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” (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” (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. 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 average of other social media platforms has been increasing during the past few years, and therefore that the younger generation of social media users is less active on social media than fans of other genres.

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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” (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 America [6], which shows a share of Classical music between 1.9% and 3.5% on total music purchases. 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
This research is supported by the European Union FP7 / 2007-2013 program through the PHENICX project (no. 601166) and by the Austrian Science Funds (FWF): P25655.

3. REFERENCES

http://phenicx.upf.edu/
http://www.cp.jku.at/conferences/SoMeRA2014/

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