

Authenticity is a complex issue when marketing classical music

Home > Insights into arts and culture > Developing new audiences in arts and culture

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Summary

This paper looked at the phenomenon of ‘historically informed performance’ (performing classical music on period instruments and in original arrangements) and examines how it gained relative commercial success in the UK during the 1970s and 80s. The author attributes the success of the early HIP movement to the fact that a critical mass of skilled and entrepreneurial musicians and performers were able to find an audience thanks to their superior ability in communicating the music’s magic, thereby bridging the distinct worlds of art, commerce and popular taste. This was at a time when authenticity was a badge of honour in various commercial sectors and although authenticity was a key component of the music’s popular appeal, it played a complex role in the music’s development.

The paper surveyed relevant literature and the content of interviews with 40 people from this part of the classical music scene

The interviews were conducted with a variety of people involved in HIP: including musicians, agents and record label producers. They revealed that the early exponents of HIP were interested in exploring new and interesting forms of music, rather than the pursuing authenticity. Although record companies used ‘authenticity’ as a badge and branding tool it was not a cynical or uncritical method to sell records to an unsuspecting public. Instead, the notion of authenticity as a brand was carefully and consensually negotiated between performers and the record labels. In the end the musicians were able to develop a particularly new and interesting form of practice that attracted the interests of commercial backers as well as an audience of listeners.

Keywords

interview

authenticity

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marketing

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