

# Today's Young Musicians

## **Their Environment, Their Challenges, and Remedies**

As more young musicians than ever attend music conservatories, dreaming of lives in music, the classical music industry that will potentially support their careers struggles with challenges of many kinds, from cultural to financial.

Musicians now in their mid-twenties, at the threshold of their careers, have watched the demise of the classical recording industry, the dissolution of symphony orchestras and other classical presenting organizations, the closure of artist managements, and the rapid decline of classical music exposure in the media.

Many young musicians today realize that the burden of career creation is on their shoulders. They tackle this life-sustaining task with widely varying degrees of expertise and success. Those who have engineered sustainable careers are among the few, and are viewed with admiration by the industry. And, most excitingly, they have begun to re-form that industry in meaningful ways that offer hope for the survival of the art form.

### **A Return to the Art**

All young musicians who hope that the world will support them need to understand and embrace their art form's core values.

They have grown up during a time during which a great number of ultimately meaningless gimmicks for classical music promotion have actually done the industry more harm than good, relegating many deservingly gifted but misguided performers to their own small, undistinguished niches, and having disenfranchised audiences who have felt deceived.

The blame for this sad chapter of classical music's history rests in all areas. Managers desperate for dates for their artists have sold them on the basis of their photos or other extra-musical assets; recording companies lost focus on repertoire and responsible artist development; musicians (often with their teachers' encouragement) have relied on distracting stage histrionics to "connect" to an audience, doing a disservice to the music; presenters and promoters of classical music have weakened their constituencies by broadening their series offerings, hoping that other genres of music such as crossover, world and jazz will bring in new listeners for classical, which they have not.

In order to begin the long road to resurrecting an honest identity for classical music, musicians (who have become practically synonymous with the industry itself) must understand, advocate and utilize the essence of the art form. They must figure out how not only to sell themselves, but the music they are playing, for what it really is.

### **Guidance, Inspiration and Leadership**

We believe that today, to have genuine success in classical music, one has to become a compelling educator. Not necessarily in the classroom model, but in every interaction with audiences, presenters, and with industry entities with whom artists work such as managements, press and media.

This is because the new generation of industry administrators is largely untrained in the art form. Many or most of them, now in their 30's and 40's, have not studied an instrument. They are not, nor were born to, immigrants from Europe for whom classical music was an essential part of their community. They did not sit transfixed in front of televisions watching the New York Philharmonic Young People's Concerts.

In order for these well-meaning administrators to run their organizations with vision and vitality, they need inspiration and relevant, meaningful information. They need the enthusiastic partnership and understanding of the performers themselves. They need to absorb, understand, and transmit to their audiences genuine excitement about what their music really is.

In order to be able to assist in the promotion of classical music, and to further their own careers, young musicians need not only the highest performance skills and musical knowledge, but also must possess the passion and technique to propel their product from the practice room straight through the industry, all the way to listeners themselves.

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