

A joint project of the RSA
and the ABO Trust in
association with the
Esmée Fairbairn
Charitable Trust

NOTES ON NOTES

**Research findings on good
practice in the production
of concert programmes**

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The report was researched and written by Sue Harries and Phyllida Shaw, with assistance from Rosalind Butcher.

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1. INTRODUCTION

'Sometimes the music industry forgets that, to those of us on the outside, music is glamorous and the source of celebration and escapism. This is often reflected in the music making, but not always in the programmes.' Concert-goer

Concert-goers in the UK spend tens of thousands of pounds a year on printed programmes. They do so to find out more about the music they are about to hear, the composer who wrote it and the musicians who will play and conduct it. This study was instigated by the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA) and the Association of British Orchestras Trust (ABO Trust), to find out whether the printed programmes produced by orchestras, venues and promoters in the UK could be more effective at engaging and informing audiences.

Funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Charitable Trust and the ABO Trust, the research was in four parts. The first was a survey of ABO members. The aim of this was to establish how orchestras produce their printed programmes. Who writes the text? How much do the programmes cost? How many are bought? And how many orchestras have asked their audiences what they think of the programmes they so regularly buy?

The second part of the research was an exercise conducted at The Bridgewater Hall in Manchester, by Sue Vanden, Director of Sales and Marketing and Phil Thomas, Education Consultant. A small, but representative, group of audience members was invited to debate the strengths and weaknesses of different types of printed programme. In response to their comments, a brief was drawn up for a writer of programme notes and new text was produced for a concert which the group attended and later commented upon.

The third part of the research was a survey by the South Bank Centre (SBC) in London of audiences for seven different types of concert. They were asked to respond to the programme they had bought that night and to offer their views on concert programmes in general.

The fourth part of the research comprised a series of audience surveys, based on the SBC questionnaire, conducted by five ABO member orchestras: the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the London Symphony Orchestra, the City of London Sinfonia, the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

In addition to this research, the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Scottish Opera and the BBC Philharmonic kindly provided the results of their own recent surveys of audience responses to their printed programmes.

The research was overseen by a steering group which included the funders of the study, and representatives of venues and orchestras. The group benefited greatly from the advice of Peter Verwey, former Marketing and Market Research Manager at the Arts Council of England.

The findings presented in this report draw on the experience and opinions of 733 concert-goers, 30 orchestras, three opera companies, two venues, the BBC Proms and the Young Persons Concert Foundation. This sample has provided a strong basis for our conclusions about the current health of the concert programme, which prompt a number of questions. What are printed programmes for? Who are programmes for? What should they contain? What sort of language should they use? How should they be designed? What should they cost?

The printed programme looks likely to remain a feature of orchestral concerts for the foreseeable future. The question is, in what form? The RSA and the ABO Trust are confident that this research will stimulate further debate about what makes a good printed programme and hope that those readers with influence over the shape, style and content of programmes may find it a useful tool.



2. THE BOOK OF WORDS

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the printed programme for a concert or play was commonly referred to as 'the book of words'. Typically it contained a list of actors or musicians, the words of any songs, and advertisements. Two hundred years after the appearance of the first book of words, the essence of the printed programme - a mixture of information and advertising - remains the same.

Programmes are seen to have three main functions: they inform the audience about the music to be played, the composer, the conductor and the players; they are a marketing tool for the orchestra; and they are a vehicle for sponsors and advertisers. What is now interesting some orchestral managements is the extent to which the programme is a traditional accompaniment to concert-going and the extent to which it is becoming part of the orchestra's mission to engage audiences in the music and encourage a desire to know more.

Britain's first purpose-built concert hall opened in 1678 near Charing Cross, in London. By the early eighteenth century, concerts were becoming an increasingly popular form of entertainment, prompted in part by the activities of G. F. Handel as composer and performer, and were taking place in an eclectic group of venues, from taverns to 'picture galleries'. By the mid-eighteenth century, music societies were a common feature of city life and the idea of the subscription concert series had arrived. The demand for programme notes to inform audiences about the music and the musicians had started to grow.

Today's printed concert programme is descended from the oversized playbills which, as well as being pasted on to walls, were carried around by audiences, for reference. Grove's *Dictionary of Music and Musicians* makes reference to the early 'wordbooks' produced in Germany in the late eighteenth century for audiences listening to new oratorios and there is early evidence, too, of notes for George Smart's 'Amateur Concerts' in London, in 1821. By the mid-1800s, playbills were becoming too unwieldy and the Olympic Theatre produced the first known smaller version for a professional theatre performance. The idea was quickly imitated and by the 1870s, printed programmes for theatre, opera and concerts were the norm. At first they cost nothing, but by the turn of the century audiences were prepared to pay.

The size, shape and style of the early programmes varied and concert halls and theatres experimented with different types of paper and methods of folding. Rimmel, the perfume manufacturer, was one of the first commercial firms to see the advertising potential of programmes and in the late 1800s, was contracted to supply scented paper to make the programme an even more exotic object. Within ten years, most concert halls had developed their own particular style, offering two types of programme: card for audiences in the circle and stalls and cheaper paper for those in the pit and gallery.

A glance at four programmes for concerts at the Royal Albert Hall in 1897, 1908, 1915 and 1929 confirms how little the late 20th-century programme has changed in content. The developments have been in size and style.

4th December 1897

Messrs Harrison's Grand Morning Concert

This programme contains information on the soloists, the 'programme of events' and lyrics for two of the ballads featured in the concert. There are no pictures and no cover price is indicated.

7th November 1908

Grand Melba Concert

This programme includes the 'programme of events', photographs of the conductor and soloists and one advertisement. There is colour on some of the pages. Cover price, one shilling.

6th February 1915

Scenes for the Song of Hiawatha

This programme contains the 'programme of events', a list of future concerts, a list of players, the lyrics to the songs, general advertising and music-specific advertising. Cover price, sixpence.



10 - 22 June 1929

Hiawatha

This programme has a colour cover, photographs of HM King George V and of key members of the Royal Choral Society and cast, a synopsis of the plot, lyrics, a list of players and extensive advertising. No cover price is indicated.

The programme on sale at the Royal Albert Hall on 8 August 1998, one hundred and one years after Messrs Harrison's Grand Morning Concert, had much in common with its predecessors and one large difference - the volume of advertising.

8 August 1998

BBC Proms 98, National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain

Colour front cover. Programme notes, composers' biographies, photographs and illustrations, further listening and reading, a timetable for Proms broadcasts that week, a list of players and a competition. 46 pages of advertisements. Cover price, £2.

There is no market research available to tell us what audiences in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century expected of their printed concert programmes, or whether they found them good value for money. What is clear is that they were as important then, as a source of information about the music and musicians, as they are today.

At the turn of the twentieth century, orchestras, venues and promoters have infinitely more sophisticated means at their disposal to produce printed programmes that inform and entertain. Some of them have recognised the potential of the printed programme to excite new interest in orchestral music, to provide experienced concert-goers with better information and to encourage new audiences to come back for more.

3. THE ABO SURVEY

A survey of members of the ABO produced information from 30 orchestras, three opera companies, two venues, the Young Persons Concert Foundation and the BBC Promenade Concerts - a total sample of 37. The tables that feature in this section of the report are based on the comparable data provided by the 30 orchestras. The text draws on information provided by all 37 respondents.

Most, though not all, orchestras operate a mixed economy of concerts in which they are either booked to perform by a promoter or venue (referred to in this study as 'engagements') or they organise the concerts themselves (referred to as 'own promotions'). Of the 30 orchestras represented in this survey, 53% say their audiences have access to a printed programme for every concert they give, whether it is an engagement or an own promotion. Programmes are available at most of the concerts given by all other respondents.



3.1. Price

Just under two thirds of respondents (63%) always charge for their programmes and most of the others usually do. Only two of the 30 orchestras give programmes away. The price of programmes ranges from less than a pound to more than two. Table 1 below shows that the most common price range for a concert programme is between £1.31 and £1.75, followed by the lower bracket, £1.01 to £1.30.

Some orchestras showed that they charge different prices according to the venue. The City of London Sinfonia, for example, charges between £1.01 and £1.30 for programmes for its concerts in Ipswich and King's Lynn and between £1.60 and £2 for its concerts at the Barbican Centre in London. Where an orchestra has offered two price ranges, both have been included in our calculations. It is worth noting that all but one of the orchestras charging less than £1.31 for a programme are based outside London. The one London orchestra charging this amount is a chamber orchestra.

TABLE 1 THE PRICE OF A PROGRAMME

Price range	% of orchestras with programmes in this range
Free	7% (2 orchestras)
£1 or less	10% (3 orchestras)
£1.01 - £1.30	25% (6 orchestras)
£1.31 - £1.75	47% (13 orchestras)
£1.76 - £2.00	17% (5 orchestras)
£2.00 +	3% (1 orchestra)

Source: Survey of 30 ABO member orchestras, June 1998

For one fifth of these orchestras, the cost of programmes for engagements and own promotions is the same; in 10% of cases, programmes for engagements cost more and in just 7% of cases they cost less. For the majority though (57%), the price of the programme varies according to the venue, the content of the concert and the arrangements made with the promoter.

To compare the cost of programmes relative to the cost of a concert ticket, we asked ABO members to state their lowest and highest ticket prices. The highest ticket price for concerts covers a very wide range, from £9 to £32, with a typical top price of £22.50. The most common cost of a programme is £1.50. This means that for the customer paying the top price, the purchase of a programme adds less than 7% to the total cost of attending the concert.

For the customer paying the typical lowest ticket price, of £6, it is a different story. The cost of a programme, at £1.50, increases their outlay by 25%. This raises interesting questions for orchestras about the pros and cons of including a programme in the price of the ticket. This is common practice in the United States. The arguments in favour are that every concert-goer would have the opportunity to learn more about the music, the composers and the musicians and might go away with a positive impression of the orchestra as a generous organisation. The main argument against is that the ticket price would have to be increased to cover the cost of the programme or that in order to keep down the cost of designing and printing the programme, a lot of the basic information would have to be repeated.

As noted later in this report, cost is a major deterrent to buying a programme. This suggests that any increase in the lower ticket prices to incorporate the cost of a programme would not be a popular move.

3.2. Sales

The number of programmes sold each year by the 30 orchestras varies according to the number of performances given. The figures given ranged from a low of 400 per year to a high of 120,000. Just over a third of this sample sells fewer than 12,000 programmes per year, but the median number of sales is 20,000.

For those selling programmes at £1.50, 20,000 sales equate to a gross income of £30,000 per year. However, every orchestra questioned about this was quick to point out the cost of producing programmes and the fact that programmes rarely make a significant profit. The reasons for this include the high cost of short print runs (a different programme for every concert); the cost of photographic reproduction rights; the colour printing which, it is assumed, audiences and artists' agents expect; and, in the case of larger orchestras, the cost of editorial and programme production staff.

The LSO noted that for programmes with a text or libretto it expects to sell a programme to one in two members of the audience, while for a programme without text or libretto, that figure drops to one in three. The Bournemouth Orchestras raised the indoors/outdoors factor. For concerts indoors it expects to sell programmes to one in three members of the audience; for concerts outdoors, that figure drops to one in five.

Table 2 below shows that 14 orchestras (47%) estimate that between 36% and 50% of their audience buy a programme. Nine orchestras (30%) thought that between 21% and 35% of their audience buy a programme. Six orchestras (20%) reported that more than 50% of their audience buy a programme. Given that fewer than ten percent of audiences attend concerts alone, 50% attend in pairs and 40% in groups of three or more, these figures suggest a very high level of penetration. If 200 people buy a programme and half of them are buying one to share, the programme will have the potential to be read by 300 people.

TABLE 2 THE PERCENTAGE OF THE AUDIENCE BUYING PROGRAMMES

% of audience buying programme	No. of orchestras in this range
Don't know	1 orchestra
21% - 35%	9 orchestras
36% - 50%	14 orchestras
50% +	6 orchestras

Source: Survey of 30 ABO member orchestras, June 1998

3.3. Content

'I do like a good programme note and feel it is what I am paying my money for.' Concert-goer

Most programmes include information about the music, the conductor and soloists and the orchestra. Many also provide information about the orchestra's history, its current activities and details of how to support the orchestra, e.g. through a Friends organisation. There may also be information about forthcoming concerts or a list of recordings featuring the orchestra or soloists.

Orchestras were asked to describe how their programmes are written. It is clear from their responses that most programmes are a patchwork of material, some contemporary, some historic, some commissioned, some pulled from the archives.

In the case of 70% of these respondents, notes about the music are written by a freelance writer, critic or academic. In the remaining 30% of cases they are written by the marketing director, the conductor, the musical director, the librarian, the composer of the piece, the composer in association or the education manager. Notes about the soloists are most commonly written by the soloist's agent (over 75%), the marketing or press officer (20%), or occasionally by the musical or artistic director, the librarian or the education manager.

Notes about the orchestra are normally written by the marketing or press officer (68%). Otherwise they are written by the director or general manager of the orchestra, by the musical director, librarian or archivist, education manager or, in one instance, by a publications director. Very few orchestras have a publications director or equivalent and in most cases, responsibility for editing lies with either the marketing manager or managing director, depending upon the size of the orchestra's administration.

'I would like to have been told why these particular works were chosen to complement each other.' Concert-goer

3.4. Briefing the programme writers

'Let x do all the programme notes. Unlike others, he does not set out to patronise patrons by showing how clever he is on musicological matters.' Concert-goer

Just over 60% of respondents say they provide the authors of their programmes with a brief. These briefs have a number of common themes:

- that the writer should not assume an informed knowledge of music on the part of the reader.
- that technical language should be kept to a minimum.
- that the notes should not be too analytical.
- that the programme should include the historical context of the music.
- that the writing style should be informative and entertaining.

Some briefs ask writers to produce their material to a particular structure, for example, to start with a piece about the composer; to follow this with a longer section about the work; and finish with a short paragraph on the historical context. In the case of one orchestra, programmes for concerts featuring the work of less well-known composers will give more space to telling the audience about the composer, while in programmes where the composers are well-known, most space will be given to the music.

Two thirds of the orchestras say they aim to produce a different style of programme note according to the programme being played. Just under half say they aim to tailor the programme notes to the venue in which they are playing and the audience they are likely to attract. In practice it is often difficult to spot the difference between programmes and given the lack of control that orchestras have over the programmes produced by venues or promoters for engagements, this kind of adjustment is not always possible.

The use of different writers for different sections of the programme, without the intervention of an editor, helps to explain why programmes are often disjointed in style, with some articles in the language of decades ago and some in a more contemporary style. Photographs may have been chosen from the library or commissioned. The overall impression may be smooth and coherent, a rag bag, or something in between. For audiences attending a large number of concerts by different orchestras, the purchase of a programme remains a goodwill gamble.

During the course of this research, Margaret Levin, the Marketing Director of the Corn Exchange in Cambridge, provided some useful advice on the style and content of orchestras' printed programmes. They should, she suggested, be accessible, informative and unthreatening. Too often, she thought, programme notes are written in an 'erudite and inaccessible style which might impress other programme note writers, but does nothing to inform the less knowledgeable members of the audience'. Programme notes, she suggested, 'should aim to:

- give informative background to the pieces.
- include relevant biographical information about the composer and put the piece into an historical/musical context.
- enable the listeners to orientate themselves within pieces (e.g. describing/listing movement divisions or giving other clear landmarks).
- give a flavour of the character of the piece/movements, not a laboured analysis.
- describe key features that can be easily identified.

'The writing style should use:

- clear language: simple sentences, understandable vocabulary, sharp, engaging style.
- interesting and amusing quotes - contemporaneous or later.
- enthusiasm.

'The writers should avoid:

- verbose, high style.
- less common musical terms used freely without any explanation, e.g. sonata form, *ostinato*, *portamento*; give an explanation/footnote/definition box, if appropriate.
- making assumptions about musical knowledge, e.g. by referring to similarities with other pieces (a form of musical name dropping or one-upmanship).
- detailed analysis of movements, in terms of entries, key changes, etc. which turn programme notes into a musical orienteering course.'

Other respondents have suggested that where there is a rationale to works presented in a programme, it should be explained. The fact is that many programmes have no such artistic rationale; they are driven by other imperatives and the relationship between pieces cannot be explained in artistic terms.

Less than one third of the orchestras taking part in this survey have recently asked their audiences about their responses to printed concert programmes. This may be a sign of the relatively low priority given to the development of the programme or it may be an indication that the orchestras feel that programmes are doing the job they are intended to do. The summaries of research provided by the orchestras echo the findings of the audience research described in the next section of this report.

4. THE VIEW FROM THE AUDIENCE

'Most programmes could bore the toenails off a tortoise. Programmes need to be creatively edited, not just thrown together.' Concert-goer

A primary aim of this study was to establish the audience's opinion of the programmes they buy. Do programmes contain what audiences want? Is there anything printed programmes provide which audiences do not want? Is there anything they do want which they are not currently getting?



Audience opinion was examined in three ways:

- i. The Bridgewater Hall, in Manchester, was commissioned to run a series of focus groups with audience members. They would study examples of text written about music for programmes and make recommendations about what worked and what did not, with a view to producing a brief for an exemplary programme.
- ii. The SBC, in London, was commissioned to survey audience responses to programmes for concerts of different types and to ask those audience members for their views about programmes in general.
- iii. ABO members were invited to conduct their own audience surveys (using a questionnaire based on the SBC questionnaire) and to send the raw data to the researchers for analysis.

This three-part exercise, involving 733 members of the public, has produced a remarkably consistent picture of the strengths and weaknesses of concert programmes and of audiences' interests and needs. In some cases the individual samples that make up this number are too small to be statistically useful (i.e. fewer than 50 people) but in aggregating the responses to questions related to programmes in general (rather than to the programme for a specific concert) every questionnaire returned has been taken into account.

'The dark, strawberry shading, made the programme impossible to read in the semi-dark.'
Concert-goer

4.1. The Bridgewater Hall research

The Bridgewater Hall, in Manchester, was chosen to take part in this study for three reasons: it was a new venue; it would provide an interesting contrast with the SBC, and it was known that the then Chief Executive, Victoria Gregory, the Director of Sales and Marketing, Sue Vanden and the Education Consultant, Phil Thomas, who is sometimes commissioned to write programme notes, had strong views on the importance of accessible printed programmes.

It was agreed that The Bridgewater Hall would work with a group of up to 20 people with different degrees of experience of concert programmes. They would be subscribers, regular attenders at individual concerts, students and non-attenders or first-time attenders. The focus groups would be selected (with the exception of the non-attenders) from the ticket sales records.

At the first meeting, the 12 participants would discuss in detail what they would and would not like to see in a programme. The discussion would be prompted by discussion of programmes produced by the Hallé, the London Symphony Orchestra, the BBC Philharmonic and by The Bridgewater Hall for their International Orchestras Series. Participants would also be given different versions of a note on Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 5 in E minor and asked to comment. Their suggestions would be used as a brief to Phil Thomas to write about the works to be performed by the Moscow Radio Symphony Orchestra on 3rd March 1998. The focus group would then report back on what they thought of the specially-written programme.

4.1.1. An assessment of programmes

The first focus group meeting gave the following advice to writers of concert programmes.

Notes on the music

- A description of the music (the 'notes') should appear first in the programme.
- Notes should never be patronising or assume great musical knowledge.
- Each movement should be given a separate paragraph, with musical and instrumental 'signposts' to take the readers through the work chronologically and help them listen rather than analyse. A bar by bar account is too much.
- Bear in mind that the use of quotes from the music (i.e. on a staff) are useful only to those who can read music.
- Technical language should be avoided.
- The approximate running times for each item should be included.
- Notes should reveal the composer's state of mind when writing the piece (quotes are good, but there should not be too many) and be long enough to include salient points about the composer's age and background - especially for new works.
- The history of the work is interesting, including when and where it was composed and first performed and by whom.
- Contemporary works need a note from the composer.
- Point out the challenge of the music for the musicians.
- Information about works of a similar type, or with some kind of link to the evening's programme would be useful.
- If possible, the same author should be commissioned to write the notes for a whole series of concerts.
- The focus group suggested that orchestras and venues might consider producing a single sheet of information about the works to be played, which would be sent out in advance with the tickets.

Biographies and notes about personnel

- The space given to biographies should not exceed the space given to the notes about the music.
- Biographies should be concise and up to date. The details of busy conductors and soloists can become out of date very quickly.
- Biographies should include details of recent recordings and future plans of soloists and conductors.
- The history of the orchestra and its conductors is interesting, but should not be repeated for every programme in a series by the same orchestra.
- Provide information about how musicians began their careers. Think about including details of non-musical interests. A chatty style is preferable to a dull historical record.
- An orchestra personnel list is essential, but this should be no more than a page long. Regular attenders like to note changes in personnel.
- If players leave an orchestra, it would be interesting to know where they are going.
- A discography is especially useful for contemporary composers, and helps the reader/listener find out more. Long lists of commissions are not interesting.

Other content

- The date and time of the performance.
- An anti-clapping/coughing note, carefully phrased.
- Interesting facts, such as information about different and unusual instruments in the orchestra.
- Information about the venue would be useful for newcomers.
- Information about pre-concert talks and forthcoming concerts, including booking details.
- Information about local restaurants and bars.

Advice to programme designers

- Programmes should add to the sense of occasion.
- If the programme looks easy to read, it welcomes the reader and heightens the anticipation.
- The longer pieces of writing should be laid out across a double page, to prevent the noise of turning pages.
- Print must be readable even in poor light. A clear and reasonably large font is important for older people.

- All text should be black print on white and unfussy. Avoid laying print over photographs, distracting backgrounds and logos.
- The programme should not be too big or awkward. It should sit easily on the lap during the performance. The programme should stay open easily. A5 or slightly larger is ideal, but not square.
- Some participants in the focus group said they disliked too much white space.
- A gap between programme notes and biographies might help the reader to take in the information.
- Covers should not be garish or too 'busy'.
- The cover should be relevant to the experience.
- Illustrations help to break up the text.
- Do not use out of date photographs of conductors and soloists.
- Photographs of the composer are interesting, but not essential.
- Photographs of the musicians are more interesting.

Advertisements

- These are 'a necessary evil', so acceptable if they keep price down, but they should be kept to a minimum and be as unobtrusive as possible.
- Information from or about sponsors and benefactors can be very intrusive and uninteresting. Keep it to a minimum and at the back of the programme.
- Advertisements repeated in programme after programme are an irritant to regular attenders.
- All advertisements should be placed at the back of the programme.
- Ensure that advertisements are not promoting an event that has already taken place.
- A programme shown to the focus group without advertisements was liked but was said to feel less substantial than the others. The interesting point is that it contained the same amount of information about the concert as the programmes with advertisements.

4.1.2. Responses to the new programme

The group was pleased with the notes about the music written by Phil Thomas for the Moscow Radio Symphony Orchestra concert on 3rd March. (Samples of these notes are included, in the appendix.) They felt that they struck the right balance between being technical and informative. They argued that Phil Thomas should have produced not only the programme notes but all the text in the programme, to give it a more coherent style. They asked for signposts through the works, in bold text or highlighted in some other way, e.g. 'Now you will hear a theme from the clarinet... the mood changes abruptly...' This group found the note about the piano interesting and wanted to know more. They also wanted more information about the early instruments used by some of the players.

They found the style of the biographies informative and interesting and preferred them to 'endless lists of players' achievements'. They did not mind about the absence of pictures of the composers (Britten, Shostakovich, Rachmaninov and Borodin) and noted that if the composer was old or dead, they did not need a picture. They welcomed the information about the running times of each piece.

They liked the introduction to the programme by Sue Vanden, which they described as being like a 'mini newsletter' and asked for this to be repeated. They would appreciate guidance to other works. 'If you enjoyed tonight's concert, you might also be interested in...' They would like information about broadcasts by the soloists and conductor featured in the concert, including dates and times on Classic FM and Radio 3. They would like a discography and recommendations of particular recordings.

The group disliked the purple colour of the print and the purple tint of the photographs and cover. They thought the typeface was too small. They wanted all the advertisements and information about sponsors confined to the back of the programme.

4.2. The SBC research

The SBC research comprised a survey of audiences at seven concerts in May 1998. The survey form was designed by Chris Denton, SBC's Head of Marketing and Peter Verwey, former Marketing and Market Research Manager at the Arts Council of England.

Questionnaires were slipped into the programmes of audiences at seven concerts. In total, 286 audience members completed a questionnaire. For three of the seven concerts, the sample sizes were large enough to produce what could be considered to be representative results and these were analysed individually. The concerts were as follows:

The BBC Symphony Orchestra

Brahms Piano Concerto No.1 (soloist Stephen Kovacevich); Liszt *Hamlet*; Kodály *Psalmus Hungaricus* (Julian Gavin and the BBC Symphony Chorus). Conductor Jiří Bělohlávek. Cost of programme £2. Sample size 83

The Philharmonia Orchestra

Clocks & Clouds Part II. The Music of György Ligeti. Debussy *Iberia (Images II)*; Ligeti Piano Concerto (soloist Roland Pontinen); Ravel *Shéhérazade*; Ligeti *Melodien*; Ravel *La Valse*. Conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen. Cost of programme £3. Sample size 78

Daniel Barenboim with the Staatskapelle Berlin

Celebrating Beethoven. Beethoven Symphony No.8 in F; Piano Concerto No.2 in B flat; Symphony No.6 in F. Cost of programme £4. Sample size 56

The smaller groups of respondents were attending concerts by the London Mozart Players, the Philharmonia, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and the London Sinfonietta.

This section reports on the views of the 286 respondents and looks at their programme-buying habits.

4.2.1. To buy, or not to buy?

The typical number of concerts attended by the respondents to the SBC survey is between 11 and 20 per year. These are regular concert-goers with considerable experience of buying and reading printed programmes. Of the 286 respondents attending the seven concerts, 67% always buy a programme and 73% keep their programmes as souvenirs. These are dedicated programme buyers in a good position to judge the strengths and weaknesses of the product they so regularly buy.

Table 3 below lists, in order of importance, the reasons why 33% of this SBC sample do not always buy a programme. Some respondents gave more than one reason, which is why the percentage total does not equal 100%. Cost is the major deterrent, cited by almost two thirds (65%) of respondents. For 31%, the main purpose of the programme is to learn about the repertoire and since they already know it, they do not see the need to buy a programme. For 19% of these respondents, the information in the programme is thought to be inadequate.

The dislike of advertisements (reported upon below) could also be interpreted to mean, 'too many advertisements in relation to the information provided about the music, the composers and the players'. The dislike of advertisements may, for some, be a dislike of the balance between advertisements and 'hard information' rather than a dislike of advertisements *per se*.

TABLE 3 REASONS FOR NOT BUYING A PROGRAMME

Reason for not buying a programme	% indicating this reason
Too expensive	65%
Already know the repertoire	31%
Information is inadequate	19%
Too many advertisements	17%

Source: SBC audience survey, May 1998. Sample: 94 respondents who do not always buy a programme

One reason suggested by the questionnaire for not buying a programme was that the language of the programme was too technical, but almost no one chose this option. It seems to be the

case that where the decision not to buy a programme is related to its content, rather than its price, it is because the content adds little to the reader's store of knowledge, not because the content is too challenging.

Just over half of all SBC respondents said that they would welcome the chance to choose between programme notes of different levels of detail. The larger number of those responding positively to this suggestion were those who regard themselves as frequent concert-goers with an informed knowledge of classical music. This response may reflect a demand, on the part of some audience members, for a programme which offers more detailed information about the music, the composers and the musicians, and may be a reaction to orchestras' attempts to provide programmes that are accessible to all.

4.2.2. A reasonable price to pay

All of the 286 SBC respondents supplied information about what they thought would be a reasonable price to pay for a programme. The results are given in Table 4 below. This shows that the largest group (34%), thought a reasonable price for a programme was between £1.50 and £1.99.

The next largest group (27%) opted for £2.00 - £2.49, followed by 17% for £2.50 or more; 15% chose a price between £1 and £1.49 and only 7% opted for less than £1. (It is worth noting here that the survey undertaken by ABO member orchestras of their audiences, representing a larger sample of 477, found that a small majority thought a reasonable price for a printed programme was £1 or less.)

TABLE 4 THE SBC AUDIENCE VIEW OF A 'REASONABLE PRICE' FOR A PROGRAMME

Price range	% prepared to pay this price
Less than £1	7%
£1 - £1.49	15%
£1.50 - £1.99	34%
£2 - £2.49	27%
£2.50 or more	17%

Source: SBC audience survey, May 1998. Sample: 286

Programmes for series

Almost 60% of this SBC sample would be prepared to pay more for a programme which included all the concerts in a series, or festival. The motivation for buying such a programme seems to be that in the long run it would be a cheaper way to acquire the information. Once again, there is a contrast between the SBC audience and the audiences sampled in a range of venues. The larger number of audience members sampled by ABO member orchestras cited the inclusion of details for more than one concert in a programme as one of their dislikes. Just under half of the SBC respondents (47%) thought that a programme containing details of more than one event would encourage them to buy tickets for other concerts, for which they had not already booked or which they did not already plan to attend.

Free programme sheets

Just over one third of the SBC sample (34%) would prefer to have free programme sheets with limited information on the orchestra and soloists, rather than a programme containing more detailed information for which they would have to pay. It is reasonable to assume that a large proportion of this group comprises the 21% of the sample who cited cost as their main reason for not buying a programme. The figure of 67% of the sample who always buy a programme is very close to the 61% who would not prefer free programme sheets. An American participant in the survey could not understand why programmes are not included in the ticket price in the UK, as they are in the United States.

4.2.3. Content

Audiences were asked to indicate the relative importance of different types of programme content. They were offered a list of possible elements of a programme and asked to grade them as very important, quite important or not important.

Programme notes on the works being performed were considered by far the most important element of any programme in this SBC sample. As Table 5 shows, 92% said they were very important or quite important. Next came biographies of composers, which were said to be very important or quite important by 87%. (The table shows all those elements of the programme thought to be very important or quite important by more than 50% of the sample.)

TABLE 5 THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF PROGRAMME CONTENT

Content	% very important or quite important
Programme notes	92%
Biographies of composers	87%
Details of players	84%
Artists' biographies	83%
Forthcoming concert details	75%
Photographs of artists/conductors	73%
Details of pre-concert talks	70%
Details of recordings	63%
How to support the orchestra	60%
Life behind the scenes	57%
Players' anecdotes	51%

Source: SBC audience survey, May 1998. Sample: 286

The highest scoring items in the 'not important' column were advertisements, which are considered unimportant by 80%. Information on sponsors is unimportant to 67% of SBC concert-goers.

Although audiences say that advertisements are not important, a small number of respondents qualified this statement by saying that they recognised why advertising was necessary as a source of income for the orchestra. It was not made clear whether they thought the advertisements paid for the programme or provided additional income for the orchestra's general funds.

4.2.4. Likes and dislikes

'Although the notes were excellent, I miss a sense of passion for the music. I am none the wiser as to why Ligeti wants to compose or why the performers choose to play his music.'

Concert-goer

It is instructive to look, in a little more detail, at readers' responses to particular programmes. The comments that follow are based on the comments of the smaller SBC sample (the 217 attenders of the three concerts by the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the Philharmonia and Barenboim with the Staatskapelle Berlin). Respondents were asked to list up to three things they liked and disliked about the printed programme they had bought that evening. Their responses are given below, paraphrased and grouped in order of importance. Each short section begins with a physical description of the programme.

BBC Symphony Orchestra

Programme: 32 pages, three quarters the size of A4, landscape format, stapled. Paper, colour cover. 9 pages of advertisements. 2-page article about the orchestra. 6 pages of notes about the music. 3 pages of composers' biographies. 3 pages of words for the *Psalmus Hungaricus*. 3 pages of artists' biographies. 2 pages of players' list.

Elements of programme most liked by the audience

Having the words of the piece by Kodály

The programme notes, composers' biographies and soloists' biographies

The list of players

The soloists' future engagements

The programme was thought to be well written, concise and to contain a good balance of information. The fact that it was 'not too glossy' was said to be a definite plus.

Dislikes

On the negative side, the programme was thought to have too many advertisements and the quality of the photographs was poor. Audiences did not like the fact that the players' list and the biographies of soloists were at the back of the programme.

They asked for more information about the composers, more about the performance history of the orchestra, more information about recordings and forthcoming performances. Although the concert was being recorded, no date for the broadcast was given. On the question of style, negative comments were made about 'the large and heavy format', the small size of the print, the lack of a date on the cover, the use of quotes out of context and the anecdotal style of some of the writing.

The Philharmonia Orchestra

Programme: 32 pages, three quarters size of A4, black and white, stapled. Light card cover. 3.5 pages of advertisements relating to the concert or the artists (e.g. conductor's recordings). 1 page of information from sponsors. 1 page of corporate members' names. 1 page on the music of Ligeti. 10 pages of programme notes, including 3 of words. 3.5 pages of composers' biographies. 3 pages of artists' biographies. 1 page listing of players. 1 page about the orchestra. 1 page of forthcoming concerts.

Elements of programme most liked by the audience

The notes on the works being performed, the inclusion of an introduction to the series, the words to the song cycle (translation), the composers' and soloists' biographies, the list of players, the separation of the advertisements from the rest of the programme and (cited by more than one respondent) 'the comparative lack of advertising'. The design received positive comment for the fact that it was 'not glossy', it allowed for one page per work performed and the writing style was clear.

Dislikes

The dislikes of this audience included the volume of advertising and details of sponsors, the volume of information about other concerts in the series, a lack of rationale for the programme, a lack of information about Ligeti, the incomplete discography, the quality of photographs, the lack of information about the duration of pieces and the finishing time of the concert.

Negative comments on style included the size of the programme, the small size of the typeface and the dull cover design. At £3, the programme was also thought by several respondents to be too expensive. It is clear from the likes and dislikes of this Philharmonia audience that for one person the information about a series of concerts is a positive point, while for another it is a negative point. Some felt there were not enough photographs, while others thought there were too many. For some respondents, the detailed information about the orchestra was welcomed, for others it was unnecessary.

Barenboim and the Staatskapelle Berlin

Programme: 40-page A4 programme, mono, with a 4-page, colour feature on 'the new Berlin'. 2-page feature on the two sponsors of this six-concert series. 2 pages on Barenboim; 2 on the Staatskapelle Berlin. 2 pages listing players and 3 pages on Beethoven. 1 page of programme notes for each of the 6 concerts in this series. 2 pages of soloists' biographies. 2 pages on the London Symphony Chorus. 8 full-page advertisements plus the 4-page supplement on Berlin.

Elements of programme most liked by the audience

The programme notes, composer's and artists' biographies and list of players. The list of works to be performed, with their movements; the inclusion of information about the other concerts in the series, and the supplement about Berlin.

The programme received positive comments for its clear design and layout, the quality of paper and photographs.

Dislikes

The audience's dislikes included, once again, the volume of advertisements, the photographs of the sponsors, the supplement advertising contemporary Berlin, the inclusion of all the concerts in the series (only one page of notes per concert). No details of running time, no details of future concerts (by Barenboim or the Staatskapelle Berlin or the London Symphony Chorus) and no recommended recordings.

For some members of this audience, the programme was 'too lush', the paper too thick and heavy and some disliked the fact that Barenboim's name was printed larger than Beethoven's.

The comments on the programme for what some might describe as a 'celebrity concert' are interesting. The programme was well designed, with plenty of white space, but the information about the pieces to be played was sparse and written in a style of one paragraph per movement. Some of the more informed concert-goers clearly found this irritating. The feature on contemporary Berlin (paid for by sponsorship), written in the style of an airline magazine article, was appreciated by some and thoroughly disliked by others.

4.3. Audience surveys by ABO member orchestras

The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (RPO), the London Symphony Orchestra (LSO), the Royal Scottish National Orchestra (RSNO), the BBC Symphony Orchestra (BBCSO) and the City of London Sinfonia (CLS) were among the ABO member orchestras which undertook audience surveys for this study.

The results from the first four of these are summarised below (five concerts, with two of them given by the LSO). The results of three CLS surveys, with 105, 98 and 50 respondents respectively, were analysed by the CLS and included only the respondents' comments on the concert programme, rather than their comments on programmes in general.

Four hundred and forty seven (447) audience members completed questionnaires for the following orchestras:

London Symphony Orchestra	128 responses at one concert
London Symphony Orchestra	122 responses at another concert
Royal Scottish National Orchestra	122 responses over three concerts
BBC Symphony Orchestra	45 responses
Royal Philharmonic Orchestra	30 responses

These respondents were frequent concert-goers with half of them having attended more than 24 concerts in the past 12 months (i.e. the equivalent of a concert every other week).

Taking each audience group separately, between 49% and 89% say they always buy a concert programme. Aggregating the figures, 70% of these respondents always buy a programme. It needs to be taken into account that many of the audience members who took the trouble to complete a questionnaire are likely to have been keen concert-goers, with a strong interest in commenting on the programmes they buy.

The reasons these respondents give for not buying a programme are, in order of importance:

- the cost.
- the potential programme purchaser already knows the repertoire.
- there are too many advertisements.

A minority of respondents, but still a significant number in every sample, said that they would be interested in receiving a free programme containing less detail than the programmes currently on sale.

There was no agreement about what constitutes a reasonable price for a concert programme, but a small majority suggested that programmes should cost one pound or less. A slightly smaller group thought a price between £1.01 and £1.99 would be reasonable and a slightly smaller group still would be prepared to pay £2 or more. It is worth noting however, that these audiences equate price with quality and where they are dissatisfied with the content of a programme, they frequently point out that it was 'not good value for money' or 'very thin for £2'.

The responses of this sample of 477 mirrored very closely the findings of the SBC survey and The Bridgewater Hall survey when it came to identifying the strengths and weaknesses of concert programmes. Once again, notes about the music and biographies of the composers, and the soloists were most in demand, with advertisements and information about sponsors placed at the bottom of the list.

Where there were regional variations in responses, these were related mainly to the cost of programmes and not to the content.

Analysis of these surveys is provided in the appendix.

5. CONCLUSIONS

'Your polite notice re coughing is not working. I would suggest bigger, bolder print or something more direct, like "Cough and you're dead meat!" Concert-goer

Programmes may be a habitual purchase, but their readers are observant, critical and often in some doubt that programmes are as effective as they might be in conveying information, or that they represent good value for money.

The fact that orchestral managements are not being lobbied by audiences to produce better printed programmes suggests either that audience expectations of programmes are low, or that they do not like to complain, or that the improvement of the printed programme is not a high priority. However, when given the opportunity to comment on the programmes they so regularly buy, 733 audience members responded forcefully, articulately and with a large degree of unanimity.

The audience members surveyed included frequent and infrequent concert-goers, with widely ranging levels of knowledge of the orchestra, the music and the musicians. Their opinions are likely to be influenced by their familiarity with printed programmes, by their knowledge of the music and musicians, by their geographical base and by personal preference. The views expressed during the course of this study cannot be attributed to concert-goers with a particular level of experience of attending concerts or a particular knowledge of the repertoire. The full range of opinion was found in each group. There were, for example, frequent concert-goers who felt there were 'too many photographs' and 'not enough photographs'; and infrequent attenders who thought both that there was 'insufficient biographical detail' and that the 'biographies are too long'.

This research has produced strong evidence of the need for programmes to be improved and recommendations for how they might be improved. We recommend its conclusions to orchestras, venues and promoters of orchestral concerts.

Content

- According to the audiences surveyed, the job of the printed programme is first to inform and educate and only then to entertain. Audiences are more interested in content than in style, notwithstanding the role of style in presenting information effectively. In every audience survey conducted for this research, three elements of the programme were cited as the most important: notes on the works being performed, composers' biographies, and biographies of the soloists and conductor.
- Audiences want information about the artist, but they dislike blatant promotion of the artist. Information which is out of date and photographs taken some years before the event, to the extent that the subject is unrecognisable, come in for particular criticism.

Language

- Audiences want their programmes to be well written. Regular concert-goers, who read thousands of words of programme text a year, are too often presented with a badly written piece. They do not appreciate programmes which have been 'cobbled together' from a combination of sources, with no editorial intervention. They are quick to condemn what they describe as 'puff pieces', written by the agent of the soloists or conductor. The music, they say, will speak for itself.
- It has been rare for a respondent in any of these surveys to comment on the language being either too simplistic or too technical. Colourless, turgid, too brief or too long-winded, yes. Too technical or too simplistic, no.
- In programmes with limited space for text, words cannot be wasted and several respondents have enjoyed reporting their favourite piece of jargon. One referred to a programme note for Dvořák's *Czech Suite*, Op.39, which describes '...a featured cor anglais enriching and bucolicizing the sound-world.'



- Writers who take what is thought by audiences to be the lazy, formulaic route of 'and in the second movement we hear....and in the third movement we hear...' are not popular. The amount of text in each programme may be small, but this research suggests that audiences enjoy the sense of steadily accruing knowledge of the music, its composers and its performers and they look for more of that knowledge in every programme. If they do not find it, they are disappointed. They do not welcome repetition in any form.

Improvements

- For most respondents, the nub of the programme is what is written about the music and this is where orchestras need to concentrate their efforts. Notes need to be commissioned regularly, not culled from the library or printed without amendment.
- Agents may insist that the soloist's or conductor's biography is uncut, but this position cannot go unchallenged. Agents need to be made aware of how alienating the 'puff piece' can be and the extent to which it is disliked and ignored by readers.
- Orchestras could give more consideration to how they might ensure that new concert-goers are better informed, whether through free programme notes or the full programme, complete with biographies and information about the orchestra.
- Free programme notes would be popular among a significant minority of concert-goers. Orchestras are likely to be concerned that this would result in a reduction in programme sales. However, the high percentage of programme buyers who keep their programmes as souvenirs suggests that free notes would be of most interest to those who cite cost as their main reason for not buying a programme.
- Orchestras need to pay particular attention to new audience members. There could, for example, be schemes which offer new concert-goers a free programme for their first three visits.
- Web sites published by the orchestra or the venue, listening posts near the box office and the display of enlarged programme notes in the venue's foyer and on street poster sites (just as critics' notices of plays are displayed) would all be worth exploring as a means of bringing audiences into the concert hall, on the basis of what they think they might hear.
- Printed programmes have three main functions:
 - they provide the audience with information about the music to be played, the composer, the conductor and the players,
 - they are a marketing tool for the orchestra,
 - and they are a vehicle for sponsors and advertisers.

While some orchestras argue that the provision of information is education enough, increasing numbers see the potential of their printed programmes to act as an educational tool, capable of promoting a more active interest in and knowledge of orchestral music to audiences of all levels of knowledge and interest.

- The printed programme does not exist in a vacuum. It is complementary to what is seen and heard on stage - or should be. The fact that some audience members do not usually buy a programme because they already know the repertoire suggests that orchestras are missing an opportunity to provide their most well-informed listeners with the opportunity to listen from a different angle.
- This research suggests that orchestras, venues and promoters could and should be investing more thought and effort in the production of programmes and be producing written material that does the music, the orchestra and the audience justice.

6. APPENDICES

1. Participants in the ABO survey
2. Material used by The Bridgewater Hall focus groups
3. Sample of the copy produced as a result of The Bridgewater Hall focus group
4. Audience surveys
 - 4.1. Results of surveys of audiences at three SBC concerts
 - 4.2. Results of surveys of audiences at concerts by five ABO member orchestras



1. Participants in the ABO survey

Academy of Ancient Music
Academy of London
Academy of St Martin in the Fields
Ambache Chamber Orchestra and Ensemble
BBC National Orchestra of Wales
BBC Philharmonic
BBC Symphony Orchestra
Bournemouth Orchestras
Britten Sinfonia
BT Scottish Ensemble
City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra
City of London Sinfonia
City of Oxford Orchestra
East of England Orchestra
English Symphony Orchestra
Guildford Symphony Orchestra
The Hallé Orchestra
The Hanover Band
London Philharmonic Orchestra
London Symphony Orchestra
Milton Keynes City Orchestra
Northern Sinfonia
Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment
The Philharmonia Orchestra
Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra
Royal Philharmonic Orchestra
Royal Scottish National Orchestra
Scottish Chamber Orchestra
Ulster Orchestra
One anonymous orchestra

City of Birmingham Touring Opera
English Touring Opera
Scottish Opera

BBC Proms
Cambridge Corn Exchange
St David's Hall
Young Persons Concert Foundation

2. Material used by The Bridgewater Hall focus group - versions of a note on Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 5 in E minor, Op 64

Version 1

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840 - 1893)

Symphony No. 5 in E minor, Op 64

Andante: Allegro con anima

Andante cantabile, con alcuna licenza

Waltz: Allegro moderato

Finale: Andante maestoso - Allegro vivace

Long regarded as one of the great symphonic landmarks of the 19th century, Tchaikovsky's *Fifth Symphony* was composed between May and August 1888. The first performance was given under the composer's direction in St Petersburg in November of that year at a concert which also included the première of the Fantasy Overture, *Hamlet*. In spite of a favourable public reaction, the critical response was negative. One writer went so far as to claim that Tchaikovsky's creative talent was 'exhausted and played out', a comment that had a detrimental effect on the composer's morale. Already in that summer, after a strenuous conducting tour that had taken in Leipzig, Hamburg, Berlin, Prague, Paris and London, he had written to his benefactress, Nadezhda von Meck, complaining that he had increasing doubts about himself: 'Hasn't the time come to stop, haven't I always overstrained my imagination too much, hasn't the source dried up?' Days later, on finishing the symphony in sketch, his attitude had not changed: 'It doesn't seem to have the old lightness and constant flow of material. As I remember, I used not to be so exhausted at the end of a day; now I am so tired each night that I am not even able to read.' Following further performances in St Petersburg and Prague, he expressed the extent of his disillusionment in another letter to von Meck (2 December): 'I have become convinced that this symphony is unsuccessful. There is something repellent about it, a certain patchiness, insincerity and artifice ... The realisation of this causes me a keen, tormenting feeling of discontent with myself.' A few months later, however, he could write to his brother, Modeste, saying that the symphony had 'ceased to strike me as bad ... I have fallen in love with it again.' In spite of this it achieved little success in the remaining years of Tchaikovsky's life and it was not in fact until Nikisch began to champion it in the 1890s that the *Fifth* achieved its present status and popularity.

Like the *Fourth Symphony* but to a far more specific degree, the *Fifth* is concerned with Fate. In one of his notebooks Tchaikovsky jotted down the concept of his work: 'Introduction. Complete resignation before Fate, or, which is the same, before the inscrutable predestination of Providence. Allegro (I) Murmurs, doubts, lamentations, reproaches against XXX. (II) Shall I throw myself into the embraces of the Faith???' By the last movement, Fate has, it seems, been overcome, but the impression is elusive: in the end the goal is never reached, the triumph, for all its might, is hollow, man tries to rise above the adversary but can never escape. The phrenetic imagery is vivid, Destiny's hold is supreme.

Fate itself is represented by a motto theme that is stated in the minor at the outset and recurs in each of the subsequent movements, finally being transformed into a *maggiore* apotheosis. The source of this motto has been variously attributed to Chopin (the E flat minor *Polonaise* from Opus 26) and a Polish love song; what is perhaps more relevant is its remarkable integration into the music and the fact that it proves to be of germinal importance in the evolution of the principal thematic ideas of the work. As such, Tchaikovsky's motto technique is here even more highly developed than in the *Fourth Symphony* or *Manfred*, and might be traced back to the example of such earlier motto-cyclic symphonies as the Berlioz *Fantastique* or Liszt's *Faust*, not to mention the Borodin *Second Symphony*.

Both the first and last movements fall into a basically identical architectonic structure: introduction, exposition (with several subject groups), development, recapitulation and coda. Both, too, are concerned in their main *Allegros* with a powerfully intensive rhythmic display - the dotted 618 figurations of the first movement might also be Tchaikovsky's reply to the orgiastic pulse rhythms of Beethoven's *Seventh* - while the March element pervades all.

The Andante cantabile, in the unlikely key of D major, is famous for its lyrical writing, its soaring climaxes, and the dramatic, almost operatic appearance of the motto in a totally unexpected harmonic context. Long addicted to the dance, Tchaikovsky provided a waltz (in A major) for the third movement, apparently balletic, an idea that promoted many negative thinkers to at once belittle his symphonic achievement. They conveniently forgot, however, that what he did here was in reality no more orthodox than Haydn's minuets, Schubert's *ländler*, or the *Ball* movement of Berlioz's *Fantastique*.

The orchestration of the *Fifth* has often been commented on, and rightly so. More than almost any other Tchaikovsky symphony, specific incidents are associated with particular orchestral colours and balancing. The lugubrious opening, for instance, would be nothing without its two *chalmes* clarinets and lower strings; elsewhere one notes the fiercely blazing brass writing in *tutti*, the freedom of the horns (the famous solo of the *Andante* needs no reminding), the kaleidoscopic changes of melismatic decoration and commentary on the melodic line, the magnificence and variety of the string writing - all contribute to an overall picture that is a rich tapestry of colour, mood and theatrical statement projected against an unfailingly symphonic backcloth, Tchaikovsky never clouds the issue. Some of his boldest strokes are also the simplest: the concept of the second subject group in the finale, for example, is little more than a two-part texture of well-defined bass and treble. At the very end of the same movement, the use of the general pause just before the Thor-ian swing of the coda begins is a no less remarkable vision of genius. There is much else besides. For all Tchaikovsky's misgivings, there is really no need to plead this symphony's cause. It is a masterpiece through and through.

Version 2

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840 - 1893)

Symphony No. 5 in E minor, Op 64

Andante: Allegro con anima

Andante cantabile, con alcuna licenza

Waltz: Allegro moderato

Finale: Andante maestoso - Allegro vivace

Each of Tchaikovsky's last three symphonies uses some kind of musical symbol to represent fate, the inescapable force which Tchaikovsky believed governed his life. Yet fate in his *Fifth Symphony* is of a rather different nature from that in the other two. *The Fourth Symphony* had been inextricably connected with his life's central emotional crisis which had precipitated his vain attempt to defeat fate's main agent (his homosexuality) through marriage. But when he came to compose his *Fifth* in 1888, 11 years had passed. By now he was capable of a certain self-assurance, and this is confirmed by the source from which he derived the fate theme which quietly opens the work: it is a fragment from Glinka's opera *A Life for the Tsar*, setting the words 'Turn not unto sorrow'. *The Fifth Symphony* has, therefore, a kind of confidence, despite its passages of intense emotion. There is no dramatic contrast as the gentle dance-tune of the first subject enters, and for all the moments of powerful dynamic surge, neither of the other two main ideas (the first introduced by a rising string phrase, the second a charming waltz) shows any inclination to deflect the music into a different expressive world. The development maintains this stability, compelling our attention through its musical inventiveness, untroubled by dramatic shocks, and the crucial moment of recapitulation is as clear and calmly inevitable as it could be.

The emotional strength in the slow movement is self-evident, but again Tchaikovsky is content to explore a single expressive world, and other themes collaborate closely with the opening horn melody to build one of the most unified and deeply satisfying of all Tchaikovsky's creations. And if the two interventions of the Fate theme in his *Andante cantabile* have been abrasive, in the following movement it insinuates itself just before the end with a gentleness which in no way disrupts the benign mood created by this lovely waltz melody.

The *Finale*, like the first movement, opens with a slow introduction founded on the Fate theme, which this time itself gives birth to the vigorous main idea of the following irrepressibly energetic sonata movement. But the symphony finally returns to the Fate theme, its confidence reinforced by its full scoring as well as its major key presentation. Yet in the very insistence of the

repetitions it is not only a courageous defiance of fate's baleful force but an implied admission that this defiance is futile. And the sudden recurrence of the first movement's main theme to close the symphony challenges any sense of facile optimism. Has not the voyage of hope been merely in a circle from which there is no escape?

Version 3

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840 - 1893)

Symphony No. 5 in E minor, Op 64

Andante: Allegro con anima

Andante cantabile, con alcuna licenza

Waltz: Allegro moderato

Finale: Andante maestoso - Allegro vivace

Ten years separate the composition of Tchaikovsky's *Fourth Symphony* and the completion of the *Fifth*. The *Fourth* was written in 1877 in circumstances of the greatest emotional turmoil arising from his disastrous marriage and subsequent attempted suicide. The *Fifth* was composed immediately after he had successfully withstood the rigours and frustrations of a European tour when he had made appearances as a conductor. Tchaikovsky was installed in a new house near Klin, sixty miles from Moscow, through the continuing kindness of Nadezhda von Meck oppressed neither by material worries nor by the agony of constant social engagements. He could delight in his garden, could even consider an old age devoted to growing flowers, and concentrate without distraction on his work.

Yet, not surprisingly, his preoccupations in each major work are similar ones. The *Fourth*, he told his benefactress, might be seen as the reactions of the sensibility to the attack of Fate, 'the fatal force which prevents our hopes of happiness from being realised.' In a notebook he sketched a programme for the first movement of the present work: *Introduction: 'Complete resignation before Fate, or, which is the same, before the inscrutable predestination of Providence. Allegro (I) Murmurs, doubts, complaints, reproaches against XXX. (II) Shall I throw myself in the embraces of the faith???' Whether or not XXX stands for an actual person, it is very likely Tchaikovsky refers to the dominant emotional problems caused by his homosexuality.*

Tchaikovsky certainly yearned for that peace of mind he recognised that a true faith could bring, for he writes to Nadezhda von Meck: 'The intelligent man who is at the same time a believer ... possesses armour against which all the blows of fate are utterly useless.' He was strongly drawn to the poetry of the Church's ritual: 'I often go to mass; the liturgy of St John Chrysostom is, I think, one of the greatest of artistic creations. If one follows the service attentively, examining the meaning of every symbol, it is impossible not to be moved spiritually at our orthodox services. I dearly love the night service too. To go on a Saturday to some ancient little church, to stand in the half-darkness laden with the smoke of the incense, meditating by oneself and searching for an answer to the eternal questions; why, when, where, what for, to be aroused from reverie when the choir begins to sing, "Many a time have they fought against me from my youth up" and to abandon oneself to the influence of the enchanting poetry of that psalm, to steep oneself in silent bliss when the Royal Doors open and there sings out, "O Praise the Lord of Heaven" - Oh! I love it all tremendously, it's one of my greatest delights.' It was merely the beauty of the liturgy that he accepted so enthusiastically and not the doctrine that lay at the heart of that liturgy.

The Providence theme which opens the work is quite unlike the violent Fate motive of the *Fourth Symphony*. It is quiet though heavy, *pesante e tenuto sempre*. The air of resignation derives from the rhythmic and melodic repetitions within the theme and also from the alternation of tonic and subdominant chords which accompany the first subject of the *Allegro* as well as the Providence theme. No programmatic outline exists for the three remaining movements. Over a sketch for the horn melody which opens the *Andante cantabile* Tchaikovsky is said to have written: 'O, que je t'aime! O, mon amie! O, how I love ... if you love me... With desire and passion...' The violence of the emotion in this movement is evident simply from the great number of expressive markings: *animando, ritenuto, sostenuto, con noblezza con desiderio* and so on, every few bars. Though it occurs at a moment of climax the Providence motive is none

the less shattering in its savagery. The lyrical vein is recaptured and the music surges ecstatically only to be brutalised as before, and to die away in 'complete resignation before Fate.' A Valse, which takes the place of the more usual Scherzo, suggests an escape to a world of lightness and grace. But there is chromatic wistfulness as well as grace in the waltz and in the coda the providence motive intrudes in a dramatic gesture surely inspired by a similar one in the *Symphonie fantastique* of Berlioz. The finale is a sonata-form movement with an introduction stating the motto theme in its major version and it is with the major version of the opening movement's first theme that the work ends.

The energy that the *Fourth Symphony* achieves at its close cannot conceal an underlying spiritual emptiness; the Finale of the Sixth expresses, in Tovey's fine phrase, the 'simplicity of despair'. Here the note of triumph is a false one; this is music for a hollow victory; Tchaikovsky himself recognised the 'gaudiness' and 'artificiality' in this Finale. The poetic vision this Symphony articulates is not a comforting or an ennobling one, and to this extent it is unsatisfactory. But it is profoundly moving because, for Tchaikovsky, it was true.

Version 4

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840 - 1893)
Symphony No. 5 in E minor, Op 64

Andante: Allegro con anima

Andante cantabile, con alcuna licenza

Waltz: Allegro moderato

Finale: Andante maestoso - Allegro vivace

The late-nineteenth century symphonist was challenged by the problem of composing large, purely musical forms in an era where music had, through popular opera and programmatic works, tended to become a series of dramatic gestures linked by a narrative. Music had turned into story-telling, rather than structures or abstract ideas.

Each of the symphonic works of a romantic like Tchaikovsky are attempts to accommodate this hybridisation. Always, the towering figure of Beethoven served as the uneasy benchmark of success or failure. It is from Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* that the idea of a thematic motto symbolising fate originates, an idea taken up by Tchaikovsky in his *Fourth and Fifth Symphonies*. Both works depict an immense personal struggle that is overcome in the exuberance of creativity. It would seem now that the cause of Tchaikovsky's turmoil was his deep sense of personal and social alienation arising from his homosexuality, which was not openly tolerated. It led to at least one documented suicide attempt and there is now some evidence that the threat of scandal led to his demise by his own hand. Whether this music is autobiographical in the strictest sense is open to debate, but the emotional territory it inhabits suggests engagement with a deep psychological stress.

When Tchaikovsky began work on his *Fifth Symphony* it was to try and remove a temporary block in his creativity. 'I am dreadfully anxious to prove, not only to others, but also to myself, that I am not played out as a composer' he claimed as he began work. He later commented that he was having to 'squeeze it (the symphony) from my dulled brain.' If the work was laboured in its gestation, it is certainly not laboured in its impact. It opens with the halting fate theme on the clarinet as a slow introduction. This leads to a forceful *Allegro* with a lyrical second theme for violins in the unexpected key of D major. The movement follows sonata form in the traditional mould of the opening of a classical symphony, but thickly overlaid with subjective feelings and romantic rhetoric, leading the composer down unusual tonal and thematic byways.

The *Andante* is blessed with one of Tchaikovsky's most beautiful themes, played on a solo french horn. Its mood of agonised lyricism is interrupted by the recurrent fate motif, which bursts threateningly over a fierce timpani roll, before the return to the ripe sentiment of the opening. The third movement is a minor key waltz which, while more relaxed than the previous movements, still gives the impression that fate hangs over all. In the finale, the fate motif is at last translated into the major key, and moves through a furious development section towards its climactic transformation into a triumphant march. A brisk coda brings the work to a positive conclusion.

Like Beethoven's *Fifth*, we have been led from darkness to light; a triumph of aspiration over adversity. Whether one hears Tchaikovsky's triumph as hollow, bearing in mind the resignation of the *Pathétique Symphony* which followed it, is a matter of personal judgement. There can be no doubt Tchaikovsky believed at that particular moment in his life that the creative spirit could transcend everything.

Version 5

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840 - 1893)
Symphony No. 5 in E minor, Op 64

Andante: Allegro con anima

Andante cantabile, con alcuna licenza

Waltz: Allegro moderato

Finale: Andante maestoso - Allegro vivace

On a visit to Prague in 1888, only two or three months before he started work on his *Fifth Symphony in E minor*, Tchaikovsky was present at an evidently fine performance of Dvorak's *Seventh in D minor* and, moreover, was presented with the autograph score of the work by the composer himself. Though the experience might not have had any direct effect on the shape taken by his *Symphony in E minor*, it is interesting that Tchaikovsky's *Fifth* - like the *Seventh* among Dvorak's - is the most regular, the most Western, and the most evenly balanced of his symphonies.

It is true that there is a fragment of a characteristically tortured programme in Tchaikovsky's note books: *Introduction. Complete resignation before Fate or, which is the same, before the inscrutable predestination of Providence. Allegro (1) murmurs, doubts, lamentations... (2) Shall I throw myself into the embraces of Faith??? On the other hand, the programme clearly applies only to the first part of the work and even there Fate plays nothing like the dramatic role allotted to it in the Fourth Symphony. Indeed, once the two clarinets in unison have introduced the motto theme in E minor (with its ominous descending scale) in the Andante introduction, it isn't heard again until half-way through the Andante cantabile.*

The most disturbing aspect of the *Allegro con anima* is not the sinister character of the first subject introduced by clarinet and bassoon over the stealthy tread of the strings: it is more disturbing that the yearning second-subject melody - which enters *molto più tranquillo* in D major on violins choking for breath on the first beat of every bar - is never allowed to fulfil its expressive potential. Cut off on a rising climax by the sinister E minor first subject on brass, the second-subject melody is not featured in the development section and is again cut short when it reappears in the recapitulation.

It does, on the other hand, find some sort of consummation in the *Andante cantabile*, which is nearly all in D major, the key area where the first movement so devoutly yearned to be. The lovely melody introduced by first horn over quiet string harmonies in the opening bars is in D major. The slightly quicker oboe theme is in F sharp major but, after the cellos have adopted the horn melody in D major, the oboe theme is reintroduced by violins in that same key and the whole orchestra takes it up to a massively confident D major climax. True, there is a more agitated middle section beginning in F sharp minor and the motto theme does make a *fff* intrusion - but, interestingly, in such a way as to make it easy for the violins to enter in D major with the horn melody set against a pretty woodwind counterpoint. The motto theme intrudes also on the recapitulation of the oboe melody but only to be answered by the sweetest recollection of that theme in D major.

The *Valse* in A major enshrines a happy memory of a visit to Italy and an apparently irresistible young Florentine street singer called Vittorio. Tchaikovsky transcribed Vittorio's *Pimpinella* at the time, adapted it for one of his songs, and incorporated an attractive phrase from it in the main theme of this movement. The staccato semi-quaver material in the middle section is beautifully integrated with the waltz on its return towards the end and the once ominous slow-march motto theme meekly complies with the prevailing waltz-time in the closing bars.

Beginning in G major with a fearless *Andante maestoso* version of the motto theme, the Finale turns back to E minor for the main *Allegro vivace*. The theme here is a trepak, a vigorous Cossack dance in duple time evidently not unrelated to the motto theme: certainly, Tchaikovsky makes a very neat point of comparing the scalar element in the two themes just after the motto makes its first dramatic re-entry in C major. This is at the height of the development section of a construction which achieves in its coda a full-scale *maestoso* treatment of the motto theme in E major followed by a brilliant fanfare based on the first subject of the *Allegro con anima* - the one sinister character not so far absorbed into Tchaikovsky's brave new world.

3. Sample of the copy produced as a result of The Bridgewater Hall focus group

The copy below is taken from the programme produced for the concert of the Moscow Radio Symphony Orchestra at the Bridgewater Hall on 3 March 1998. It is based on the comments of the focus group.

The programme was in portrait format, 8.5 inches x 5.5 inches. It was 20 pages long and printed in purple ink on white. All photographs were in a purple tint.

The inside front cover carried an introduction by Sue Vanden, Director of Sales and Marketing, explaining the Bridgewater Hall's participation in the RSA/ABO research project and summarising the comments the focus group asked the Hall to take into account when producing this programme. Pages 2 - 8 carried notes on the four pieces being played. Then came a page each for the biographies of the conductor and soloist, a page on the Moscow Radio Symphony Orchestra and two pages listing the players. Page 14 carried the acknowledgements, followed by five pages of advertisements.

Sample note

Passacaglia from *Peter Grimes*. Benjamin Britten (1913 - 1976)
approximate duration: 7 minutes

The *passacaglia*, *chaconne* or *ground* - a musical form in which phrases of increasing richness and complexity develop above a short, repeated bass figure - was a favourite device of Purcell and his contemporaries, composers whom Britten held in particular esteem. Its combination of formal repetition and organic growth make it a fascinating vehicle for exploring changing dramatic or psychological states within a fixed context, such as one might find in an opera.

With the premiere of his first opera *Peter Grimes* in 1954, Britten immediately joined the front rank of composers for the stage. In it he established several of the important ideas and one powerful metaphor - the sea - which would dominate much of his later music. This orchestral *passacaglia* is one of five extended instrumental interludes in the opera, the others were published as a set and are often performed separately as the *Four Sea Interludes*.

The *passacaglia* occurs between the two scenes of Act II. Moments before, fisherman Grimes has struck his friend, Ellen Orford, in a moment of passion and stormed off with his new apprentice, a previous apprentice having died in 'accidental circumstances'. The citizens of 'the Borough' decide to challenge him, their march to his hut effectively happening off-stage during the *passacaglia*. He escapes them, but his new apprentice dies in the process, signalling the inevitability of Grimes' own death at the end of the opera.

The music - expressive of rising tension, fear of confrontation and the suffering both of Peter and the boy he bullies - is based on the phrase to which the sinister words '*Grimes is at his exercise*' were set earlier in the same act. Britten's *passacaglia* motif is a simple eleven-beat pattern of notes and silences, yet the music is divided into four-beat bars, resulting in a constantly shifting emphasis suggesting psychological unease. The scoring of this tiny, stubborn phrase is always changing: now on low strings, now on tuba, double bassoon or trombone, coloured and supported by bass drum and gong.

After two plain statements of the motif, an increasingly impassioned - almost defensive - viola solo forms the basis for a series of eleven short variations, each exploring a different world of

rhythm, orchestral texture or instrumental colour. No two are quite the same length, adding the prevailing mood of restless insecurity. The music builds to a tremendous climax until a huge stroke on the gong indicates the point at which, in the opera, voice once again take over. For concert performances, Britten added an atmospheric coda: celesta and harp create a haunted sea-murmur above which the solo viola returns to sing its lonely lullaby. The work ends with a whispered fragment of the *passacaglia* motif, leaving Peter Grimes to his cold fate in the depths of the North Sea.

Sample note

Piano Concerto No. 2 in C Minor, Op. 18
Sergei Rachmaninov (1873 - 1943)

Moderato

approx. duration: 11 minutes

Adagio Sostenuto

approx. duration: 12 minutes

Allegro Scherzando

approx. duration: 11 minutes

'When the indescribable torture of the performance had at last come to an end, I was a different man' wrote a stunned Rachmaninov after the disastrous St Petersburg premiere of his *First Symphony* in March, 1897. Hopelessly inadequate rehearsals, the sloppy indifference of the conductor, Glazunov, and the hostility of the St Petersburg musical establishment toward young 'Muscovite composers' contributed to an evening of appalling public humiliation, followed by days of calculated spite from the critics. Rachmaninov, his self-esteem obliterated, retreated to Moscow, to the comfort of friends and to three years of creative near-paralysis.

Despite some success as a conductor, his repeated attempts at composition over the next few years produced nothing more than a handful of doodles, a couple of songs and an attempt at a piano concerto which quickly ran into the sand. Early in 1900 his desperate family and friends tricked him into visiting a neurologist, Dr Nikolai Dahl, whose three-month course of treatment for depression (including hypnotherapy) produced the hoped-for breakthrough - though not immediately. 'I have absolutely lost my facility to compose' he reported in June, but by the autumn felt confident enough to announce that he had written with ease two movements of a new concerto, although the opening movement was proving difficult.

Rachmaninov was first persuaded to play the part-finished work through in December, 1900 - his first performance since the debacle, and only his fourth with an orchestra. The audience approved, and thus encouraged he pressed on with the first movement. The entire concerto, appropriately dedicated to Dr Dahl, received its triumphant premiere in Moscow on 27th October, 1901.

It is undoubtedly one of the great lyrical concertos, and deservedly one of the most popular: melancholy without melodrama and intensely Russian in its dark splendour. In his dual role as composer and virtuoso pianist, Rachmaninov has ensured an unusual level of collaboration between soloist and orchestra in which the melodic and textural honours are equally divided. Revealingly, there is no extended *cadenza* for the soloist alone.

The C minor concerto follows the usual three-movement plan: a sonata-form first movement, a flawless three-part slow movement with a surprisingly brisk, turbulent central section and a bold sonata-rondo finale with an irresistibly glorious second subject. Each movement begins with a brief, memorable introduction: in the first the soloist has eight bars of increasingly tense preparation above tolling low F, the second has an exquisite orchestral transition from C minor to E major and the third a similar harmonic process in reverse, but now bright and expectant.

Probably its most remarkable feature is the unusual degree of unity between the many musical ideas, something which Rachmaninov would explore even further in his *Second* and *Third*

Symphonies. Themes tend to move by step and never to stray from their home note - indeed, much of the material of the first and last movements is based simply on the rocking alternations of two adjacent notes. The second subject of the first movement, the flute tune near the start of the adagio and the 'big tune' which brings the third movement to a matchless climax all share the same rising profile and pattern of intervals, typical of the dense mesh of musical relationships that underpin this closely written masterpiece.

Sample biography

Peter Dmitriev, soloist

Peter Dmitriev was born in Moscow in 1974, the same year as Vladimir Fedoseyev was appointed Artistic Director of the Moscow Radio Symphony Orchestra! He was born into a family of professional musicians - his father is a composer and his mother a singer. At the age of five, he began his music studies at first with Artobalevskaya, and then with Vladimir Ashkenazy's teacher and mentor, Sumbatyan.

At the age of 7, he joined the Central Music School at the Moscow State Conservatoire and a year later gave his first performance with an orchestra, performing Bach's *Concerto in F minor*.

In 1993, Peter Dmitriev began studies at the Moscow Conservatoire and began working as a soloist for the Moscow Concert and Philharmonic Society. In 1995, Dmitriev achieved a great success when he participated in the Sixth International Music Competition of Japan. He was honoured with not only the First Prize and Gold Medal, but also with three other special prizes of the Competition.

In tonight's concert, Peter Dmitriev will be playing one of The Bridgewater Hall's four model D Steinway grand pianos. The particular piano being played this evening was chosen from Steinway's showrooms in London for The Bridgewater Hall by piano technician Glenn Easley and concert pianist Martin Roscoe. It is primarily used for richly scored, big romantic concertos with its brilliant powerful sound and cost £72,000 to purchase.

For this performance, technician Glenn Easley has tuned the piano up beyond its 'regular' pitch because, as with many East European orchestras, the Moscow Radio Symphony Orchestra play to a pitch of A=443 Hz as opposed to the standard used by British and American orchestra of A=440 Hz. Raising the pitch of the piano increases the already substantial tension on the instrument to above 30 tonnes.

4. Audience surveys

4.1. Results of surveys of audiences at three SBC concerts

BBC SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Sample 83

1 Did you or someone in your party buy a programme at this concert?

Yes 81
No 2

2 Do you always buy concert programmes?

Yes 54
No 24

3 Why do you choose not to buy a concert programme?

Already know the repertoire 8
Too expensive 12
Too many advertisements 5

4 What would you consider to be a reasonable price for a programme?

Under £1 3
£1 - £1.49 19
£1.50 - £1.99 33
£2 - £2.49 25
£3 - £3.49 1

5 If you were attending a concert as part of a series or festival, would you be prepared to pay more for a programme which covered all the concerts as part of the series/festival?

Yes 46
No 36

6 Would a festival programme encourage you to attend additional concerts you may not have booked for?

Yes 23
No 57

7 Would you prefer to have free programme sheets with limited information only on the orchestra and soloists rather than programmes with more detailed information?

Yes 21
No 61

8 The relative importance of different elements of programme

	Very Important	Quite Important	Not Important
Artists' biographies	46	26	5
Information on sponsors	1	14	65
Photos of soloists/conductor	12	48	21
Forthcoming concert details	20	44	17
Programme notes on works performed	74	7	0
Biographies of composers	39	38	5
Advertisements	0	8	72
Details of players	31	44	7
Details of orchestra's management	1	31	48
Information about Friends groups	3	43	33
Details of how to support the orchestra	4	50	27
Information about life behind the scenes	9	39	34
Information for younger listeners	11	32	38
Details about the venue (eating etc.)	3	26	52

	Very Important	Quite Important	Not Important
Facilities in the local area	1	25	50
Details about pre-concert talks	24	15	0
Players' anecdotes	6	12	4
Details of recordings	14	10	3

9 Items considered most important by this audience

Programme notes on works being performed	81
Biographies of composers	77
Details of players	75
Artists' biographies	72
Forthcoming concert details	64
Photos of soloists/conductor	60

10 Elements of the programme that respondents liked

(These are verbatim responses. A number in brackets records how many times this response was made.)

Quality of notes on the music (9)
Length of notes
Programme notes not too technical
Details of unfamiliar works
Composers' biographies (7)
Artists' biographies
Orchestral list (3)
Information about BBC Symphony Chorus
Details of last minute changes (2)
Having the words of the *Psalmus Hungaricus* (3)
Programme list at front
Profile of the orchestra
Who leads each section of the orchestra
Future engagements and performances by the artists, especially in UK, no matter how far ahead
Layout/typeface
Not too technical - I'm not very musical
Good translation
Balanced information
Right size and length
Photos of composers and performers
Informative
Readable (3)
Not too thick
Comprehensive
Slightly unusual programme
Cover picture
Not glossy
Good layout as usual with BBC
Interesting and informative (2)
Good size print of libretto
Concise - easy to read
Note to audience not to cough

11 Elements of the programme disliked by respondents

Lack of colour printing/photography
Pictures a bit 'standard library'
Colour of cover and design
List of orchestral players at back of programme
Biographies at back
Usual tosh from [name of contributor to the programme]
Too expensive

No list of forthcoming performances
 Too many ads (2)
 Too flimsy for the number of ads
 Unnecessarily large
 Too heavy
 Too wide
 Inconvenient shape - landscape. I keep programmes on bookshelf and prefer A5
 Print too small
 Quotations from newspapers out of context
 Inaccurate
 A bit too glossy
 Programme notes are too anecdotal - should concentrate on analysis of the music
 Not enough background on Kodály
 Need more reading material
 Lack of details about recordings available and lack of critical appraisal of them
 Lack of artists' performance history with orchestra
 Repeated biographies - would be nice to have a different point of view
 Poor styling compared to other orchestras' programmes
 Not knowing the date of the broadcast
 Undated cover

12 Do you have access to the internet?

Yes 26
 No 57

13 If you could have seen basic programme notes for this evening's concert in advance via the internet, would you have used this service?

Yes 20
 No 61

14 Have you, in the past 12 months, attended pre-concert talks?

Yes 35
 No 46

15 If so, how many talks have you attended?

1 8
 2 - 5 21
 6 - 10 4

16 Do you think that information in the programmes should complement information found in...

Pre-concert talks	50
Sales brochures	25
Displays	27

17 What is the ideal size of a programme?

The size of this page (A5)	50
Twice the size of this page (A4)	27

18 Do you keep programmes as souvenirs?

Yes 56
 No 22

19 Would you welcome the chance to pick programme notes based on information which graded them according to their level of detail?

Yes 35
 No 43

20 Number of concerts attended in the past 12 months

1 - 10	22
11 - 20	19
21 - 30	9
31 - 40	5
41 - 50	5
51 - 100	4

THE PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA

Sample 78

1 Did you or someone in your party buy a programme at this concert?

Yes	77
No	1

2 Do you always buy concert programmes?

Yes	53
No	25

3 Why do you choose not to buy a concert programme?

Too expensive	20
I already know the repertoire	10
Inadequate information	6
Too many adverts	5

4 What would you consider to be a reasonable price to pay for a programme?

Free	3
Under £1	5
£1 - £1.49	20
£1.50 - £1.99	20
£2 - £2.49	19
£2.50 - £2.99	6
£3 - £4	3

5 If you were attending a concert as part of a series or festival, would you be prepared to pay more for a programme which covered all the concerts as part of the series/festival?

Yes	49
No	26

6 Would a festival programme encourage you to attend additional concerts you may not have booked for?

Yes	46
No	30

7 Would you prefer to have free programme sheets with limited information only on the orchestra and soloists rather than programmes with more detailed information?

Yes	25
No	46

8 The relative importance of different elements of programme

	Very Important	Quite Important	Not Important
Artists' biographies	38	28	8
Information on sponsors	28	14	58
Photos of soloists/conductor	228	38	16
Forthcoming concert details	278	38	13
Programme notes on works performed	75	3	0

	Very Important	Quite Important	Not Important
Biographies of composers	47	28	2
Advertisements	1	5	70
Details of players	30	39	9
Details of orchestra's management	3	34	40
Information about Friends groups	5	42	30
Details of how to support the orchestra	4	50	23
Information about life behind the scenes	7	43	28
Information for younger listeners	9	40	27
Details about the venue (eating etc.)	11	25	41
Details of local area	6	23	46
Details about pre concert talks	35	35	8
Players' anecdotes	17	40	20
Details of recordings	29	40	7

9 Items considered most important by this audience

Programme notes on works being performed	78
Biographies of composers	75
Details about pre-concert talks	75
Details of players	69
Artists' biographies	66

10 Elements of the programme that respondents liked

(These are verbatim responses. A number in brackets records how many times this response was made.)

Notes on the works being performed (17)
 Good notes on the music - detailed but not too technical
 Detail of the pieces so that I can follow with more understanding
 The explanation regarding 4/4 12/8 with piano concerto.
 Notes on works each on separate pages
 Programme note written by the composers (4)
 Information on works, artists and future concerts
 Introduction to modern music
 Artists' biographies (10)
 The conductor's profile (and the profiles in general)
 List of players
 List of orchestra members as well as soloists
 Composers' biographies (7)
 Translation of sung text (12)
 Format
 Photographs (2)
 Cover design (4)
 Cover not too glossy (2)
 No naked bodies on the cover
 Good design and layout (8)
 Quality of writing on the music
 It covers more than one concert (6)
 Format
 Informative notes
 Orchestra list
 Intelligent background information
 Colour, variety and contrast
 The notes on works to be performed were above average
 The information about the pieces performed
 The inclusion of general series introduction
 Reasonably full notes on the music
 Comparative lack of advertising
 Clearly set out - uncluttered format, adverts separate
 Detailed notes on the composer and pieces featured in the concert

Clear and easy to read
 Contained useful information
 Programme notes on works performed
 Informative about the music and the performers
 Comprehensive
 Minimal advertising
 Upon opening the programme the detail was clear
 I got 50p off as I am a subscriber
 Layout (8)
 Size
 Amount of information
 Precision
 Easy to read
 The price
 Good content
 Size

11 Things disliked about the programme

Too much advertising and sponsorship detail
 Information on sponsors
 Sponsor's logos rather than a list of names
 Some musical descriptions were hard to understand
 No summary of movements and soloists
 Inconsistency with details of artists - some had dates of birth listed some did not
 Not clear from the cover that it covered both concerts (6)
 No information about other concerts in the series (2)
 Photos of the performers and too much biographical material
 Too much information on the orchestra
 Excessive attention to the orchestra
 Too many adverts (10)
 Wading through adverts to find information
 Inappropriate advertising
 £3 is far too much to pay (17)
 Incomplete discography
 List of corporate 'benefactors'
 Cover design dull
 Not enough in depth information on Ligeti
 Lack of photos
 No colour photos
 Errors in the text/French translation (2)
 Tendency to glorify soloists
 Biography had no real relevance
 More than one concert in one programme
 I would have liked to have known why these particular works were chosen to complement one another
 Size
 How can I store hundreds of programmes that are inconsistent in size?
 No mention of dates and venues of previous London performances of Ligeti's work
 Excessive details on the players
 14 pages of words only - could have been split up by pictures/adverts
 Design (except the cover which was okay)
 The programme in general
 Two concerts in one programme
 More information needed on the orchestra
 Cover - overproduced for what is required
 Typography not user friendly - too small
 No indication of the duration of each piece/finishing time (3)
 Not enough illustrations of original scores
 Lack of an index
 Colour design same as previous programme

Information repeated from the previous programme
It's rather grey in tone and feel
The design is old fashioned
Rather dated format
Type too small
The introduction is confusing (2)

12 Do you have access to the internet?

Yes 45
No 32

13 If you could have seen basic programme notes for this evening's concert in advance via the internet, would you have used this service?

Yes 35
No 40

14 Have you, in the past 12 months, attended pre-concert talks?

Yes 44
No 32

15 If so, how many talks have you attended?

1 9
2 - 5 26
6 - 10 4
More 4

16 Do you think that information in the programmes should complement information found in...

Pre-concert talks 41
Sales brochures 27
Displays 32

17 What is the ideal size of a programme?

The size of this page (A5) 42
Twice the size of this page (A4) 27

18 Do you keep programmes as souvenirs?

Yes 66
No 7

19 Would you welcome the chance to pick programme notes based on information which graded them according to their level of detail?

Yes 40
No 28

20 Number of concerts attended in past 12 months

1 - 10 21
10 - 19 20
20 - 29 11
30 - 39 5
40 - 50 2
Over 50 13

BARENBOIM AND THE STAATSKAPELLE BERLIN

Sample 56

1 Did you or someone in your party buy a programme at this concert?

Yes 49
No 7

2 Do you always buy concert programmes?

Yes 33
No 22

3 Why do you choose not to buy a concert programme?

I already know the repertoire 5
Too expensive 17
Inadequate information 4
Too many adverts 3

4 What would you consider to be a reasonable price to pay for a programme?

Under £1 1
£1 - £1.49 4
£1.50 - £1.99 16
£2 - £2.49 17
£2.50 - £2.99 7
£3 - £4 9

5 If you were attending a concert as part of a series or festival, would you be prepared to pay more for a programme which covered all the concerts as part of the series/festival?

Yes 29
No 26

6 Would a festival programme encourage you to attend additional concerts you may not have booked for?

Yes 22
No 34

7 Would you prefer to have free programme sheets with limited information only, on the orchestra and soloists rather than programmes with more detailed information?

Yes 29
No 27

8 The relative importance of different elements of programme

	Very Important	Quite Important	Not Important
Artists' biographies	22	25	2
Information on sponsors	3	14	34
Photos of soloists/conductor	15	29	8
Forthcoming concert details	21	21	13
Programme notes on works being performed	42	10	3
Biographies of composers	23	25	7
Advertisements	1	7	45
Details of players	21	28	4
Details of orchestra's management	3	20	30
Information about Friends groups	3	22	27
Details of how to support the orchestra	4	27	20
Information about life behind the scenes	8	27	17
Information for younger listeners	7	19	29
Details about the venue (eating etc.)	4	18	31
Details of local area	5	15	31
Details about pre-concert talks	16	28	10

	Very Important	Quite Important	Not Important
Players' anecdotes	6	26	22
Details of recordings	16	23	14

9 Items considered most important by this audience

Programme notes on works being performed	52
Details of players	49
Biographies of composers	48
Artists' biographies	47
Details about pre-concert talks	44
Photos of soloist/conductor	44

10 Things respondents liked about the programme

Notes on works (10)
 Programme notes: short and concise
 Listing of all the works to be performed with the movements
 Profile of composer (3)
 Notes on artists/soloists (7)
 Details of orchestral players (6)
 Photos and listings of orchestral members
 Details on Barenboim and Staatskapelle (3)
 Notes on conductor (4)
 Players' anecdotes
 The programme covered more than one concert
 John Suchet's article about Beethoven (3)
 Information about Berlin
 Layout (2)
 Paper quality
 Good photographs
 Programme notes
 Cover design
 Colour
 It covers the whole series
 Detailed, interesting and well presented
 Quality of paper and printing
 Print and design
 Stylish layout (3)
 It was free (programme voucher)
 Content
 Style
 Appearance
 Coverage and depth of information
 Quality of production
 Well presented and informative

11 Things disliked about the programme

The billing on the cover gives Barenboim greater significance than Beethoven (3)
 Notes obsessed with key changes
 Too many adverts (9)
 Too thick
 Too expensive
 All programmes in one book
 Information on a concert that I will not see
 I thought the pictures of modern Berlin were totally unnecessary and simply there to fill space (3)
 It did not say which members of the orchestra were playing
 Price
 Biography of composer
 Not focused on tonight's performance
 Orchestra list

Too much information on forthcoming events
 No details of future events
 Too little background information on works performed
 Anecdotes
 Sponsors
 Paper too thick and heavy
 No need for pictures of the sponsors
 Price (6)
 Size - too big (2)
 No details about intervals (2)
 Format
 Messages of welcome
 Insufficient concert detail
 Finishing time not given
 Too lush i.e. expensive paper and format
 Details about the venue
 Forthcoming concert details
 No colour pictures
 Not enough details about the composer, orchestra or conductor
 No recommended recordings
 Blue ink. You cannot improve on black print and white paper

12 Do you have access to the internet?

Yes 21
 No 35

13 If you could have seen basic programme notes for this evening's concert in advance via the internet, would you have used this service?

Yes 16
 No 26

14 Have you, in the past 12 months, attended pre-concert talks?

Yes 16
 No 40

15 If so, how many talks have you attended?

1 3
 2 - 5 11
 6 - 10 1
 More 1

16 Do you think that information in the programmes should complement information found in...

Pre-concert talks 19
 Sales brochures 22
 Displays 24

17 What is the ideal size of a programme?

The size of this page (A5) 37
 Twice the size of this page (A4) 18

18 Do you keep programmes as souvenirs?

Yes 44
 No 9

19 Would you welcome the chance to pick programme notes based on information which graded them according to their level of detail?

Yes 30
 No 18

20 Number of concerts attended in past 12 months

1 - 10	25
10 - 19	17
20 - 29	3
30 - 39	1
40 - 50	1
Over 50	6

4.2. Results of surveys of audiences at concerts by five ABO member orchestras

The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the London Symphony Orchestra (two concerts), the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the Royal Scottish National Orchestra (three concerts) and the City of London Sinfonia (three concerts) each conducted audience surveys as part of this study. The orchestras used a modified version of the questionnaire used for the SBC surveys. The results of the survey are summarised below.

LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Sample 128

- 1 The typical number of concerts attended by this audience sample in the past 12 months was 29.
- 2 Just over 60% of respondents always buy a concert programme.
- 3 The 40% of respondents who do not always buy a programme gave the following reasons, in order of importance:

• too expensive	100%
• already know the repertoire	48%
• too many advertisements	34%
• inadequate information	14%
• information too technical	4%
- 4 Respondents were asked to suggest what a reasonable price for a programme might be. The top three choices were:

£1	37%
£2	24%
£1.50	22%
- 5 This audience made clear choices about those elements of a printed programme that they consider very important or quite important. Artists' biographies were cited by 98% as being very important or quite important. Notes on the works being performed were cited by 97%. Then came composers' biographies (90%), the list of players (83%), details of recordings (72%), photographs of the artists (68%), future concert details (66%) and details of how to support the orchestra (66%).
- 6 Looking only at those elements considered very important, notes on the works being performed were cited by 87% and artists' biographies by 60%. All other elements scored considerably less.
- 7 For these respondents, the elements of the programme considered unimportant were advertisements (cited by 77%), details about the venue (73%), details about local facilities (68%) and details of the orchestra's management (65%).
- 8 Respondents were asked to list (without prompting) the three things they most liked and disliked about the programme for that evening's concert. This group agreed on the top three items: programme notes (89%), the essay (73%) and the biographies (41%).
- 9 They had two dislikes which scored more highly than any other element. These were the advertisements (cited by 49%) and 'repeated text and photographs' (48%). Next in the list of dislikes came 'small print' (24%) and an incorrect orchestra list (21%).
- 10 More than 70% of this sample collect their programmes and only 46% would prefer to have free programme sheets containing less information than the programmes that are for sale. Half of this group would be interested in programmes offering different levels of detail.
- 11 Just over a third would use the internet to access programmes were such a service available.
- 12 The preferred programme size was A5.

LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Sample 122

1 The typical number of concerts attended by this group in the past 12 months was 28.

2 Fifty-two percent of these respondents always buy a concert programme.

3 The 48% who do not always buy a programme give the following reasons, in order of importance:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----|
| • too expensive | 84% |
| • already know the repertoire | 43% |
| • too many advertisement | 31% |
| • inadequate information | 14% |
| • information too technical | 2% |

The percentages vary, but the reasons for not buying a programme are the same as for the other LSO sample.

4 Respondents were asked to suggest what a reasonable price for a programme might be. The top three choices were:

£1	37%
£1.50	25%
£2	25%

Once again these mirror almost exactly the responses of the other LSO group.

5 The strengths and weaknesses of concert programmes were clearly identified. Once again, notes on the works being performed and artists' biographies were considered very important by the largest number of respondents (91% and 93% respectively). For this group, as for the other LSO group, composers' biographies came third in the list of priorities (84%), followed by the list of players (75%).

6 The unimportant elements of the programme were said to be the advertisements (71%), followed by information about the management of the orchestra (68%) and information on sponsors (62%).

7 This sample's list of likes was topped by the libretto (71%) and the programme notes (60%). Next came the essay with 31%, followed by biographies with 21%. (One of the SBC sample concerts, which included a choral work, produced a similarly strong response to the inclusion of the words for that work in the programme.)

8 The list of dislikes started with advertisements (42%), followed by the price (25%), the information on the LSO (24%) and the small print (20%).

9 Sixty percent of this sample collect their programmes (compared with 71% of the other LSO sample), but in both LSO groups, the percentage of respondents interested in free programme sheets is about the same.

10 Fifty-nine percent liked the idea of programmes offering different levels of information.

11 Thirty-nine percent would use the internet to gain access to programmes, were such a service available.

12 In this group too, the preferred format for the printed programmes was A5.

ROYAL SCOTTISH NATIONAL ORCHESTRA

Sample 122

This sample combines the responses of audiences at three different RSNO concerts. The sample sizes were 64, 39 and 19.

- 1 The typical number of concerts attended by this combined group in the past 12 months was 14.
- 2 Eighty-nine percent of these respondents always buy a concert programme and 60% collect programmes.
- 3 The 11% who do not always buy a programme gave the following reasons. (The number of respondents not buying a programme was very small [13] and these percentages should not be read as representative of a larger group of non-buyers of programmes.)
 - too expensive 62%
 - already know the repertoire 23%
 - too many advertisements 23%
 - inadequate information 8%
 - information too technical 46%
- 4 Respondents were asked to suggest a reasonable price for a programme. An overwhelming majority (92%) opted for a price in the £1 - £1.99 range. Four percent suggested less than £1 and the remaining 4% were prepared to pay more than £2.
- 5 For this combined RSNO sample, notes on the works being performed were considered very important by 79% and quite important by a further 16%. Next in the list of very important elements came artists' biographies (50%), followed by biographies of composers (43%). Forthcoming concert details were considered very important by 40% and quite important by a further 44%.
- 6 Advertisements were considered the least important element of the programme (65% said they were 'unimportant'), followed by information on sponsors (53%), a list of the orchestra's management (51%), information about local facilities (51%) and information about the venue (48%).
- 7 Two of the three groups making up this sample were too small for their responses to the evening's programme to be analysed, but the likes and dislikes of the largest group (of 64) are worth reporting. Notes on the music were the most frequently cited like, followed by biographies of the artists and composers. Forty-two percent of respondents answered this question with reference to the concert programme, rather than the printed programme, and half of these cited the concert's Russian theme as their principal like.
- 8 This was a largely satisfied audience and many chose not to list any dislikes. Within the group of 64, the principal dislikes were the design of the programme, the volume of advertising, the price and the seriousness of the tone for a Proms concert.
- 9 Fifty-five percent of the combined RSNO sample would welcome the chance to choose programme notes offering different levels of information.
- 10 Thirteen percent would prefer free programme sheets to a bought programme containing more information.
- 11 Eighteen percent would use the internet to gain access to programmes, were such a service available.
- 12 The preferred size for printed programme was A5.

BBC SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Sample 45

1 The typical number of concerts attended by this group in the past 12 months was 30. Of these respondents, 49% always buy a concert programme, although for this BBC concert at the Maida Vale Studios the programme was free. The 51% who do not always buy a programme gave the following reasons:

- too expensive 91%
- already know the repertoire 61%
- too many advertisements 56%
- inadequate information 26%

2 Respondents were asked to suggest what a reasonable price for a programme might be. More than half (56%) suggested a price of £1 or less (20% suggested 'less than £1' and 36% suggested '£1'). Forty percent suggested amounts between £1 and £2 and 4% (two respondents) suggested that more than £2 would be a reasonable price.

3 This group said that the most important element of the programme was the notes on works being performed (100% said these were very or quite important). Next came biographies of composers (98%), artists' biographies (87%), forthcoming concert details (69%) and lists of players (67%).

4 The unimportant elements of the programme were, in order, the advertisements (cited by 80%) and information on sponsors (73%).

5 Sixty-two percent of this group collect their programmes and 42% liked the idea of free programme sheets containing less detail. The same proportion (but not the same respondents) would welcome the chance to choose programme notes offering different levels of information.

6 Forty-seven percent of this sample would have looked up the evening's programme on the internet, had it been available.

7 Respondents were divided on the ideal size for a programme, with 42% opting for A4 and 49% for A5.

ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

Sample 30

This sample is too small to be statistically reliable, but is included for interest.

1 The typical number of concerts attended by this group in the past 12 months was 30. Seventy percent of these respondents always buy a concert programme and 70% (though not exactly the same 70%) collect programmes.

2 The 30% who do not always buy a programme gave the following reasons:

- too expensive 89%
- already know the repertoire 44%
- too many advertisements 22%

3 Respondents were asked to suggest what a reasonable price for a programme might be. Thirty-seven percent suggested a price between £1.01 and £1.99, 33% suggested £1, 27% suggested £2 and 7% would be prepared to pay £2 or more.

4 This group gave equal importance to notes on works being performed and artists' biographies, with each being considered very or quite important by all respondents (100%). These were very closely followed by biographies of composers (97%) and lists of players (83%).

5 Advertisements were thought to be the most unimportant element of programmes (cited by 80%), followed by information on sponsors (63%).

6 More than a quarter of this sample (27%) would welcome the chance to choose programme notes offering different levels of information.

7 One third (33%) would log on to the internet for programme information, were it available.

8 Sixty percent of this sample would prefer programmes to be in an A5 format.

CITY OF LONDON SINFONIA

Sample 253

1 The CLS conducted surveys of three audiences at the Barbican Centre in London (105 respondents), the King's Lynn Corn Exchange (50) and the Ipswich Corn Exchange (98). The questionnaire asked respondents whether they had bought a programme, what they liked about it and if they had not bought one, why.

2 Of this combined sample of 253, 74% had bought a programme. Reasons for not buying a programme included the following:

- late arrival and unable to see programmes for sale
- programmes apparently not for sale during the interval
- already know the repertoire
- the cost

3 The comments on the programme booklet were largely positive. The criticisms included the price (for the concerts at King's Lynn Corn Exchange and the Barbican); a shortage of biographical material; the absence of a list of movements; the difficulty of reading print in dim light.