

# New Work for New Audiences and Evaluating Classic FM Support for Orchestral Concerts

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## **New Work for New Audiences**

This presentation will begin with a look at:

- How reaching new audiences affects your organisation, particularly when making it a central plank of your work;
- The history – WNO's previous behaviour (looking at a project that went wrong as well as a success story);
- The *Chorus!* Case study, including the campaign, results and legacy; and
- Conclusions.

Although this presentation focuses on a specific event aimed at new audiences, it is important to be clear that new work is not the only, or even necessarily the best, way of attracting new audiences. Indeed WNO aims to put opera on the 'going out' agenda for new audiences more generally by:

- Offering 250 tickets for every WNO performance at the Wales Millennium Centre at £5 (when WNO moved into the Millennium Centre it doubled the capacity of the house and a new pricing strategy was put in place, including reducing the top price from £47 to £35 and offering £5 tickets that could be booked in advance);
- Conducting special promotion campaigns de-mystifying opera for those who have not tried it before;
- The fresh2opera website which has won numerous awards and uses accessible language;
- Extensive education and outreach work (including new commissions);
- Specially commissioned work.

First of all, the story of WNO's *Carmen*. The Education Director was keen on the idea of a one hour, one act *Carmen* which would have the passion and the punch to attract new audiences. Tickets were £10 and it was a big undertaking, utilising the full WNO resources (orchestra, chorus and principals). Performances were staged at 1.30pm and 6.30pm (the latter to reach the 'commuter audience') and it was aimed at people new to opera. However, there were a number of issues with the project:

- Confusion over who the event was for, and although the 1.30pm performances sold well to schools, the 6.30pm performances didn't attract a commuter audience;
- As the project was to attract 'new people' there wasn't any specific targeting of particular groups;
- The venues were not involved in the detailed planning of the project: WNO depends on its relationships with its four venues and they were nervous about

losing a main scale show, as well as concerns over the timing of the performances and the abridged nature;

- Because the performance was only one hour it did not deliver the full impact of the opera experience;
- Low audiences, with the evening performances averaging only 300 (a respectable number but not ideal in the context of a 1,500 seat house).

As a result *Chorus!* was approached in a very different way:

- There was a clear aim to develop a new audience for opera through a specially commissioned work;
- There was a more specific target audience, in the form of ballet and musical attenders (i.e. people who were happy to spend time in theatres and used to a strong non-spoken/musical element, so relatively soft targets);
- Media partnerships were created to reach listeners and readerships;
- Ensuring that the legacy of *Chorus!* was fundamental to the campaign planning, so that when we were talking about how to reach people the next sentence was immediately discussing what would be done with them next;
- Although the project was initiated by particular elements of the organisation it was owned by the whole management team;
- The project was given real artistic pedigree, directed by David Poutney and using his international reputation to give it a mark of quality;
- Accessible pricing, positioned at £10 per ticket, although some of the venues were nervous about losing income so some were charging as much as £18.50 (although most were £10-£15).

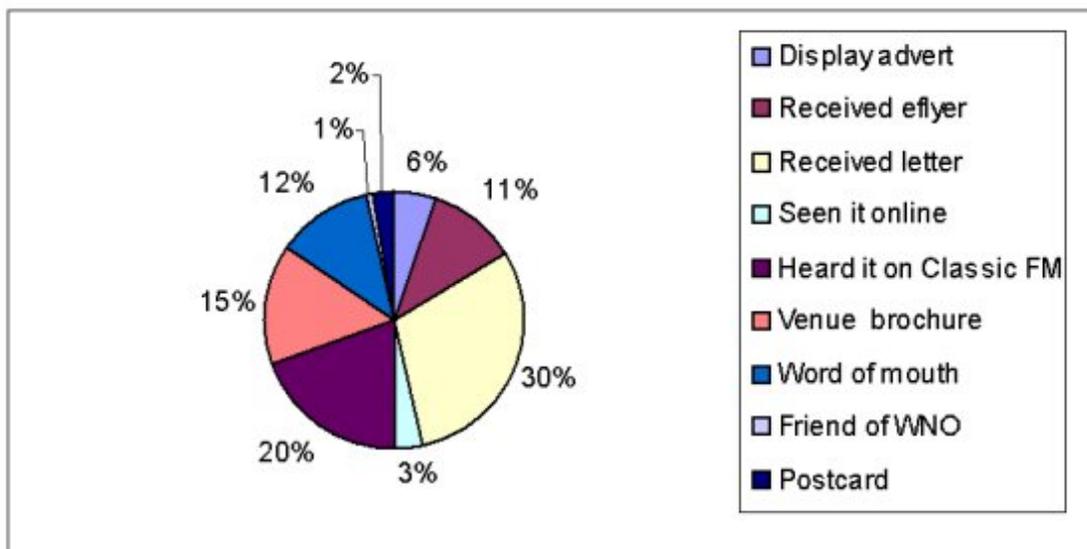
In terms of the campaign itself, the focus was:

- Strong editorial presence;
- UK national advertising;
- Direct mail to ballet and musicals attenders (offering an information pack, follow up deals and an information desk in the foyer);
- The right legacy deals (i.e. what they do next) was a crucial part of the campaign: these people want *La Traviata* on a Saturday night not an unknown opera on a Wednesday evening and this meant taking a financial hit on some of those shows on Saturdays nights that we could have been selling to (again the management ownership was crucial here);
- E-flyer and micro-site.

The show was:

- Critically acclaimed;
- The programme was treated differently (so, instead of academic articles, there were interviews with the chorus and particular pieces were signposted for the rest of the repertoire so the audience could find out more);
- Post-show discussions with two of the chorus and the chorus master;
- The audience reached 700 a night – more than double the audience for *Carmen*.

When we did the analysis of what made the audience book we found the following:



The response to the e-flyer and Classic FM were almost double the norm.

It is important to be aware that reaching new audiences affects your organisation in a number of different ways. The biggest problem WNO faced was the core audience who, either because they didn't fancy what else was on or had because they had already seen it, wanted to attend *Chorus!* (which had been well-reviewed and was perceived as exciting). This had major implications, in terms of displacing *Turandot* income and in terms of affecting the event (as the regulars turned up in black tie and asked questions at the post-show discussions that demonstrated a level of knowledge, fan-dom and expertise that could make new audiences feel like outsiders). Another economic implication was the legacy offering – ensuring the audience could be taken on a journey meant offering top price tickets on a Saturday night that could have been sold for more money.

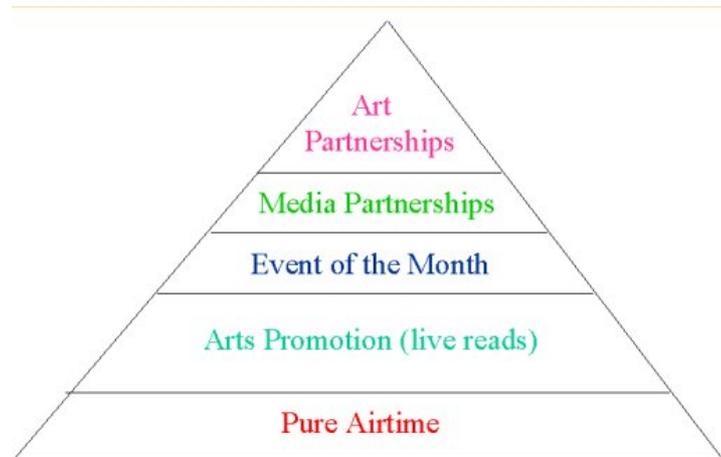
In terms of the managerial implications, it is essential to have management buy in. There was also significant impact in terms of communications – WNO had to think long and hard about the language that was used and challenge the usual assumptions and shorthand that you can slip into when communicating with a well-informed core. This highlights the need to revisit everything about your ways of working and whether they are appropriate for this different audience. In terms of the results, there was a significant range, including 28 per cent in Oxford who had never booked before for opera to 89 per cent in Bristol – over 1,000 people. The legacy offering was a 2 for 1 for *La Traviata* or an Italian double bill. Bristol had the highest take-up of the follow-up offer with 60 tickets. This might sound like quite low retention, but remember that 60 per cent attend only once every three years, so having got new audiences back within a year is exceptional. To get a full picture of the legacy, these individuals will need to be tracked over a 3-5 year period.

In conclusion:

- Experiment and learn from your mistakes. If we hadn't done *Carmen* we would not have done such a good job with *Chorus!* There tends to be a pain barrier and as long as you learn from your mistakes things will get better the second or third time that you do them
- Exploit all the partnerships you have and think laterally about them: Classic FM was incredibly valuable for us, along with the local press and sponsors who introduced or suggested people; with a project like this you need to get different people excited, so exploit your networks, rather than falling back on the normal constituency;
- Ensure the initiative is owned by the management team/whole organisation;
- Lobby to ensure that everyone realises that developing audiences is an ongoing process (you can't just do a project and then abandon them).

## An evaluation of Classic FM support for orchestral concerts

This research project was commissioned from an independent research organisation by Arts Council England. Classic FM aims to create more access to classical music, but has to have a structured approach and tight restrictions in terms of how it works with organisations (because it would be impossible to have partnerships with everyone).



At the base of the pyramid is airtime, through Classic FM box office – a cheaper route to market for organisations to talk about their events. As this takes the form of live reads by presenters it is almost like an endorsement and the listeners see this as a service.

The objectives of the research were to find out:

- The degree to which Classic FM support has attracted attendees to presenting venues
- The degree the campaign has attracted first-time attendees; encouraged greater frequency of attendance and/or stimulated lapsed attendees
- To understand the hierarchy of motivational factors that have encouraged attendance.

The research was based on a broad mix of methodologies, including:

- Analysis of box office records;
- A postal survey distributed to 3,986 attendees at both Classic FM supported and non-supported concerts, achieving a sample of 1,502 (37.6 per cent response rate);
- Two focus groups held in London with new and lapsed attendees at Classic FM supported concerts;
- Telephone interviews with 111 individuals.

The study was undertaken from May to October 2004 and focused on comparing the audiences for the following concerts:

- Classic FM supported concerts: concerts that received significant on-air and on-line support and promotion, inclusion of Classic FM in the name of the concert and significant Classic FM branding at the concert itself, including:
  - Mostly Mozart, Barbican Centre, London (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2003),
  - The Philharmonia at De Montfort Hall, Leicester (22<sup>nd</sup> October 2003),
  - The LSO at The Barbican Centre, London (13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> November 2003),
  - The RLPO at the Philharmonic Hall, Liverpool (19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> November 2003);
- Non-supported concerts: concerts that did not receive any on-air support from

Classic FM, including:

- The LSO at the Barbican Centre, London (3<sup>rd</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> December 2003),
- The RLPO at the Philharmonic Hall, Liverpool (13<sup>th</sup> March 2004),
- Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra at the Anvil, Basingstoke.

The findings across all of the supported concerts were as follows:

- A more upmarket concert audience: 34 per cent of audiences at supported concerts were social grade AB compared to 29 per cent of non-supported concerts;
- An audience that attends concerts more often: 30 per cent at Classic FM supported concerts booked multiple concerts, compared with 22 per cent of those going to non-supported concerts;
- An audience that attends other cultural events: those attending Classic FM supported concerts go to art galleries/exhibitions more frequently than non-supported concerts;
- A responsive audience: of those people who heard about a concert on the radio, 82 per cent cited Classic FM as the place where they heard it and as the motivation to go;
- A concert-going audience: just over eight out of ten concert-goers say that they listen to Classic FM.

Looking at specific audiences:

- For the Philharmonia, over 18 per cent of attendees at supported concerts are new bookers compared with 6.3 per cent for non-supported concerts and 15 per cent came because of hearing about the concert on radio and the majority of these (87 per cent) heard about it on Classic FM.
- For Mostly Mozart at the Barbican (a series designed for first time concert attenders) 38 per cent of all bookers were booking for the first time and these attenders were four times more likely to have been motivated by radio (37 per cent compared with a study average of 9 per cent), with 88 per cent of those responding to an advertisement having heard about the concert on Classic FM.
- For the RLPO, 88 per cent of those questioned had heard an RLPO feature on Classic FM and 23 per cent had booked tickets as a result.

In conclusion, Arts Council England found that Classic FM supported concerts create an audience that:

- is more upmarket,
- is more likely to attend concerts more often,
- has a higher percentage of first timers to concerts,
- already listens to Classic FM,
- is very responsive to radio advertising.