

Social Media and Classical Music?

A first analysis within the PHENICX project:
“Performances as Highly Enriched aNd Interactive Concert eXperiences”

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ABSTRACT

In the ongoing EU-FP7 project “Performances as Highly Enriched aNd Interactive Concert eXperiences”¹ (PHENICX), one aim is to make Classical music appealing to new audiences, not at least the typically younger generation of social media users. In the context of the “Social Media Retrieval and Analysis”² (SoMeRA) workshop, this paper sheds light on the use of two social media platforms (Last.fm and Twitter) by fans of Classical music.

1. MOTIVATION AND ANALYSIS

It has frequently been argued that listeners of Classical music are reluctant to use social media.³ However, to the best of our knowledge, no scientific analysis has been carried out yet to verify this claim. In the following, we thus present results of a preliminary analysis to answer the question whether fans of Classical music are more reluctant to use social media for talking about their listening habits than listeners of other genres.

To answer the question, one may be tempted to attribute an important role to age structure, as a correlation between age and degree of inclination to Classical music is evident. On the other hand, since the average age of users of many social media platforms has been increasing during the past few years, it is natural to presume a likewise increase of the presence of Classical music fans on social media. In fact, the average user of Last.fm is 38.2 years old, which is above the average of other social media platforms, according to a report from 2012 carried out on 24 popular social media platforms.⁴ Twitter’s average user is aged 37.3.

¹<http://phenicx.upf.edu/>

²<http://www.cp.jku.at/conferences/SoMeRA2014/>

³This statement has been made countless times in personal conversations between the author and other researchers, music lovers, musicians, and users of social media.

⁴<http://royal.pingdom.com/2012/08/21/report-social-network-demographics-in-2012>

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For our analysis, we look into two data sources: Last.fm and Twitter. The Last.fm listening data has been gathered in April 2014, by acquiring play counts (PC) and listener counts (LC) of the 1,000 most popular artists in each of 15 major genres. PC of an artist refers to the total number of listening events over all Last.fm users, whereas LC refers to the number of users who listened to the artist at least once. We use as second dataset PC and LC data inferred from music listening posts on Twitter, as given in the “Million Musical Tweets Dataset”⁵ (MMTD) [1].

Analyzing the two datasets, we learn that only 1.8% of *all* PC and LC on Last.fm relate to Classical music and only 0.3% of all PC and LC do so in MMTD. Compared to the *average* PC and LC of other major genres, listening events to Classical artists are almost 25 (based on PC) and 21 (based on LC) times less frequent (4.1% PC / 4.8% LC) in Twitter data, but only 4 (PC) and 3 (LC) times less frequent in Last.fm data (26.2% PC / 31.3% LC). We thus conclude that **listeners of Classical music are less active on social media than fans of other genres.**

To assess whether Classical aficionados are in general less active in social media, we relate these results to the 1999-2008 listening trends report of the Recording Industry Association of America⁶, which shows a share of Classical music between 1.9% and 3.5% on total music purchases.⁷ Comparing these figures to the corresponding 1.8% and 0.3% for Last.fm and Twitter, respectively, we conclude that **listeners of Classical music in the general population are less active on Twitter and Last.fm.**

2. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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3. REFERENCES

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⁵<http://www.cp.jku.at/datasets/MMTD>

⁶http://www.riaa.com/keystatistics.php?content_selector=consumertrends

⁷We are aware that the RIAA data only covers the USA, but given that the Last.fm community has a bias towards users from the US and that the Classical music share of Twitter users are even much lower, we are sure that the RIAA data does not underestimate the global share of Classical music in comparison to the social media data.