Exchange and negotiation of value when symphonic music is marketed as a commodity

Åsa Bergman

Value exchange in marketing campaigns

In the opening scene of the 2019 commercial for the Volvo XC90 car, soprano Emily Cheung performs the Queen of the Night's aria from the second act of Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. The performance takes place in an empty industrial warehouse set up as an opera stage. Wearing a long orange dress and rhinestone earrings, Cheung's appearance contrasts sharply with the otherwise neutral colours of the setting. As the soprano continues to sing, the viewer is invited to take a ride in the car, and the camera alternately focuses on the performer, the built-in speakers, the stereo's volume control, and the surrounding forest. Halfway through the video, a brief close-up of the soprano is followed by a view of the car's touchscreen, and the driver selects 'Concert Hall Mode' from the menu bar. This brings up the main stage at the Gothenburg Concert Hall, described in the accompanying text as: 'Home of the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra'. Following the selection of Concert Hall Mode, the sound changes and gets a more spatial character, and zooming back in on Cheung's performance, the video ends in the warehouse. The soprano is now standing next to the car with the text message: 'The Volvo XC90 – Designed for an aria'. The last word, 'aria', is then replaced in quick succession by 'rock stars', 'conductors', 'beatboxers', and finally 'you', before the whole sentence is replaced by 'The Volvo XC90 – Our idea of luxury'.[1]

It is hardly controversial to claim that the Mozart aria in this commercial and the visual references to the Gothenburg Concert Hall contribute to an image of the car as providing not only good sound quality, but also values such as exclusivity, technical brilliance, and high quality. In the same way that Nicholas Cook (1998) argues that the overture to Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* in a commercial for the Citroën ZX 16v gives meaning to the car brand, it can be said that a dialectic between technology and art is emphasized here. Furthermore, the music's cultural value lends prestige to the Volvo brand.[2] However, since, according to Cook, the construction of meaning can be understood as a reciprocal process, the values associated with an industrial corporation

[1] The commercial is titled "Can you design an SUV for an aria?", and is available on YouTube at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0jdh5rIvx-M (2022-06-16). Thanks to Lawrence Kramer for presenting an interesting and well-delivered keynote talk at the *Classical Music in Contemporary Media and Society* online conference, in May 2022, where I was introduced to this commercial.

[2] How and why music is used in brand building has recently received attention from several researchers (Graakjær, 2014; Tan, Rodman and Deaville, 2021; Anderson, 2021; Clem, 2021; McLeod, 2021).

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can also be transferred in the opposite direction, i.e., back to the cultural product (ibid., p. 8). In other words, by being involved in a commercial for a car brand, the Gothenburg Concert Hall can receive values like quality, exclusivity and status in return.

The increasing importance of branding and other marketing activities for music institutions today may be related to the fact that the value of classical music is seen as contested in our time (Kramer, 1995; McDonald, 2010). This may also explain why classical music is promoted through unconventional marketing methods, such as performing it in nightclub environments (Haferkorn, 2018), making the music available on digital platforms such as YouTube to reach a more socially diverse audience (Tan, 2016), or signalling collaborations with influencers on the image-sharing service Instagram (Nyman, 2024).

The growing interest in branding and marketing strategies among today's concert institutions has also been described as related to new economic conditions in the culture field (Löfgren and Willim, 2005). Based on such an assumption, it has also been claimed that economic viability 'has become a more intense, frequent, and dominant strategy in neoliberal capitalism' (Taylor, 2016, p. 54). A current example from the Swedish context is the political discussion about the Norrköping Concert Hall, where the importance of bearing more of the costs as a cultural institution has been stressed (Jonsson, 2023). Furthermore, the new economic conditions that have been identified as governing the activities of cultural institutions impose greater demands in terms of managing goals and results. According to research conducted in Norway, this challenges and weakens the artistic autonomy of cultural institutions. At the same time, however, it is emphasized that this neoliberal governance can also lead to the development of new artistic strategies (Røyseng, et al., 2017). As Timothy D. Taylor (2016, p. 9) puts it: 'just because something is a commodity doesn't mean it is somehow debased', and moreover, 'commodities are never "simply" commodities. Any sort of good, whether or not it is a commodity, whether or not it is a cultural good, can exist in different regimes of value and is never static in any regime' (ibid., p. 9). What Taylor is suggesting here is that even if cultural life in the Western world today is dominated by neoliberal ideas and capitalism, it is not only commercial values that give legitimacy to cultural products. Rather, the commercial value should be seen as part of a process of exchange, where other kinds of values also are acknowledged and negotiated. This means that when cultural products are presented as commodities, artistic and economic values should be seen as intertwined and impossible to fully separate.

The emphasis on how aesthetic and cultural values can be perpetuated even if music is made into a consumer product may seem paradoxical, in relation to earlier ideas about how mass-produced and commercialized music poses a threat to the preservation of aesthetic values (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1997). For example, commodity fetishism has been described as 'an excuse for absolving the listener from the thought of the whole, whose claim is comprised in proper listening', and commodified music has been said to produce a listener 'converted along his line of least resistance, into the acquiescent purchaser' (Adorno, 2001, p. 33). However, as acknowledged by Taylor (2016, p. 10), 'music, like all goods, cultural and otherwise, exists in different regimes of

value, sometimes as a commodity, sometimes as a gift, sometimes as something else altogether – never fixed'. A similar statement is made by Marianna Ritchey (2019), who notes that the idea of classical music is itself socially constituted and therefore represents 'a pliable ideology that can overlap with neoliberalism but also contest it in various ways...' (ibid., p. 6).

Against this background, the overall aim of the present article is to investigate how different ideas about classical music within the contemporary musical scene are expressed in advertising campaigns, and what ideological grounds are used to construct music as a valuable resource. In order to gain knowledge about how cultural values related to classical music institutions are created and negotiated, the article will focus on how symphonic music is constructed as valuable in a Swedish context in marketing activities targeting supposed concert visitors. It will also show how the values that are communicated to listeners are involved in processes of value exchange that may be based on neoliberal ideology, but in which both economic and non-economic values are acknowledged (Taylor, 2016, 2021; Ritchey, 2019). This is motivated by how, under neoliberalism, cultural goods are 'even more conceived and produced for exchange than they have been in the past', and to how the autonomy of cultural production is believed to be in jeopardy because 'commerce increasingly makes inroads in the neoliberal world' (Taylor, 2016, p. 78). Moreover, this is motivated by how commercial and aesthetic values have become tightly intertwined and how 'capitalism appropriates, and creates, different forms of value that are constantly in circulation and constantly in process of translation, untranslation and retranslation' (Taylor, 2021, p. 393). Therefore, it is also important to consider how cultural institutions actively promote certain values when communicating with their audiences, and how this is done by using neoliberal models of governance (Foucault, 2004; Nealon, 2008).

Based on a case study of how the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra (GSO) presents its music and concert performances, and how it strives to be perceived as attractive to a contemporary audience, the analysis will concentrate on how commodification is used as a marketing strategy by the orchestra. This means that the focus is on how symphonic music is constructed as a commodity and how special qualities and characteristics are stated in information material and marketing campaigns. The empirical material consists of texts and images published on the orchestra's website, social media, and streaming channel GSOplay, as well as printed information from the period 2018–2021. In addition, notes from observations made in connection with locally arranged or streamed marketing events are also examined. In order to outline a broad perspective on value production and value exchange, the material was analysed using a critical multimodal discourse analysis approach. From such a perspective, language is viewed as a set of resources rather than as a system, which makes the analytical work a queestion of how meaning is expressed linguistically or represented visually (Machin and Mayr, 2012, pp. 17ff). The analysis has also focused on the narratives about symphonic music identified in the empirical material and on the ideas about music's values that anchor the narratives. Because marketing campaigns are often directed at an imagined audience, listener position is also a frequently used concept. In line with a Foucauldian

understanding of power as something relational and subject positions as something that can be assigned to people, attention has been given to what kinds of listeners are idealized and constructed as preferable (Foucault, 1982). The overall analytical perspective also involves a perspective on images as semiotic resources with the potential to symbolize or represent cultural meaning (Hall, 2013). In other words, the combination of close readings of texts with image analysis anchors the article in a view of cultural meaning as constructed through a combination of linguistic and symbolic representations.

The following sections will show how symphonic music is commodified and how this process involves an exchange between cultural values and economic viability. The presentation is structured around the following ideas about how the music offers value to the audience: as representing a variety of meanings, but also the idea of a musical whole; as a mundane, but also an extraordinary experience; and as a form of luxury consumption, but also a promoter of sustainability.

Multiple choices of meanings creating an aesthetic totality

During the 2018–2019 concert season, the GSO offered several subscription options packaged in different sizes on specific days of the week. Concertgoers could choose from concert series such as: *Wednesday Small*, *Thursday Medium* and *Friday Large*, each of which was represented by a picture of cellophane-wrapped packages filled with the same number of items as there were concerts in the programme. The most dedicated audience members were offered a so-called 'premium subscription', either in the form of a 'silver subscription' which 'offers plenty of highlights for those of you who can't live without classical orchestral music' or a 'gold subscription' described as 'an exclusive opportunity for a few really dedicated orchestra fans'. And while the concert series *Wednesday Small*, *Thursday Medium* and *Friday Large* were illustrated with one item each, the image below was used to present the premium series with 26 and 47 concerts, respectively (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Illustration for the 2018–19 concert season programme, designed by Gothenburg Symphony's marketing department. Published by permission of the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra.

In this picture, a wide variety of musical meanings are referred to. For example, the music is represented as ranging from something typically mundane (as in the packages of

wood-coloured clothes pegs and pencils) to something more festive (as in the package of confetti bombs). Moreover, it ranges from a warm and romantic atmosphere (as in the picture of the red tea lights) to strong emotional responses (as in the package of paper tissues). Furthermore, it ranges from something sweet and tasty (as in the package filled with polka dot lollipops) to something spicy or fiery (as in the illustration of red chillies). Altogether, the variety signals that the concerts offer something for everyone, and that meaning alternatives are available to suit whatever a listener might want the music to symbolize. The concert performances are thus constructed as the kind of individualized experience that is said to characterize contemporary digital music consumption, i.e. as a resource to adjust and regulate specific situations or moods in different everyday situations (Nealon, 2018). Lifestyle-adapted offerings are also a common sales strategy today, which can be linked to the way cultural products are promoted as 'positively reinforcing the consumer's values, feelings, identity or lifestyle desires' (Kupfer, 2021, pp. 6–7). The emphasis on musical content as accommodating everyone's wishes and needs can further be related to how 'neoliberalism emphasizes a kind of hyperindividualism by wielding ideologies of consumer choice and fostering what has become known as the "care of the self"' (Taylor, 2016, p. 4). As a result, music 'like other commodities has become a powerful means of fashioning one's self in an era of heightened consumption' (ibid.).

However, when the GSO presents its concert programmes by emphasizing the material dimension of music, it also turns it into a consumer product for reasons other than lifestyle or identity choices. Stressing the material dimension of the music also constructs it in line with the idea that it is a bearer of inherent and eternal values, i.e., ideas that were central to the establishment of the concept of the musical work in the nineteenth century. According to Lydia Goehr (1992, p. 111), this idea 'began to regulate musical practice at the end of the eighteenth century', as it was linked to the increased status of instrumental music as an autonomous art form (see also Bonds, 2006; Dahlhaus, 1989a). An important part of establishing the concept of a musical work was for theorists to construct music as 'one of the fine arts', which proved to be 'a really successful way to give substance to the idea of a musical product', making the work-concept 'the focal point' (Goehr, 1992, p. 152). So, apart from how each of the objects illustrated above might be seen as symbolizing different musical meanings, they all also refer to and uphold the idea of the musical work. Thus, because the illustrations are not only presented separately but also occur together, they emphasize the idea of a 'musical whole' or 'aesthetic totality' that Adorno (2001) describes as desirable. In other words, the cellophane-wrapped products in Figure 1 can be understood as representing not only a variety of meanings but also the idea of a musical whole.

Commodifying music as a mundane but also extraordinary experience

Symphonic music is also constructed as a commodity when concert tickets are made into an economic investment and subscribers to concert series are positioned as

beneficiaries. In the text accompanying the images illustrating the 2018–2019 season programme, this is emphasized in the following way:

> With a subscription to the Gothenburg Concert Hall, everything is packaged and ready. You get a range of experiences to look forward to, a better price than if you buy single tickets at the regular price, and you are guaranteed a seat at concerts that quickly sell out. You also get to share the experiences with other music lovers, have your own seat in the auditorium and get even more great benefits.[3]

'A better price' and a guaranteed seat are described here as the main reasons for subscribing to a concert season. Other values that are mentioned are the listening experiences the music gives rise to, the social dimension of listening together with 'other music lovers' and the benefits that subscribers recieve when assigned 'their own seat in the auditorium'. In other words, this means that concert tickets are sold to the audience on the basis of being both an economic and a cultural investment.

That the collective dimension of attending symphony concerts is cited as a reason to buy tickets may be related to the way in which being a concertgoer has historically been seen as both a social and a cultural investment. This, in turn, may be related to how, in the nineteenth century, bourgeois audiences acquired the status of being 'the taste-bearing stratum' (Dahlhaus, 1989b, pp. 41–43; see also Gay, 1996). Moreover, it means that when concert tickets are marketed as an opportunity to become part of a social context, listeners can be seen as being offered social and cultural status.

Emphasizing that concert tickets are both an economic and a cultural investment can also be discussed in relation to Taylor's remark that capitalism is characterized by an exchange between different types of values, and to how the exchange between economic and non-economic values is especially prominent with cultural products (Taylor, 2021, p. 379). In this context, it is relevant to ask: what does the commodity sold to the audience consist of? Is it the concert performance that the audience purchases? Or is it the ticket, or the subscription itself? The question is motivated by the shift that has taken place in music distribution, where music is now mostly consumed through subscriptions to streaming services rather than the purchase of physical media, and furthermore by the fact that, according to Rasmus Fleischer (2017), subscriptions to streaming services such as Spotify have become the primary music commodity today. However, given the way that the symphonic concert programmes are described in the previous section as commodifying music by emphasizing its material dimension, using, for example, tea lights, clothes pegs, and confetti bomb as symbols, it seems that the material dimension somehow reinforces the meaning of an immaterial product as a commodity.

Furthermore, economic and non-economic values were articulated as intertwined in a marketing campaign launched in connection with the global shopping event Black Friday in November 2019. In Figure 2, Johann Sebastian Bach is depicted promoting

[3] Translated by the author. In original: 'Med ett abonnemang i Göteborgs Konserthus är allt paketerat och klart. Du får en rad upplevelser att se fram emot, bättre pris än om du köper till ordinarie biljettpris och garanterad plats på konserter som snabbt blir utsålda. Dessutom får du andra musikintresserade att dela upplevelsen med, har egen stol i salongen och får ännu fler fina förmåner.'

his *Christmas Oratorio* by emphasizing that it is a unique offer due to the low ticket price.

Figure 2. Illustration of Johan Sebastian Bach marketing his *Christmas Oratorio*, designed by Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra's marketing department. Published by permission of the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra.

The reduced price of the concert tickets, emphasized here by the statement '50% off my wonderful oratorio, today only!', and the fact that the advertisement is published in conjunction with Black Friday, means that the concert tickets are made irresistible on economic grounds. But, in the accompanying text we can see how non-economic values are also emphasized in relation to the concert performance:

> Finally, Bach Friday is here – book the Christmas Oratorio at half price! [...] Come and experience jubilant music powerfully performed by the Gothenburg Symphony, choir, and vocal soloists. Get your tickets before they run out – the offer is only valid today!

The statement that the concert offers 'jubilant music' that is 'powerfully performed by the Gothenburg Symphony, choir, and vocal soloists' means that aesthetic qualities are also emphasized in the promotion of Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*. As noted by Frank Sibley (1995), such qualities are often emphasized by referring to visible or audible elements in a piece of music, or as in the case of the text above, by attributing certain qualities to it. However, as in the previous example, where the benefits of being a subscriber are articulated, it is clear that the experiential dimension is emphasized in this marketing campaign as well. Given that, according to Tom O'Dell (2005, p. 12), experiences 'have become the hottest commodities the market has to offer', this should be seen as yet another argument for seeing symphonic concert performances as a worthwhile investment, even when the non-economic dimensions of the concert are being emphasized.

The image promoting the Bach Friday event is also interesting because the composer is depicted in a way that resembles memes, a cultural phenomenon that is common on social media today. As Sverker Hyltén-Cavallius (2021, p. 103) notes, memes of classical

composers are often characterized by 'a combination of knowledge, competences, everyday experiences and playful clashes between popular culture and classical canon'. By referencing the aesthetics of memes in an advertising campaign for a symphony orchestra performance, the orchestra has taken the initiative in creating such playful clashes. In other words, not only are economic and cultural values exchanged within the commercialization process, but different cultural expressions also seem to be exchanged in a way that is recognized as common within popular culture (Fiske, 2010).

Another example of a canonized composer being portrayed in line with meme aesthetics is a poster that was displayed on the wall of the Gothenburg Concert Hall in October 2020. This time, the image (Figure 3) was part of a marketing campaign to promote the streaming service GSOplay. Here we see a person dressed as Mozart along with the following message: 'Work out with Mozart. Classical music. Whenever you want. Wherever you want'.

Figure 3. Illustration of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart on an exercise bike, designed by Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra's marketing department. Published by permission of the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra.

The Mozart-like person is depicted wearing a wig, a ruffle and an 18th-century coat, while holding a water bottle and a towel in his hands. He is also standing next to a man dressed in sportswear sitting on an exercise bike in a private kitchen. One interpretation of this image is that, although Mozart may be a person from the past, his music still has a role to play in contemporary life as a product that can be consumed 'whenever you want, wherever you want'. Mozart's music is thus constructed as a ubiquitous consumer product in line with how medialized music is described as appearing in today's society (Kassabian 2013). Moreover, Mozart's music is made into a potential resource that can be used to reuglate moods and emotions in different everyday-life situations (Nealon,

2018). Furthermore, representing the music in the context of an exercise session is a way to further stress the functional aspects of music listening. According to Sigrid Røyseng et al. (2017), this can be understood as a strategy in the struggle for legitimacy at a time when artistic value is contested as a consequence of increased demands for economic viability. However, when the music is combined with aesthetic attributes in the form of an 18th-century costume, it is constructed as something more than just its basic function. The commodity sold to the audience with this poster seems to be related to how a traditional aesthetic expression is intertwined with human habits today.

The concert as luxury consumption

Another example of how symphonic music is commodified is its construction as a luxury product. While some of the excerpts analyzed so far have articulated an understanding of classical music and symphonic concert performances as a natural part of everyday life, others construct the music and the concerts as glamorous and a form of luxury consumption. This meaning of symphonic music is also emphasized in a velvet case with the orchestra's logo embossed in gold, which is sold at the GSO box office as a gift box for tickets, gift cards, or compact discs. Symphonic concerts were also turned into a luxury product at a marketing event at a local department store, Nordiska Kompaniet (NK), in May 2018. During the event, musicians from the orchestra, dressed in black suits and dresses, performed chamber music. On the small stage built for this special event, instruments such as a harp and a grand piano were prominently positioned in a way that expressed the idea of classical music as a highly valued form of 'fine art' (Dahlhaus, 1989a; Goehr, 1992; Bonds, 2006). Since the department store's main target group is customers with high purchasing power, it can be argued that there was a mutual exchange of value between NK and the symphony that validated the status of both actors. The event also created a performance of symphonic music as a gift to signal prosperity to concertgoers. In other words, the music is constructed as a resource that can be used to reinforce an identity as a luxury consumer (Kupfer, 2021, p. 7).

Articulating symphonic music as a luxury product counters not only the image of the music as mundane, but also the idea that traditional norms of aesthetic value are being challenged and weakened by changes in the production, consumption, and circulation of cultural goods in the postmodern era (Featherstone, 2007). Given that contemporary music culture is perceived as more diverse than before, and that classical music demonstrably had a weaker position as an aesthetic object at the end of the 20th century than a hundred years before (Widestedt, 2001), the emphasis on its exclusivity can be understood as an attempt to reclaim the hegemonic position of instrumental music (Bonds, 2006) and to maintain the idea of autonomous musical works (Goehr, 1992).

Emphasizing aesthetic values in a way that maintains the hegemonic position of symphonic music also helps to construct concert tickets and season programme subscriptions as investment objects through which it is possible to acquire or increase cultural capital. This challenges and contests postmodern ideas about 'broader shifts in the balance of power and interdependencies between groups and class fractions on both inter and intrasocietal levels' connected to 'changes in the broader cultural sphere'

(Featherstone, 2007, p. 11). Instead, it confirms the idea of classical music as having 'an unspoken value attached to it' and the notion that cultural capital is something that can be 'converted into economic value' (Bull, 2019, p. 3). It can also be argued that it reproduces a strong correlation between an interest in classical music and class position (Bennett et al., 2009), and, moreover, that it positions the listener as belonging to a 'taste-bearing stratum' similar to the bourgeois class in the nineteenth century (Dahlhaus, 1989b, pp. 41–43).

Symphonic music was also made into a luxury product during a promotional event in the foyer of the Concert Hall on 27 February 2021. At this event a cookbook was launched with favourite recipes from the Concert Hall restaurant and tips on classical music for a great dining experience. In addition, the programme for the orchestra's coming season was presented (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Image of the cookbook that was released in 2021. Photographer: Anna Hult. Published by permission of the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra.

Because of the pandemic, the event was broadcast on the orchestra's website, and with the Concert Hall having been closed to the public for almost a year, the launch of the cookbook served as a reminder of its valuable role as a place to listen to symphonic music. The message was also emphasized on the GSO website in the text describing the cookbook. In it, social, auditory and gustatory reasons were given for listening to live concert performances:

> A visit to the Gothenburg Concert Hall is always a multifaceted experience. Spend time with your best friends, experience great classical music with the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra, and enjoy a tempting meal with nice drinks in the restaurant. This is what we want to share with you in this book!
>
> In this beautiful book, written in both Swedish and English, the Concert Hall's unique environment and the restaurant's best dishes are brought together, a delight for anyone with an eye for design and for the home chef...[4]

[4] The text is translated and published in the English version of the orchestra's website.

The rhetoric used to describe the cookbook is quite similar to how online performances were promoted during the Covid-19 lockdown, especially in terms of how spatiality was constructed as valuable, and the potential of music to unite people in difficult times was highlighted (cf. Bergman, 2021). As mentioned above, by materializing meanings and values in a cookbook or a velvet case, and by promoting them as commodities in their own right, one constructs symphonic music as something material, which is in line with the concept of the musical work (Goehr, 1992). However, while the aesthetic attitude towards classical music in the Romantic period meant abandoning 'the belief that music should serve an extra-musical, religious, or social end', and adopting a belief in instrumental music as 'a fine and respectable art in service to nothing but itself' (ibid., p. 147), extra-musical functions in combination with commodification seem to be necessary for the music to be relevant and achieve cultural status in contemporary society.

The symphonic music was also accorded cultural status during the cookbook launch with repeated references to good taste in relation to the dishes in the book, the food normally served in the Concert Hall restaurant, and the music suggested to accompany the dishes. This was made by emphasizing the delicious dishes in the cookbook and mentioning that the idea behind the book was to convey something similar to the elevated feeling that music can give. This stress on the idea that both food and music are creators of elevated feeling means that the idea of sublimity is articulated throughout the event. In the context of music aesthetics, where the concept of the sublime has often been discussed in relation to E.T.A. Hoffmann's review of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, sublime qualities are described as involving a 'vastness of scope, unpredictability, and capacity to overwhelm the senses' (Bonds, 2006, p. 45). As mentioned by Stephen Downes (2014, p. 86), this has also been done by pointing to 'how the symphony facilitates the contemplation of the infinite through the experience of its sublime effect, its potential to elevate the subject, to point to the absolute and to express endless longing'.

In other words, the culinary experience emphasized during the cookbook launch positions GSO as a provider of sublime listening experiences. However, it also positions the orchestra as a mediator of experiences on a diametrically opposed ideological basis, namely as a commercially viable product (O'Dell, 2005). This is because it offers content that responds to the needs of contemporary individuals (Taylor, 2016; Nealon, 2018; Ritchey, 2019; Kupfer, 2021). The promotion of these clashing views of musical meaning at the same marketing event is remarkable.

Symphonic concerts as promoters of sustainability

In the marketing campaigns discussed so far, there are several examples of how symphonic music is commodified through references to materiality. Among other things, it has been shown that images of physical products were used to symbolize features of the music, and beautiful objects such as a velvet box constructed the music as a luxury product. In the following example, a rather different marketing strategy will be discussed, namely highlighting non-material qualities of the music. In an advertising

campaign in November and December 2019, concert tickets were promoted as Christmas gifts for relatives and friends. This campaign included posters on the wall of the Concert Hall, advertisements on buses and trams, and images and texts posted on the GSO website and social media. As part of the campaign, a poster was displayed on the wall of the Gothenburg Concert Hall with the text 'For mother-in-law, who most of all wishes for peace on earth' in white letters on a red background (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Poster designed by Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra's marketing department and displayed on the facade of the concert hall in December 2019. Published by permission of the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra.

The message of this advertisement accomplishes two things. Symphonic music is constructed as having the potential to improve the world, and the listener (an imagined mother-in-law) is positioned as a person whose desires extend far beyond her own everyday challenges and problems. This emphasizes a listener attitude that is diametrically opposed to that of the experientially oriented listener and the luxury consumer in the previous examples. At the same time, smaller posters, with other messages, were hung on the wall of the Concert Hall below the large poster. These posters described the music as a potential gift: 'For the woman who likes new experiences...', 'For the friend who longs to hang out...', 'For the man who likes environmentally friendly Christmas presents...', 'For the dad who has enough ties...' and 'For grandpa, who deserves more than new socks, this year again...'.

As well as communicating an easy and efficient way to do your Christmas shopping, the campaign emphasizes the non-material and non-commercial values of music. This is done by highlighting its socializing function and its potential to address global environmental challenges. Rather than offering listeners musical experiences that meet their personal needs and wishes and their desire for a life of luxury, they position concertgoers as socially engaged and as protectors of ecological sustainability. In other words, the musical values and listener positions expressed in this campaign are

diametrically opposed to those discussed above. They also have a different ideological basis, drawing more on Christian ideas (which makes sense in the context of Christmas) than on capitalist and neoliberal ones.

But the fact that capitalist and commercial values are toned down in this marketing campaign does not mean that they do not exist. As mentioned above, music is also made into a potential gift for someone 'who likes new experiences', i.e., according to O'Dell (2005), into one of the most attractive commodities on the market today. During the same Christmas marketing campaign, concert tickets were also promoted on the orchestra's website as a suitable gift 'for that special someone', 'for the hyper-stressed person who finds it hard to make time themselves', and 'for the lonely person in need of company'. By representing values of sustainability and positioning the ticket buyer as acting responsibly in relation to other people and societal challenges, the campaign makes attending a concert into something more than just an experience. The audience is also offered a lifestyle that can be perceived as attractive by the modern, contemporary person (Nealon, 2018). Moreover, the linking of social responsibility and sustainability issues with music can also be understood as invoking utilitarian ideas, which according to Røyseng et al. (2017) are considered a central foundation of the neoliberal economic governance model.

Conclusion

This article has demonstrated how commodification is used as a strategy for marketing symphonic music in different ways and on a number of ideological grounds. The most prominent ideological starting point is capitalism, which can be seen in how symphonic music is symbolized by physical objects that refer to various kinds of experiences, and how the meaning of music is made into a matter of individual choice. As noted above, this is consistent with how music is created and distributed today as a resource that can be used to enhance certain moods or to create and affirm individuality (Nealon, 2018). Symphonic music has further been described as commodified in line with capitalistic ideas when concert tickets are made into a form of investment, for example when becoming a subscriber is described as desirable and valuable for economic reasons. However, the economic benefits do not seem to function apart from other values. Instead, they are always mentioned alongside such things as the concert's function as a social arena, as a stress reducer in modern life, and as a promoter of inner experience. In this respect, the concert experience is commodified on the basis of both economic and non-economic values that are involved in a value exchange typical of contemporary capitalism (Taylor, 2021).

Another way in which symphonic music is made into a consumer product, with capitalism serving as the ideological framework, is when it is constructed as a luxury item. This has been noted in cases where an ensemble performs music from the orchestra's repertoire in settings associated with luxury consumption, as well as when the music is constructed as exemplifying good taste and as a potential promoter of sublime experiences. When music is commodified as something exclusive that has the potential to confer cultural status on the listener, the music is also constructed as a class marker.

This is motivated by how it positions the listener as belonging to the taste-bearing strata, a concept that came to characterize the bourgeoisie in the nineteenth century (Dahlhaus, 1989b). For this reason, the correlation between an interest in classical music and class position seems to be maintained in a similar way as recognized by Tony Bennett et al. (2009) and in a more recent study by Anna Bull (2019).

Another example of how symphonic music is turned into a consumer product for capitalist reasons, and how the listener is positioned according to middle-class ideals, is when the non-material values of the music are emphasized in marketing campaigns. One example of this is the Christmas gift campaign, which highlights the values of environmental sustainability and social responsibility. In relation to such qualities, the listener is positioned as a consumption-critical subject willing to deal with societal and global challenges. In other words, what is being sold to the listener through this campaign is the sort of lifestyle offerings that are said to be characteristic of neoliberalism and capitalism (Nealon, 2018; Kupfer, 2021). Alongside experiences, lifestyle and identity options seem to be the most central selling points in relation to a contemporary concert audience. On this basis, it may seem to be difficult for symphony orchestras to maintain the values that have traditionally been associated with the music they perform.

But, even if capitalism proves to be a solid ideological basis for the marketing of symphonic music as a commodity, the analysis presented here has nevertheless shown how artistic values are also given space in the advertising campaigns. For example, it has been shown how the music is constructed as having the potential to generate sublime listening experiences (Bonds, 2006; Downs, 2014). It has been highlighted how aesthetic values are articulated in the marketing campaigns for specific concert performances by pointing to specific characteristics within the music (Sibley, 1995). Moreover, artistic values are articulated when the music is made into something that stands in contrast to everyday experience, often by being constructed as an extraordinary experience. The aesthetic dimension of symphonic music is further articulated when it is promoted as a 'musical whole' and an 'aesthetic totality' (Adorno, 2001).

From the perspective of cultural institutions, the increasing demands for economic viability associated with capitalism and neoliberal ideology should also be understood as a possible basis for promoting values that the symphony orchestra wishes to maintain (cf. Bergman, 2021, 2023). This furthermore means that symphony orchestras today must be seen not only as passive entities governed by economic conditions, but also as actors with the power to influence the values that should be associated with music, today and into the future (Foucault, 2004; Nealon, 2018). However, although traditional aesthetic values, norms and ideas are to some extent reproduced when the music is incorporated into a capitalist practice, it cannot be taken for granted that they will achieve permanent status and legitimacy for ever. Instead, one can ask how the conditions for the survival of norms of aesthetic value might change if market economic principles gain even greater influence over the field of culture than they already have, and if the demands for economic viability that symphonies and other music institutions face continue to increase. It is not least important to ask this question in relation to the recent discussions

in a Swedish context calling for cultural institutions to bear a greater part of their costs, among other things by offering the audience the sort of content they are willing to pay for.

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Abstract

The overall aim of this article is to investigate how different ideas about classical music are expressed in advertising campaigns and what ideological grounds are used to construct music as a valuable resource. Based on a case study of how the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra (GSO) presents its music and concert performances in marketing campaigns during the period 2018–2021, the article examines how commodification is used as a marketing strategy. A discourse-analytical perspective is used to demonstrate how values that are communicated to a listener are involved in value exchange processes that, although based on ideology, also acknowledge traditional norms of aesthetic value. While this value exchange process enables aesthetic value norms to be reproduced, it is also involved in ongoing negotiations about which values should apply today and in the future.

Keywords: commodification, symphonic music, marketing campaigns, capitalism, discourse analysis, value exchange.

The author

Åsa Bergman is Associate Professor in Musicology and holds a position as Senior Lecturer in Cultural Studies at the University of Gothenburg. Her research interests include music as a social, societal, and cultural phenomenon and in particular how notions and ideas about music are expressed and negotiated in contemporary practices. Another area of interest relates to how ideas about music generate norms and how this creates opportunities and obstacles for participation in different situations and contexts.