hostile to the new style, to the point that it prompted the Viennese school of composers who used it to shut themselves off, along with their craft, from most audiences. Their decision to assume the role of misunderstood artist became the foundation of the well-known concept of the ivory tower and its implicit ruling that the art it contains is intended only for the properly educated (Taruskin, 2010). At the same time the atonal school was walling themselves away, the rest of the classical music world was looking even more fondly at its past. A return to the aesthetic of eighteenth century compositions marked the emergence of the neoclassical style, which was a reactionary move away from both atonal music and the lingering remnants of late Romantic styles and their excessiveness (Magnuson, 2009). Throughout the century, these two attitudes gradually began to converge and eventually lead to the peculiar blend of haughtiness and nostalgia prevalent in concert halls today. The Baltimore Symphony Orchestra compiled data from 21 American orchestras on their 2014-2015 seasons, and the results were more than telling. The average date of compositions performed was 1886, with only 9.5% of programmed pieces having been written after 2000. One of every eight performances featured works by either Beethoven or Mozart, and German composers made up almost a quarter of all works performed (Upton & O'Bannon, 2015). Orchestras may claim that they are trying not to become obsolete, but by continuing to play music that becomes ever more removed from today's audiences, many of them are not doing a convincing job.

The hostile attitude within concert halls is somewhat harder to quantify, but no less keenly felt. Andrew Mellor (2012) describes his own experience, as a white man whose profession is writing about classical music, of feeling isolated and judged at concert venues. There is a very strict margin in which classical music audiences are expected to fit, and appearing or acting outside of what this margin dictates leads to negative judgements and a sense of unwelcomeness. It is an easy attitude to unwillingly adopt: avid concertgoers and classical music enthusiasts often resent someone clapping between symphony movements, even though holding applause until the end of the piece did not become common practice until the late nineteenth century. If it is so common for people who fit within classical music's self-proclaimed chosen demographic to feel unwelcome, how would the feeling be for people outside this group trying to connect to the genre? Many of them simply do not try, which isolates classical music from the community it is supposed to be intrinsically connected to even further. Ivan Hewett (2003) summed up the problem quite succinctly: "[t]here's something disquieting, in 2003, about the sight of an all-white orchestra playing to an all-white audience" (Hewett, 2003, para. 2). Now, twelve years later, very little progress has been made in correcting this, making the issue even more glaring.

The ivory tower mindset has caused today's society to consider classical music an elevated, distant art form - intellectual and in some cases beautiful, but ultimately inconsequential to the modern world beyond its particular niche. Mellor (2012) states that "it's precisely this failure to connect our experience of classical music with the small strivings and failures of normal life that could sever its dialogue with society" (para. 10). The severance of this dialogue would quickly regulate classical music to the same state as Latin: a lingering relic of antiquity in the form of a dead language. In order for classical music to continue to exist as a living art form, its connection to the community must be revitalized. Libraries provide an ideal venue from which to start the process of revitalization.

If feelings of isolation occur within audiences at the concert hall, one easy solution is to move the music outside its traditional venue. Rather than trying to entice the community into coming to hear the music, why not bring the music to them? Matt Adomeit (2015) wrote on classical music outside the concert hall. He discusses why the concert hall and its precursor, the church hall, are such popular places to enjoy classical music: "[t]hese two institutions serve similar functions – community, reverence and personal development – for their devotees" (Adomeit, 2015, para. 2). All three of these (although perhaps reverence to a lesser extent) are also provided by the library for its users, making it a perfect venue for classical music.

A review of the literature

As far back as 1932, Elizabeth Coolidge recognized the potential for collaboration between the classical music industry and public libraries, declaring that "the public library can do few things more helpful to modern life than assist the public to understand and to appreciate music" (Dixon, 1932, p. 103). Coolidge was one of the first pioneers in the movement to bring music to libraries and museums, and her legacy lives on in the auditorium at Library of Congress bearing her name (Dixon, 1932). Lionel McColvin further emphasized this point in 1957, arguing that just as library patrons interested in poetry or science should be able to find relevant material in their public libraries, so too should musicians. However, he also acknowledged three obstacles that must be addressed for this to happen: public libraries must understand the needs of musicians, musicians must offer support to public libraries in order for these needs to be met, and larger shared music collections must be built in order to facilitate greater access (McColvin, 1957). Great strides have been made in addressing the third obstacle through digitization of musical scores, as will be discussed below. The first two obstacles stem largely from a disconnect between musicians and the public libraries that provide for them. In 1981, Leonard Burkat wrote on this issue, discussing his decision to withdraw from the field of music librarianship after feeling too far removed from the field of music. In his article, he urges future music librarians to make changes to address this issue, and "challenge[s] each one of you to make your library a musical place and a central institution in the musical life of your community…to be more than a passive part of that musical life" (Burkat, 1981, p. 10). Matthew Moyer continues to encourage such a connection in his 2014 interview, describing the library as "friendly to the classically uninitiated…and intimate enough to allow both novices and devotees a close-up perspective on musicians practicing their craft" (para 1). Clearly one of the best ways to forge a connection is to bring musicians and their music directly into the public library.

Music performance in the library

Of course, there are more practical reasons for why classical music is usually played in a church or concert hall instead of in a library. Acoustics must be considered when instruments are not amplified, and modern concert halls are designed specifically to cater to the needs of an orchestra. However, libraries are able to take steps to address this and combat their own well-worn stereotype of libraries existing solely as quiet spaces. The Halifax Public Libraries' new Central branch contains Paul O'Regan Hall

on its ground floor: a three hundred seat auditorium with back walls that slide away, allowing the hall to be opened to the rest of the library. Halifax Public Libraries' former CEO Judith Hare intended the space to complement the recording studio also present in the library, saying, "[p]eople can make their own music … but also they'll have a place to perform as well" (Ryan, 2012, para. 9). It is a beautiful hall
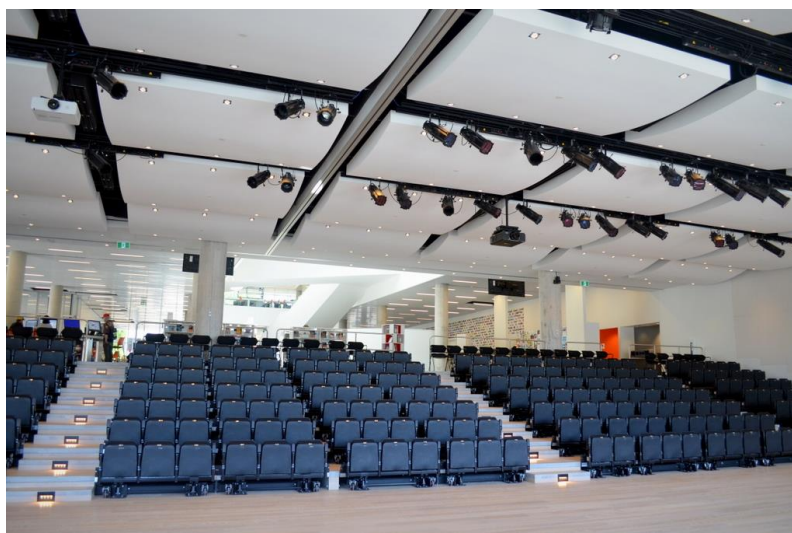

Figure 1 Halifax Central Library: Paul O'Regan Hall (Citobun,

with excellent acoustics, and when it is opened, the entire library rings with music. Furthermore, it deliberately caters to musicians within the library community by creating a greater connection and engagement to both the performers and the performance itself. As stated by Joseph Johnson, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra's principal cellist, "[classical musicians] know we have to do more than just show up and play in the concert hall…We need to interact with the community, do pop-up concerts, collaborate with other institutions…be part of people's lives" (Harris, 2015, para. 7). Since opening a year ago, the Central Library has had 1.2 million people come through its doors — an immense community to interact with and be a part of (M. Collier, personal communication, December 2015). While having an auditorium in a space generally considered quiet and scholarly may initially seem counterintuitive, Halifax Public Libraries has ensured that this need is met as well: when not used for performances, the seating in Paul O'Regan Hall is stowed and it becomes a quiet reading space (Ryan, 2012).

Access to resources and education

In addition to offering performance space, public libraries have the ability to offer their patrons access to music resources that cannot be reached elsewhere. In this way, libraries can fill a similar void as Hungarian composer Béla Bartók's collection of folk music. In 1906, Bartók began an extensive journey to collect folk music, intending to preserve it for analysis and incorporation into his own work. He was concerned that the extremely popular German style sweeping through Europe would soon overwhelm traditional Hungarian music, and hoped that by collecting the music of his homeland

he could ensure that the songs would endure. Equipped with only two phonographs, he recorded songs from all across Hungary and the regions surrounding it, making it as far as the province of Csík, in what was then Transylvania, in the summer of 1907. These recordings were etched into wax cylinders and brought back to Budapest where Bartók lived and taught at the Academy of Music. Were it not for the recordings' existence and Bartók's in-depth analysis of them, many of the songs they contained would have remained largely unknown to the world today (Gillies, 2007). Providing access to recordings of lesser-known works is fundamental for increasing exposure, especially since, as discussed above, the larger orchestras are not playing them. Public libraries are the perfect environment in which to provide this. The Naxos Music Library is the world's largest digital repository of classical music recordings, containing multiple recordings for multitudes of works, both well-known and obscure. It also costs over $300 a year for an individual to subscribe (Naxos Digital Services, 2015). For many people, this would be completely unaffordable, but larger public library systems often purchase their own subscriptions — all that patrons need for accessing it is their library card. Patrons then gain the ability to browse through almost two million tracks from every period of classical music's extensive span. This is a drastic change from the Beethoven and Mozart-centric performances on which most major orchestras remain fixated. Greater exposure to a wider sample of the classical music repertoire gives a much larger demographic the opportunity to connect with this genre, and provides the potential for classical music's audience to expand far beyond the narrow margin it currently encapsulates.

Beyond access to resources, libraries can provide access to music education. With arts funding in schools becoming scarcer and music programs being gutted, it is imperative that music education be offered in other ways. Burkat (1981) was insistent that this campaign should be led by music librarians within public libraries because "if the level of literacy is elevated, the importance of the music library and the music librarian will rise with it" (p. 13). For people trying to learn about classical music at their public library, perhaps after being inspired by an in-library performance as discussed above, the librarian responsible for the music collection will most likely be one of their first points of contact. Therefore, librarians hold an important role in music education, and it is important that they be fully committed to fostering exploration and expanding it through further education. One way to do this is by providing opportunities for adult education. According to a 1991 study in the Journal of Research for Music Education, participation in adult education rose 79% from 1969 to 1991, and two thirds of their surveyed sample were interested in taking a music course (Bowles, 1991). Of this portion, the two preferred areas of study were aural analysis and introductory music

history (Bowles, 1991). Essentially, respondents were interested in understanding the context of classical music, and learning how to listen to it better. Returning to Zander's (2008) TED Talk, he spent six minutes explaining a two-minute Chopin prelude and, when he performed it, the audience was visibly moved. Zander explained that by putting this much time into education, the audience was able to fully comprehend what Chopin was trying to say, and therefore appreciated the piece when it was played. Once again, Halifax Public Libraries have done an exemplary job in offering opportunities for music education. They offer a wide variety of programs throughout the year for adults, and an equally impressive number tailored to preschoolers, children, and teenagers (Halifax Public Libraries, 2015). Music programming is a trend that appears to be growing in other public library systems as well (Calgary Public Library, the Greater Victoria Public Library, and Toronto Public Library to name a few). It is far easier to connect to and love something that is understood, and music programming in public libraries provides those who may not otherwise have the opportunity to make this connection and learn to love classical music.

Finally, public libraries can provide a space to browse materials and to discover classical music through self-guided exploration. A 2003 ethnographic study determined that the two most common sources for people to seek out new music were public libraries and music stores (Cunningham, Reeves & Britland, 2003). With music stores losing out to digital sources and becoming rarer, it falls even more to public libraries to be the physical location that people can turn to for music-seeking and music discovery. A friend of this article's author recalls happening upon a book on cassette about Tchaikovsky at her public library as a child. The book introduced Tchaikovsky and his life in a way that was accessible to children, and the aural nature of the media allowed for his music to be directly incorporated into the storytelling. She fell in love with Tchaikovsky's music through that book, and this love compelled her to seek out other composers and their music, to become an active concertgoer, and to continue to love classical music to this day (personal communication, November 2015). Classical music relies on these connections being made and this love being ignited in order to remain relevant. The serendipity that exists among the openness of the library and the endless opportunities represented provides an ideal setting for this to take place. Libraries are increasingly filling their collections with more CDs and other audiovisual materials, with materials expense dedicated to these at 31% in 2008-2009, up from 18% in 2000-2001 (Lumos Research Inc., 2011). This can only bode well, as more pertinent items in the collection only increases the chances of a patron stumbling upon a music resource that draws them in.

Public libraries are focusing more and more on offering programs and services. As Martin (2015) proposes in her article "Who Says Libraries are Dying? They are Evolving into Spaces for Innovation" that "[l]ibraries in the 21st century are going to be less about books and more about the services that library staff provide to their communities" (para. 17). However, resources are still necessary. Without recordings and printed music and - of course - books, programs and services can only offer so much. Public libraries still offer many of these resources, but they cannot be expected to supply them all on top of programs and services. Some resources also need to come from a different source. Academic libraries and archives are uniquely suited for supplying access to materials that public libraries cannot.

Access through digitization

Most of the outreach opportunities for classical music are best served through public libraries, but academic libraries and archives can also offer unique resources, mainly the manuscripts and rare printed scores in their holdings. One of the main issues with accessibility to classical music is finding copies of the printed music. Less expensive editions of older works are often published by less reputable sources, who add additional dynamic markings, phrasing indications, and other performance instructions to the music that the original composer never intended. Scholarly editions (urtexts) are much more reliable, but these urtexts are notoriously expensive — often close to a thousand dollars for orchestral works. These costs, along with the number of musicians and cost of the venue, are a major contributing factor in orchestras' endless deficits, and a major hurdle for anyone who hopes to study classical music as either a performer or a scholar.

One obvious way to combat these accessibility problems is through the digitization and open access initiatives currently sweeping through most of the academic world. Most of the manuscripts for more well-known classical works are hidden away in the old libraries and archives of Europe, and many are now too old and delicate to even be viewed on site. Digitization provides an effective way to expand access to the global classical music community, while also helping to preserve the original documents by minimizing their handling. Encouragingly, the classical music world appears to be catching on to the idea of digitization. The Yale University Library's music subject guide includes dozens of online repositories for both scores and sheet music listed, most of them free for the public to access. Two important repositories that will be examined here are Bach Digital, and the International Music Score Library Project (IMSLP) Petrucci Music Library.

Bach Digital is a collaborative digitization effort between three German libraries that aims to create a comprehensive catalogue of the Bach family complete works and accompanying literature, including digitized manuscripts when available. It brings together manuscripts that are directly related to each other but are stored in different locations, and compiles them in a searchable database (Bach Digital, 2008). Most of the site is in German, but so long as a piece name or catalogue number is known, the site is fairly easy to navigate.

While the catalogue aspect of the site is certainly valuable, the true magic of Bach Digital is the access to primary documents it provides to anyone who wants to look. Many classical music scholars, performers, and casual enthusiasts would like nothing more than to view the original manuscript of a J.S. Bach cantata, but live on the other side of the world and cannot afford to travel to Germany. With this database, high-resolution scans are available for viewing anywhere in the world, at any time, for anyone who chooses to seek them out. With the frequency old, high profile composers like J.S. Bach and his sons have their works performed, it is sometimes easy to forget the human element of their music and regulate it to the impersonal, "higher" idea of classical music that is causing the genre to become more remote from the rest of the world. Viewing the manuscripts for these pieces can help return the personal connection to them.

Figure 2 BWV 1081, Credo intonation in F major (Bach, 1748).

Seeing spilt ink, smudged notes, and the occasional coffee stain can help forge a connection to these long dead composers, and make their music more relevant to the people listening today.
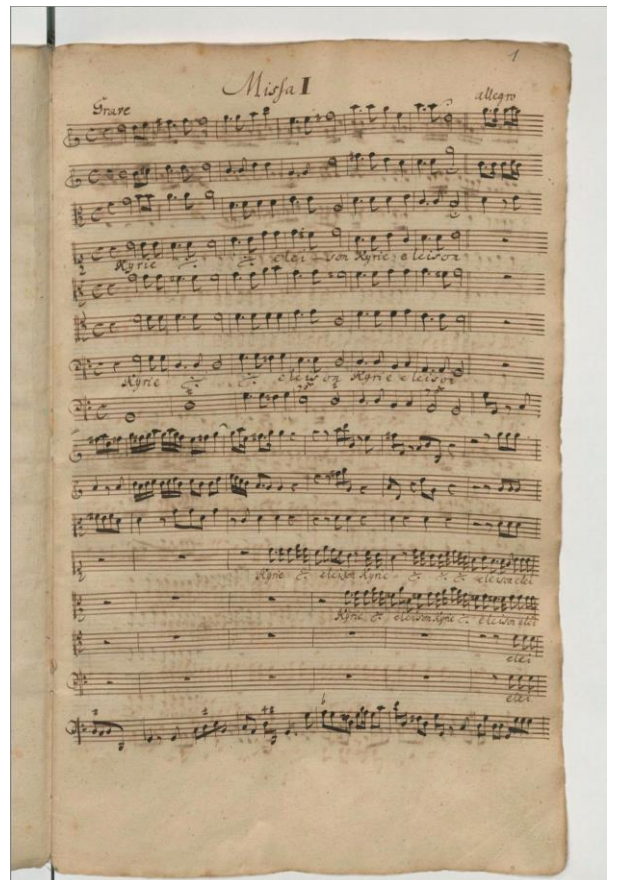
There is some overlap between Bach Digital and the IMSLP Petrucci Music Library; although very different in scope and approach, they serve a similar purpose. However, where Bach Digital is an organized catalogue curated by library staff and archivists, IMSLP is a Wiki-style site that aims to gather every classical music score in the public domain and make them freely accessible to everyone. It is made possible through collaboration between libraries and individual contributions and, as a result, now boasts a collection of over 100 000 works, most with multiple editions to choose from.

The resources offered by IMSLP are significant in supporting widespread access and interest in classical music. Here is a sizeable portion of the entire classical music repertoire - a repertoire that spans centuries - scanned and made freely available to everyone. The barriers this removes are astounding; IMSLP contains manuscripts, facsimiles, urtexts, accurate editions, terrible editions, and everything in between. It is a music scholar's dream come true, and any financially strained music student's salvation.

Figure 3 H.549/Wq 135, Oboe Sonata in g minor. (Bach, 1735).

IMSLP's collection helps more than just scholars and amateur performers. Halifax's Symphony Nova Scotia programmed a concert in October that included Ravel's Piano Concerto, which was composed between 1929 and 1931. This piece is not yet in the public domain in the United States (where most major music publishers are based), so it could not be purchased, and renting the piece costs over a thousand dollars per performance. However, the piece is no longer under copyright in Canada, and someone acquired a score, painstakingly wrote out the individual parts with music notation software, and uploaded it to IMSLP. Symphony Nova Scotia's music librarian was, with some revisions, able to use these parts for the performance. As a result, the orchestra saved a great deal of much-needed money (J. Eager, personal communication, October 2015). Even more pertinently, the concert was cancelled due to a power outage, and was rescheduled for March. Had the orchestra needed to pay to rent the parts for a second time, this rescheduling probably would not have been possible. The availability of parts through the digitization efforts of IMSLP make it possible for symphonies and orchestras like Symphony Nova Scotia to acquire musical pieces and to perform them, thereby fostering discovery, access, and appreciation of this music by the audience. Classical music is ultimately an aural art, but it is preserved

and communicated through written notation. Providing widespread access to these scores through efforts such as digitization is essential to increase the performance of classical music and public exposure to the genre.

Academic libraries and archives may be the ones contributing most of the material to digital score repositories, but it falls to public libraries to promote these resources, as well as their own, and make them easier to discover. IMSLP is a well-known resource within the classical music sphere, but few seem to know about it among the general population. Much like performances, these resources are available; they just need to be brought to the attention of those who might want to use them. The Rochester Public Library offers a music subject guide on its website via Springshare's LibGuides software, a feature not often seen outside academic libraries. Through it, the library provides information on practically everything just discussed: websites and databases for both recordings and sheet music, materials in the library catalogue, educational resources, music events within the community, and events happening at the library (Rochester Public Library, 2013). Having all this information on one page is invaluable, yet few public libraries seem to offer such a resource. Classical music organizations and library institutions need to determine effective ways to reach their communities, and to inform them of what resources are offered and available. Classical music is capable of leaving the concert hall and being made available to everyone, and libraries are no longer silent, scholarly information repositories but spaces that bring communities together. If this can be effectively conveyed, then classical music's efforts to rebuild its bridges into the community could finally gain some solid foundations.

Conclusion

With the assistance of libraries, the doors to the classical music world could once again be thrown open. Performances in library venues can introduce the idea that while listening to a symphony in a concert hall wearing formal dress is one way to enjoy classical music, it is far from the only way, and furthermore, that other performance venues and experiences are just as valid. Public libraries can offer resources through their own holdings, music database subscriptions, and educational programs. Academic libraries and archives can augment these resources and programs through digitization initiatives and efforts to compile materials across institutions. Through all these initiatives, libraries can and are supporting classical music by providing access and exposure to the genre. They are stimulating public interest in classical music, and as a result, they are supporting efforts to revitalize the genre and show its relevance in today's society.

In 1983, the Atlantic Symphony Orchestra was forced to declare bankruptcy and dissolve. It was an old orchestra that subsided on old models of music making and funding. Its inability to adapt forced it out of business. The orchestra that emerged from is ashes, Symphony Nova Scotia, is smaller and more flexible, with fewer permanent players and more outreach concerts - a modern orchestra with a modern sound, and a business model for a modern world (Blakeley, 2006). As this example shows, classical music is an industry like any other, and it must keep itself relevant in order to remain afloat. The classical music industry is putting serious effort into being more welcoming and engaging to allow more people to connect with it, and many libraries are stepping up to collaborate and further this effort. Through these efforts, classical music can resume its dialogue with society, with more participants than ever before. Classical music could be lifted off its gilded, remote pedestal, and returned to its place within the communities it is trying so desperately to reach. According to Ivan Hewett (2003), the magic of classical music is that it "connects us to the past, and floats free of it at the same time" (para. 7). It is an art form that has been used over hundreds of years in hundreds of ways to express hundreds of things, and, like libraries, it is an institution with strong roots in the past that still has the strength and potential to remain relevant to present and future generations.

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