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# Is there an app for that? A case study of the potentials and limitations of the participatory turn and networked publics for classical music audience engagement

Crawford, G, Gosling, VK, Bagnall, G and Light, BA

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5 **Is there an app for that? A case study of the potentials and limitations of the participatory turn and networked publics for classical music audience engagement**

AQ1

10 Garry Crawford<sup>1a\*</sup>, Victoria Gosling<sup>b</sup>, Gaynor Bagnall<sup>b</sup> and Ben Light<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>University of Salford, ESPaCH, Salford, UK; <sup>b</sup>University of Salford, Salford, UK

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15 The participatory turn, fuelled by discourses and rhetoric regarding social media, and in the aftermath of the dot.com crash of the early 2000s, enrolls to some extent an idea of being able to deploy networks to achieve institutional aims. The arts and cultural sector in the UK, in the face of funding cuts, has been keen to engage with such ideas in order to demonstrate value for money; by improving the efficiency of their operations, improving their respective audience experience and ultimately increasing audience size and engagement. Drawing on a case study compiled via a collaborative research project with a UK-based symphony orchestra (UKSO) we interrogate the potentials of social media engagement for audience development work through participatory media and networked publics. We argue that the literature related to mobile phones and applications ('apps') has focused primarily on marketing for engagement where institutional contexts are concerned. In contrast, our analysis elucidates the broader potentials and limitations of social-media-enabled apps for audience development and engagement beyond a marketing paradigm. In the case of UKSO, it appears that the technologically deterministic discourses often associated with institutional enrolment of participatory media and networked publics may not necessarily apply due to classical music culture. More generally, this work raises the contradictory nature of networked publics and argues for increased critical engagement with the concept.

**Keywords:** apps; audiences; classical music; mobile telephones; social media; networked publics; Web 2.0

30 **Introduction**

35 The participatory potentials of the Internet are well established, although the language used and emphasis made have shifted over time. For example, in Rheingold's early work, arguments were made regarding the potential of the Internet to revitalize the public sphere and construct new forms of community (Rheingold, 1994) and later we see broader arguments regarding technologies of computer-mediated communication and their abilities to transgress the boundaries of social situations traditionally considered distinct (Waskul & Douglas, 1997). Such discourses imply participation with digital media and pre-date Web 2.0/Social Media discourses, which have given such ideas much more prominence. Perhaps here one would consider the arguments of Tim O'Reilly in respect of the emergence of Web 2.0 (O'Reilly, 2005). Indeed contemporary ideas regarding participation and the Internet (and more specifically social media), to varying

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\*Corresponding author. Email: [g.crawford@salford.ac.uk](mailto:g.crawford@salford.ac.uk)

degrees, coalesce around the argument that greater participation is possible due to technological developments, or more accurately, the specific implementation modes of technological developments. Whether such participation is desirable and actually achievable has also been debated. Nevertheless, whichever elements of this research and discourse one subscribes to it is, at least in the western world, difficult to deny the increased uptake of digital media, by an expanded range of individuals and groups, for the purposes of consuming, creating and sharing content of different types.

The participatory turn, the idea of everyday users engaging much more with technologies associated with the Internet beyond ‘read mode’, has become pervasive in contemporary discourses regarding digital media and particularly those categorized as social media. A key thread of such discussions has been the characterization of and potentials for networks. For example, Ito (2007) introduced the term networked publics to reference a linked set of social, cultural and technological developments that have accompanied the growing engagement with digitally networked media. Here publics are used to focus on how people respond to and are (re) makers of media (Ito, 2007). Following Ito, boyd (2008) has put forward a further conceptualization of networked publics, similar to Johnson’s (1997) work, in pointing to characteristics such as replicability and persistence, whilst making more explicit the potentials of searchable information and unknown audiences. Further, this discussion has also attended to the commercial and institutional potential for the harnessing of such activity and arrangements. From a commercial perspective, for example, it has been argued that social networks can help market the organization’s products or services (Kaupins & Park, 2011).

In this paper we draw upon a case study of a UK arts and cultural, the UK Symphony Orchestra (UKSO).<sup>1</sup> UKSO’s project centres on the development and implementation of a social-media-enabled mobile telephone application (‘app’), which aimed to increase revenue through ticket sales, increase audience engagement and potentially expand audience numbers and demographic. A specific context of the research was, therefore, classical music audiences and the potentials of digital media. There is, to date, still relatively little academic research on classical music audiences, and even less on the use of new technologies as a means of classical music audience engagement.

Recent research shows that attendance at classical music in the UK has been for a number of years in significant decline; a pattern attributed to ‘the sector’s relative failure to reach out to younger audiences’ (Mintel, 2010). Moreover, research has, time and time again, shown that audiences for classical music events in the UK, as in many other countries, are primarily educated and middle-class; hence, as Kolb (2000, p. 13) argues, ‘university students are a prime future market segment’. For the UKSO, the app was viewed as a way to engage networked publics and specifically a student market. Such a conceptualization of the potentials for audience engagement, across the UK arts and cultural sector at least, is not uncommon given a recent series of significant cuts in public funding and a government agenda that dictates the sector needs to demonstrate value for money and a contribution to the UK’s creative economy.

In the next section, we consider the literature related to mobile phones and apps, arguing that this has focused primarily on marketing for engagement where institutional appropriation is concerned. We suggest that such a configuration of apps requires extension given that we know that mobile phones and new media have a much wider potential for user engagement. We then provide details of our methodology and offer an analysis of our data. Our analysis and conclusions

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<sup>1</sup>A pseudonym – the actual name of the orchestra will be provided in any final version of the paper that is published.

illuminate the broader potentials of social-media-enabled apps for audience development and engagement beyond a marketing paradigm.

### Engaging audiences via apps

95 Since the early 1990s, personal communication systems – mobile phones and personal computers at home and at work – have greatly facilitated people’s networking capabilities inside and outside their homes (Kennedy & Wellman, 2007). Moreover, the use of apps on mobile devices is not new. Mobile personal digital assistants (PDAs) were popular in the 1980s and mid-1990s. The convergence of the mobile telephone and the PDA in the 1990s led to the first smart phones. 100 However, long before this, people were using their mobile telephones for much more than just making and receiving voice calls. The dominant PDA and mobile phone operating systems around the turn of the century were namely the Palm OS, Nokia Symbian and Windows Mobile, which all allowed additional applications to be loaded onto their devices. However, functionality was usually quite limited (Godwin-Jones, 2011). The key turning point in the popularity and scope of apps occurred with the launch of Apple’s iPhone in 2007 and Apple’s ‘App Store’ in 105 2008 (Sharma, 2010).

The advantages that the Apple iPhone and its competitors had over their predecessors included larger higher-resolution screens, more internal memory, faster Internet connectivity and, most importantly, the ability to access ‘full’ websites. The previous generation of mobile phones had relied on wireless access protocol, but a new generation of 2G phones in the late 110 1990s (including the original iPhone) offered increased speed of connectivity meaning the downloading and use applications that needed Internet access became more feasible. Apple, realizing the potential of downloaded apps in 2008, released a software development kit, which allowed third-party developers to programme applications for the iPhone, and Apple launched the App Store as a ‘one-stop-shop’ for customers to download these programmes.

115 The success of the iPhone and the Apple App Store has led its competitors to offer similar app marketplaces, such as the Android ‘Google Play’ store. Consequently, mobile telephone apps have become what Hurley (2012, p. 32) describes as ‘the new “gold rush”’. Software developers have seen mobile phone apps as a rapidly expanding, and hence potentially very profitable, marketplace. However, though many of the most successful apps have been games such as Doodle 120 Jump and Angry Birds, or social networking apps like Facebook, many businesses have begun to realize the opportunities that might be afforded by using apps to reach and communicate with existing, or potentially new, audiences.

As Bellman, Potter, Treleaven-Hassard, Robinson, and Varan (2011, p. 191) indicate, many businesses have in recent years sought to develop and market ‘branded apps’ – ‘software downloaded to a mobile device that predominantly displays a brand identity ... throughout the user 125 experience’. The use of mobile phones as a medium for such engagement is not new, although research in this area has tended to focus on technologically deterministically informed conceptualizations of engagement as concerned with traditional notions of marketing – the generation of wants and needs. However, the possibilities of mobile marketing in the early part of the twenty-first century were greatly hampered by the limitations of mobile technologies. Primarily, mobile 130 marketing here relied on sending (most often unsolicited) text messages to existing or potential customers. However, seemingly anonymous mass messages sent to mobile users were not a particularly effective way of engaging consumers; for, as Bauer, Barnes, Reichardt, and Neumann (2005, p. 181) write ‘the majority of anonymous mass advertising is despised by consumers leading them to reject the messages’. The nature of mobile marketing, as a form of engagement, has changed significantly with the rise in popularity of apps. One key advantage of apps over text 135 messages is that the user has to first choose to download the app, rather than being the recipient of



an unsolicited text message. As Bellman et al. (2011, p. 192) argue ‘the customer talks to the brand, not the other way around’. Hence, unlike traditional advertising, it is argued that app-based marketing has the advantage of being able to reach an audience who already have enough interest in the product to seek out and download an app; it uses a convenient and personalized mobile technology, and does so in a way where communication between the advertiser and customer can be bi-directional.

It seems to us that the potential of apps to increase audience engagement is often limited to discussions around marketing, yet Athique (2013) suggests that the mobile phone can be understood as a case study of McLuhan’s (1964) proposition of media as sensory extensions, extending our ability to hear and speak to others across time and space. Similarly, Geser (2004, p. 18) suggests that mobile phones empower their users by breaking down geographical boundaries and ‘deritualizing’ oral communication. Mobile phones increase our volume of communication. Mobile phones also allow for micro-coordination; users are able to make or change arrangements whilst on the move (Wessels, 2010) and coordinate the complexities of contemporary life (Haddon, 2004). However, just as mobile phones can be a means of connection, they can also be a way of disengaging from those around us. Mobile phones can be used as ‘symbolic bodyguards’ (Geser, 2004, p. 9), creating a ‘private bubble’ (Haddon, 2004, p. 111), and engaging the user in ‘civil inattention’, where in the presence of others we withdraw our attention ‘so as to express that he [*sic.*] does not constitute a target of special curiosity or design’ (Goffman, 1963, p. 84). The technological availability of mobile phone users renders their physical disconnection, what Giddens (1990) refers to as ‘presence-availability’ or Turkle (2011) as ‘alone together’. Such considerations then, we argue, suggest it would be helpful to extend research into institutional potentials of social-media-enabled apps and networked publics beyond a marketing paradigm.

AQ5

### The research

This study is based on a mixed-methods approach involving a primary sample group of 18–25-year-old university students. The key method of data was post-concert focus groups. Focus groups are the main method of data collection employed in the majority of existing studies on classical music audiences, including Kolb (2000), O’Sullivan (2009) and Dobson (2010). However, where Kolb and Dobson’s research focused primarily on taking research participants to concerts who had previously never attended a live classical music event, as with O’Sullivan, the aims of this research were more keenly focused on the existing audience.

In total seven focus groups were held after (in one case before) UKSO concerts in rooms at the concert venue, between February and June 2012. The concerts were selected on the basis that they had reduced rate tickets made available to students. The first two focus groups were held before the app was launched, and the remainder conducted subsequently. The focus groups attended to an exploration of the cultures of classical music audiences, an evaluation of the app and the development of understandings regarding the potentials for social-media-enabled apps for audience engagement and development.

The focus group participants were primarily self-selecting. For the first round of focus groups students purchasing tickets for the concert were emailed and asked if they would be willing to participate and offered a £20 (GBP) incentive for doing so. From this, 26 agreed to participate and were interviewed on that occasion, split into two simultaneous focus groups, each with one interviewer. For the subsequent concerts, students purchasing tickets through the app or web-channel were, as before, emailed, asked to participate in the focus groups and offered the £20 incentive for doing so. The number of participants in the focus groups varied from 10 to 13, providing a total sample of 81 students. Given the nature of the sampling used, no claims

of statistical representativeness can be made; however, the number of participants in this research is significantly larger than those interviewed in the studies by Kolb (2000), O'Sullivan (2009) and Dobson (2010), which each had less than 20 participants and similarly utilized non-probability sampling techniques. This is, therefore, to date possibly the largest qualitative study of a classical music audience in the UK.

To complement the focus groups, a short questionnaire was handed out to participations before each focus group and completed by 68 respondents. The questionnaires covered basic demographic information, but also, for example, attendance patterns, knowledge and interests in classical music and other cultural activities. In addition, a content and textual analysis was conducted of the app, observations of the audience were recorded (in notebooks) by two researchers at the four UKSO concerts and a number of photographs taken. One-to-one interviews were also conducted with three members of the marketing staff at the UKSO and the CEO of the app development team. All interviews and focus group discussions were transcribed and thematically coded.

### **Audience engagement through a social-media-enabled app at UKSO**

The UKSO's original student scheme, on which the app builds, was first introduced in 2004. That scheme operated whereby students were recruited at university freshers' fairs to become 'ambassadors', whose role it was to encourage fellow students to purchase tickets for concerts. For each ticket transaction, there would be one free ticket issued to the ambassador who had initiated the sale. This ticketing scheme operated through a text message system; where to purchase a ticket the ambassadors would respond to a text message from the UKSO, requesting a certain number of tickets for an event, and then the price of the tickets would be charged to their mobile phone bill. The UKSO would then later be paid by the mobile phone operator, minus a sizable administrative charge.

This scheme worked fairly well for a number of years, but the UKSO found that though the number of ambassadors was increasing, they were often purchasing only their own and one other ticket; effectively turning the scheme into a 'buy-one-get-one-free' offer. When coupled with sizable administrative costs, this meant that the scheme was becoming far less economically viable for the UKSO. Moreover, this text-message-based mechanism of selling tickets only allowed for a limited amount of information and user interaction.

The Student Mobile Project was designed to engage a student audience for the UKSO and a second smaller Orchestra, utilizing a downloadable iOS and Android app. The introduction of the app at the UKSO had three key aims. First, and primarily, the app aimed to easily and simply sell discounted tickets to a student audience in a more cost-effective way. Second, using an app would allow greater levels of interaction with the UKSO's target audience. Third, it was hoped that using a technology that is popular with young people might help increase the UKSO's overall student audience numbers. As the UKSO's Digital Marketing Manager stated in an interview (4 January 2012):

The overall aim for the [new] student scheme is to remove some of the barriers to attendance for students by discounting tickets, incentivizing coming as a group of friends and increasing repeat attendance through a structured loyalty scheme... The app is aimed at university and college students aged 18 plus, to roughly 25, although we have no upper age limit, based in and around London.

In terms of ticket sales, the app has been successful. Data supplied from the app at the point of the closure of our analysis indicate that it had 265 registered users, and of the 390 discounted tickets that were made available to students over the four concerts, 318 (82%) were sold. This



compares to 175 ambassadors in place and with sales of 67% of tickets on sales during a comparable period before the launch of the app. The UKSO and developers also appeared to be very happy with the introduction and use of the app. As the UKSO's Digital Marketing Manager stated (4 January 2012):

For a technology project, the development was surprisingly straightforward, with no real issues arising or compromises required. There have been the usual bugs and problems for some users, but nothing across the board.

The analysis that follows then has to be considered in this context and we focus much more on the potentials for engagement beyond ticket sales and subsequent attendance as a mode of considering success and failure as related to mobile media.

### **Project launch and acceptance**

Upon launch, the app generated some concerns amongst the student focus group members. Some questioned why an app was being introduced at all. An example is the comment made in Focus Group 7 Participant 1 (21 May 2012):

FG7P1: I just think they [the UKSO] want an app, cos it's just trendy

There was also some disquiet concerning the replacement of the old system, particularly at first. Some focus group participants suggested that they found the text messaging system easier, and also they were unhappy at the replacement of (what they frequently described as) the 'buy-one-get-one-free' offer that previously existed. Also, some focus group participants expressed concerns that the new student ticketing procedure seemed to prioritize smart phone owners, which they thought many students might not be. As a participant in Focus Group 1 stated (9 February 2012):

FG1P9: Not many of my friends have smart phones to be honest no they just use the old ones

However, these concerns were not necessarily borne out by the pre-focus group questionnaires, which suggested that 76% ( $n = 50$ ) of respondents owned a 'smart' phone. Indeed, and whilst recognizing our sample is not representative, it is interesting to note that around the time of our study Ofcom reported a 65% take up of smart phones by those in higher socio-economic groups (Ofcom, 2013). However, what this analysis does point to overall is a characterization of young people as not always demanding the latest technology and instead positions them as sometimes comfortable with older pre-Web 2.0 arrangements.

Though objections to the introduction of the app were quite vocal in the first focus groups immediately after it was introduced, at the subsequent focus groups, the number of objections was considerably lower, and the mood shifted to one of general endorsement. We suggest that this was primarily due to users becoming more familiar with the app, and in the later focus groups, it was more common to hear praise for it.

### **Encouraging engagement via digitally mediated social networks**

Once installed and opened the consumer accesses the initial 'Welcome' page. The Welcome page, as with the rest of the app, is set out with large and clear buttons and utilizes the 'brand' red colour theme of the UKSO against a contrasting black background. All of the pages on the app use

minimal text, adhering to the ‘golden rule’ of app design of ‘when considering text for mobile usage ... keep it as short as possible’ (Boiano, Bowen, & Giaia, 2012, p. 3). This strategy seemed popular with the students in the focus groups, as most stated that they were keen on the app remaining simple and not containing too much information or too many options. As a participant in Focus Group 4 (5 April 2012) suggested:

275 FG4P6: But I think the more options you have on the app the more liable it is to break down and just not work anymore. I’d rather have something that’s minimally functional, reliable than something that has tons of options ...

280 The event details page of the app provides links to Facebook, Twitter and email. This allows the consumer to construct an email indicating that they are looking at this event or publish a similar message to Facebook or Twitter. UKSO marketing staff indicated that they were optimistic that the ability to link from the app would be used by students. As the UKSO’s Marketing Manager stated (4 January 2012):

285 What I’m most excited about is that because the app will be the link to Facebook and Twitter and you can send out information by email straight away from the app so the close connection with social networks could be a huge potential.

290 Thus, we see here an expectation regarding the potential power of contemporary networked publics in terms of ideas of scope, replicability, searchability and underlying assumptions regarding audience engagement (boyd, 2008; Johnson, 1997; Ito, 2007). However, only one of the participants in the focus groups indicated that they had used the links to social networking sites, and most stated that they did not know there was a possibility to do so.

295 Interestingly, when probed further about the lack of uptake of the sharing option, it became clear that the participants did not know what the share icon (Figure 1) did, despite it being widely used in Web 2.0 applications. Such a finding requires that we continue to interrogate the digital media literacies of young people and do not black box them as digital natives. That said, when the focus group facilitators highlighted this feature, some participants suggested it might be something they would use in the future. As a participant in Focus Group 4 (5 April 2012) suggested:



315 Figure 1. The app share icon.

FG4P6: That would be interesting to consider that, you just click there and it creates an event and I just need to invite my friends to it. That'll be very handy.

Comments, such as those above, about the app being 'handy', were quite typical. Every focus group participant who commented indicated that they were almost never without their mobile phone, and therefore having an app that allowed them to purchase tickets was 'really convenient' (FG7P11, 21 May 2012). Though focus group participants indicated there were times when you were expected to turn your phone off, or onto silent, and in particular many emphasized the importance of turning your phone off during a concert, all indicated that they would have their mobile phone with them 'at all times ... that's the point isn't it? It's a mobile ... you take it with you' (FG7P11, 21 May 2012). This sense of constant connectedness also related to how the students discussed the app. Participants used terms such as the app 'linked them into [the UKSO]' (FG6P12, 21 May 2012), or gave them a constant awareness of 'what was going on ... [and] what was on' (FG4P7 5 April 2012). Hence, following the arguments of those such as Morley (2006) and Athique (2013), it does seem that the app and the students' mobile phones played an important symbolic role in maintaining connectedness to the UKSO. AQ7

However, focus group participants were generally pessimistic that the app could be used to necessarily attract a *new* audience, unfamiliar with classical music. As comments in Focus Group 2 (9 February 2012) reflect:

FG2P10: If I'm honest I think your target audience is more going to be people ... young people who are already interested in music I don't think you have much chance of um' ... interesting people um' into coming to concerts who aren't already interested in music, because I think that interest comes from a much younger age.

Of those surveyed in this research 83% indicated that they had previously attended at least one other classical music concert in the last 12 months. And in the focus groups only two (from 81) indicated that they had never been to a classical music concert before; and neither indicated that the app had played any significant role in them attending this time. As suggested by Boal-Palheiros and Hargreaves (2001) an interest in classical music tends to come primarily from parents and in school. For example, a typical comment was given by one participant in Focus Group 1 (9 February 2012):

FG1P2: Mine was through school so I was playing at school and we'd have lots of school trips because we all played in an orchestra so we'd go on school trips ... and to the opera and all sorts of stuff.

Another participant in the same focus group stated:

FG1P4: because of my parents ... they were interested in music- classical music so ...

Moreover, it is also important to note that research suggests that most Internet users do not make friends online (Gennaro & Dutton, 2007). Studies of student use of media such as Facebook suggests they are less likely to use the site to initiate new connections (Lampe, Ellison, & Steinfield, 2006), and that often tenuous connections may be archived via social media rather than actively engaged with (Richardson & Hessey, 2009). Thus, our data combined with previous studies prompts us to further consider the nature and possibilities for networked publics. Whilst they may offer opportunities for engaging known and unknown audiences via the spreading and searching of persistent information related to user activity, this is not predetermined. In a classical music context, our data suggest that even where data from the app are shared in

networked public contexts, the engagement of those without a history of attending concerts is perceived to be of limited potential. Our participants indicated that they would not use the app to invite the previously un-initiated when it came to classical music and instead would aim to restrict the spreading of information throughout networked publics only to those who knew about classical music culture. Importantly, even if someone who saw information about a concert attendance posted, our participants reported they would have difficulty in engaging such people because classical music is something they perceived as being difficult to educate people about. An example is the comment made by a participant in Focus Group 1 (9 February 2012):

FG1P6: I think it would be quite difficult to talk about [classical] music to someone [who did not already understand it] ... it's uh so complex that I don't know what you would really talk about to someone who has no understanding of classical music. You would have nowhere really to start to talk about a particular piece or anything so it would be quite difficult.

It thus appears then that UKSO would face difficulties in enrolling existing audiences in audience expansion activity, beyond those already cognizant of classical music audience culture, through networked publics. As Bennett et al. (2009, p. 92) suggest 'classical music remains important to elite groups for providing appropriate connections'; however, it seems that these connections are most common in-group (bonding) rather than outward facing (bridging) (see Putman, 2000).

Hence, the real benefits of the app may be in simply selling discounted tickets to the UKSO's existing market, rather than using it to seek a largely unknown, new audience via social media.

### Engaging with music

The events page of the app lists upcoming concerts that students can buy discounted tickets for. Each event has basic information listed such as the date, the name of the performance, the orchestra, the venue and a small thumbnail picture of the key performer. By clicking on each event more information is provided on an events details page. These pages also provide information such as that concerning the event, the price and access to a sound clip (of less than a minute) of music from the forthcoming concert. Boiano et al. (2012, p. 4) suggest that audio is useful in an app as it is both a good way of using valuable audio content and also provides a 'satisfying user experience'. Fagerjord's (2011) study of an app to support visitor engagement with cultural sites via the use of educational music has also suggested that situated sound can function well for culture communication and learning. However, the usefulness of the sound clips in this particular app divided opinion in our focus groups. Most of those interviewed had not listened to the sound clips; some had and liked them. As one interviewee stated in Focus Group 4 (5 April 2012), 'Oh yeah that's quite cool'. However, mostly the focus groups participants were more sceptical of whether you could get a real sense of a piece of music from such a short clip. An example is one view expressed in Focus Group 3 (15 March 2012):

FG3P5: Yeah, 'cos you can't sort of explain a symphony movement in a two minute sound bite...

Underlying the comments such as the one above was a discourse of the complexity of classical music; how it is learnt and the need for it to be hard work. This was a recurring theme within our research. A participant in Focus Group 4 (5 April 2012) expressed a typical sentiment here:

FG4P7: ... not everything has to be handed to us on a plate, like I don't see the need.

Most participants began engaging with classical music at a very early age, being introduced to it predominantly by family members. They had difficulty in explaining how they would ‘teach someone’ who had not grown up with classical music and many doubted it was possible. Yet, in contradiction, they also outlined how classical music appreciation had to be worked at – indicating that possibly new pieces could in fact be learnt. Yet, it was clear that an app was not an appropriate vehicle for learning about new pieces – and certainly not ‘in venue’ as we discuss in the next section. Instead, participants reported using media such as YouTube to familiarize themselves with pieces they had not experienced before. YouTube would be enrolled in the run up to attendance at the performance as a way of learning about the piece in order that they could fully appreciate and engage appropriately in the venue. Such an analysis compliments prior work that has demonstrated the potential for informal learning through YouTube in relation to the practice of graffiti for example (Light, Griffiths, & Lincoln 2012).

Yet, it would be easy to extrapolate such engagements to an argument that media, such as YouTube, allows anyone to learn about classical music and characterize it as a mechanism for engaging previously unreachable audiences. However, this ignores some basic considerations of power. For example, individual- or group-generated internal structural constraints can lead to the ruling out of options as possibilities as they are not even on the agenda (see Bourdieu 1984). That is, for some, classical music may be something that is ruled out for them and thus whether support exists to learn about such a thing on YouTube or not may not matter.

Such use of YouTube by classical music concert attendees, however, does allow us to further add to understandings of disciplines of listening in social media (Crawford, 2009). Crawford argues that such listening invokes a dynamic process of online attention, suggesting it is an embedded part of networked engagement – a necessary corollary to having a ‘voice’ (Crawford, 2009). Our analysis points to the value of listening in social media environments; however, it also makes clear the fact that not just any form of media will do. YouTube, which offered full recordings of classical music pieces, was preferred over the short clips made available via the app.

### Supporting engagement ‘in venue’

Additionally, the focus groups explored the idea that the app could potentially be used as a concert companion (or ‘CoCo’), to provide access to information during the live event. Concert companions are hand-held devices, such as PDAs, which provide information for audiences, during the live event – such as translations, notes on the music, composer, orchestra, conductor and so forth. Concert companions were introduced into several concert halls, and mostly in the United States, in the 1990s. Though Brown (2004, p. 14) suggests that consumer reactions to concert companions were encouraging, they have failed to become a common sight at classical music concert halls around the world due to three key issues. First, the PDA handsets proved expensive for orchestras to buy and maintain; second, writing commentary for each concert is similarly expensive and time consuming; and third (and possibly most importantly), Brown (2004, p. 14) highlights that whilst ‘some people really enjoy embedded interpretations in their concerts ... others really don’t’. This third and final point is an important one, in that, whilst some audiences may appear to want a more interactive and more informed concert experience, many will not.

Certainly, it seems from the focus groups, the idea of using an app to provide information during the concert was not popular, as it was generally felt that using a mobile phone during a live concert would not be appropriate. In many ways, the discussion here was similar to the arguments made by Ling (1997) in relation to the use of mobile phones in restaurants. Concert halls, like restaurants or theatres, have elements of both the public and private; in that they are shared spaces occupied (in close proximity) by strangers, who are (often literally) shoulder-to-shoulder. However, audiences commonly engage in what Goffman (1963) refers to as a ‘civil inattention’.

Here, people in a shared social space acknowledge others' presence, but construct fictive barriers by 'withdrawing one's attention from him [*sic.*] so as to express that he does not constitute a target of special curiosity or design' (Goffman, 1963, p. 84). However, civil inattention is only maintained whilst both social actors play their expected social roles. Deviating from expected and learnt social patterns, what Goffman (1974) referred to as 'frames', is likely to result in appropriate sanctions. Hence, whilst it was seen as acceptable to, subtly and quietly, look at a programme during a classical music concert, all focus group participants agreed that it would not be appropriate to look at a mobile phone. Typical opinions on this were expressed in Focus Group 4 (5 April 2012):

460 FG5P4: I really don't think we should be encouraging people to mess about with their phones in concerts ... *please* ...

Indeed, such views resonate with Small (1987) who compares attending classical music to a Catholic mass, which requires attendees and performers alike to follow specific learnt and time-honoured patterns of behaviour. Apps and mobile phones are deemed as unwelcome features in such structures even when offered as a surrogate for a paper version of a concert programme. Our work thus contrasts with that which suggests opportunities for social-media-enabled apps to integrate social networks and physical space in order to change the way users experience that space (Humphreys, 2007). Moreover, our analysis challenges technologically deterministic discourses that position smart phones as world changing (for example, see Goggins, 2009). Classical music cultures in this instance are obdurate and overrule attempts by new media to reconfigure existing arrangements. Classical music venues, although public leisure space, are not like coffee shops where it has been shown that 'placemakers' use wi-fi networks as a mechanism to engage in co-present sociability with other customers (Hampton & Gupta, 2008). Classical music cultures require people to hang out in very particular ways.

## 475 Conclusion

This work sheds light on the potentials of enrolling a social-media-enabled app, and the associated networked publics, for the purposes of engaging classical music audiences beyond a marketing paradigm. From research conducted with over 80 student participants, it is clear that this app has had some success. Since the introduction of the app more students are buying tickets, some liked certain interactive features of the app and the new ticketing scheme, and users highlighted a symbolic connection to UKSO through it. However, overall, most were keen that the app did not have too many features or was not too complex. Most had not used the existing features, such as the sound clips and links to social networking sites, and certainly participants were against the idea that the app might operate as a concert companion during a live concert. For most, they wanted an app that simply provided information and a link into the UKSO and allowed them to purchase discounted tickets. That said, it was clear that audiences enrolled other social media, such as YouTube, as a way to prepare for attendance at a performance.

490 In this case, it seems that a new mobile technology can play a role in facilitating and enhancing an audience's engagement with a traditional art form, like classical music. However, in our study there are limitations to this, as it appears important that the app does not impact on traditional and accepted patterns of audience behaviour, such as not using mobile phones at concerts. It is also unclear as to the extent to which the app will play any significant role in attracting a new audience for classical music. Because the app's social media connectivity was not used to any great extent further work is required to interrogate the potential for



networked publics to develop audiences for classical music via this route. Moreover, it is important to note that the case of UKSO is a very specific example and the potentials for social-media-enabled apps beyond a marketing paradigm requires further interrogation in a variety of institutional contexts.

Perhaps more generally, this work suggests the need for further work on the concept of networked publics and particularly their contradictory nature. Much emphasis is placed on networked publics as having qualities that can lead to specific activities and sets of arrangements. We would not disagree with this; networked publics clearly can do things in very particular ways. However, what our work also points to is the lack of power of such networks also. Just because networked publics display particular features, it does not mean that these will be engaged in a way that was desired. In our case classical music culture, therefore, is a key set of arrangements that work against the enrolment of networked publics for audience expansion and this further asks that the potentials of the participatory turn be given critical thought. Indeed, and moreover, whilst one might conceptualize networked publics as being philosophically consistent with ideas of the participatory turn, because of their conception of openness, our work suggests an alternate take on this. We can conceptualize those engaged with classical music culture in our study as engaging with networked publics in a way that reinforces structural arrangements in this area. Participation is only for those in the know and even though networked publics have the potential to be read by those new to the culture, classical music culture dominates and audience expansion is perceived to be problematic. Such an analysis, therefore, suggests value in further interrogating the power relations (not) brought about by networked publics in other contexts.

In summary, our work suggests that, despite technologically deterministic discourses surrounding the power of social-media-enabled apps, and the implied potential for exploiting of networked publics, such power may be limited without some traditional approaches being enrolled to promote the app to a potential audience in the first place. Moreover, though it seems that apps are the new 'gold rush' for many companies, it is important to recognize that different consumers will want different things from sometimes very similar technologies, and in this case, it is not multiple features, greater interactivity or detailed information, but simply the ability to buy cheap tickets.

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### Notes on contributors

Garry Crawford is a professor of Sociology at the University of Salford. [email: g.crawford@salford.ac.uk]

Victoria Gosling is a lecturer in Sociology at the University of Salford. [email: v.gosling@salford.ac.uk]

Gaynor Bagnall is a senior lecturer in Sociology at the University of Salford. [email: g.bagnall@salford.ac.uk]

Ben Light is a professor in Digital Media at the University of Salford. [email: ben.light@qut.edu.au]

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