

# Managing the Western musical canon

Approaches to symphony orchestra program planning

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<b>Abstract</b>	
<p>This Master's thesis is examining the repertoire selection of symphony orchestras. It aims to investigate the processes, strategies and decision making of orchestras through how orchestras give understandings and meanings to musical concepts such as the Western musical canon and contemporary music. Through theories of canon and music history, this research analyzes the discourses of knowledge and beliefs orchestra professionals have when planning the concert season.</p> <p>The research data is gathered by interviewing three orchestra managers in Finland and analyzed through discourse analysis, with a social constructionist approach. Through this approach, the meanings and understanding of how managers construct their views towards program planning are reflected to the theories of Western musical canons, and the interviews also touches upon societal topics such as the relationship of the orchestra institution and society.</p> <p>The findings of the research conclude that overall, the repertoire selection is a continuous process of planning and negotiation that comes together piece by piece, and orchestras aim for a predetermined balance of musical periods and styles. Orchestra managers are interested and aware of the recent public discussion regarding a growing demand for diversity, gender balance and equality in repertoires and composer selections, and they pay attention to these issues by addressing them in the repertoires while maintaining balance. However, the analysis suggests that the power of the traditional Western musical canon is strong and rooted in the institutional premises and the educational system of orchestra musicians and conductors, and orchestras are careful and concerned not to disrupt the performers' or the audiences' tastes and expectations towards the traditional orchestral repertoires.</p>	
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Symphony orchestras, orchestra management, orchestral repertoires, repertoire planning, music history, musical canons, contemporary music, gender balance, cultural diversity	
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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background of the study

In the field of Western art music, symphony orchestras hold a significant role in the selection of whose music gets to be performed and heard. The works based on the musical form and instrumentation for the symphony orchestra are considered as the most cherished and valued style of Western art music, and the most famous orchestral music form the body of the *Western musical canon*. From the late 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the concert repertoire of symphony orchestras has been based on performing works from the canon, a collection of high value and greatness by consensus, generally accepted as the most important and influential orchestral music. As orchestras emphasize performing works from this collection of music, their practice maintains a mechanic of selective inclusion and exclusion. Lesser-known works and composers that are not included in the canon are rarely, or ever, performed to audiences, whereas works from the canon are being repeatedly performed because of their popularity and demanded by the audience. They form the pinnacle in the tradition of the Western art music culture. But as Anne Shreffler (2013) writes, through the Western musical canon, tradition is not simply just a set of practices that are repeated and transmitted for future generations, but tradition embodies a cultural authority, an instance that utilizes the force that allows the canonical tradition to remain over time (p. 3—4).

The timeline of Western orchestral music is considered to cover the period from baroque from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to current day. Despite the orchestral canon being limited to certain musical works, the amount of overall music composed over centuries is remarkably large, an incredible cultural heritage. It's impossible to measure the total number of composers throughout these centuries, but according to a non-profit website Composers21.com it is estimated that alone today there are over 4,700 professional living composers (Albertson, 2023). While females have had very limited opportunities to compose, *The International Encyclopedia of Women Composers* from 1981 lists over 6,000 women composers from

history (Cohen, 1981). In Finland, over 300 living composers are members of the League of Composers, considered to compose Western art music professionally (composers.fi, 2023).

Because the amount of music that has been composed is so incredibly vast, and symphony orchestras have a very limited number of performances, they hold great power in their decisions of whose music gets to be heard in concerts. A professional orchestra can typically perform approximately 50-60 concerts each season, and for a composer outside of the western musical canon it is an extremely rare opportunity to get their work performed. When the opportunity arises, especially for a living composer it can mean a boost to the composer's reputation and career: a concert review in the newspaper, visibility in the media and exposure to public interest, and an increased possibility of being commissioned for new works. For example, the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra has chosen contemporary composer Outi Tarkiainen as one of their theme composers for their 2022—2023 season, performing several Tarkiainen's pieces throughout the season. This leads to other attention as well: according to the orchestra's marketing, Tarkiainen is "booming" internationally, receiving lots of exposure in other countries beside Finland (Korhonen, 2023).

Contemporary music and living composers are competing with the historical works from the Western musical canon, and the share of contemporary works in concerts is small, sometimes minimal, against the Western musical canon. Andrei Nikolskyi (2012, p. 17) writes how the Western art music's market has a peculiar nature because of its historicity: the works from the 17<sup>th</sup> century as just as valid and functional as the newly created works. In fact, the Western musical canon works as the *modus operandi* for the new music: the canon's function is to provide a reference framework for the new works (ibid., p. 17). Indeed, Western art music emphasizes history over present day: Mikko Heiniö (1984) writes how today's composer works in a musical environment that has in many ways targeted its focus into the past. The composer's education mostly consists of learning music history and historical methods of expression. Composers will always have a

nuanced relationship to history, and if they don't realize it themselves, the audience does—Western art music composer cannot ignore history. (Heiniö 1984, p. 9—10).

In his book *Musicking – The Meanings of Performing and Listening*, Christopher Small (1998) writes about how music is human behavior—it is a social activity rather than being something external from us. Small constructs the idea of a symphony concert being a ritual, where all the attendants – audience, performers, and staff – come together to a ceremony where the shared social values are affirmed, explored, and celebrated. The ceremony is centered around the canon of great works, chosen from a certain significant repertoire, and the ceremony is the act of performance, not the works themselves. (p. 185). Pirkko Moisala and Markus Mantere (2013) write how Western art music is social and cultural activity of humans: it has historical values, norms and practices that are produced, strengthened, and deconstructed with the music (p. 201).

In Finland, symphony orchestras are public institutions, funded by public money through state subsidies and municipal budgets. As institutions, orchestras are also great cultural authorities that have decisive power to guide a respected and cherished historical art form into directions to meet the cultural, social, and aesthetic needs of their audiences. Moisala and Mantere (2013) write how in Finland the Western art music is a strong national element, that has been used to build the national image of Finnish culture (p. 201). The understanding and values of Western art music is produced through institutions such as music education, the concert tradition, agents and promoters, music halls, media and the music industry and cultural policies of public communities (ibid.).

## **1.2 Recent public discussion in Finland**

During recent years there's been more and more public discussion about the orchestra institution, especially about the repertoires that orchestras perform. The debate has discussed about problematic circumstances of the dominating Western musical canon with its historical works performed over new music; the lack of women composers in the repertoires; intersectional problematics and the meager livelihood of living composers.

Various associations and academic studies have conducted research that look in detail about concert programs—not only producing numerical data, but also paying attention to gender, race and other societal and diversity issues of composers and performers.

Many repertoire studies have found that while the dominance of historical music and white male hegemony is still very exclusive, the percentage of minority groups such as women composers is gradually rising. According to recent studies, this movement is happening both in Anglo-American countries (in USA: Jacobs 2021, IFCD 2022; in the UK: Donne 2022) as well as in European countries (Bachtrack, 2022; ClassicFM, 2022). In Finland, The League of Composers and The Association of Finnish Orchestras conducted a study of orchestra repertoires (SUOSIO, 2022), and a more comprehensive in-depth study is Aapo Tähkää's Master's thesis (2022) that collected and investigated the repertoires of Finnish orchestras during 2010—2019.

Tähkää (2022) raises discussion in his thesis about consensus and balance for orchestra repertoires and asks, with a reasonable concern, what kind of orchestral repertoire would be the best for all parties including the audience, musicians, experts as well as scholars? Tähkää concludes that, at least in Finland, symphony orchestras seem to perform moderately balanced repertoire of both historical and contemporary works – a notion that is also identified by the Finnish composers' society in *Kompositio*-magazine (Supponen 2022, p. 20). Nevertheless, Tähkää argues that living composers are pushed to the marginal by the canonical works, both in orchestral repertoires but also by an unbalanced supply-demand ratio: new music is being composed and published in so large numbers that the orchestra institution can perform only a fraction of it (p. 70—71).

The public debate in the media has been centered around the discussion of women composers, also including arguments to perform more music outside the Western musical canon regardless of composer gender. Musicologist Susanna Välimäki (2019a) has demanded diversity and balance in gender ratio, accusing the orchestra institution of protecting the patriarchal tradition, raising discussion with orchestra management and conductors (Kvist 2019a; 2019b). The Finnish National Broadcasting Company YLE

commented on the gender balance of composers and required for diversity (Hirn & Mattila, 2022a & 2022b) while music journalist Vesa Sirén argued that gender balance is improving as equality has already been succeeded for solo instrument players (Sirén 2021), while revealing in another article that 90% of repertoires are still composed by male composers (Sirén 2022a). Some peculiar coincidences occur, as well: The two Helsinki symphony orchestras performed the same piece within a month (Sirén 2022b), so while the public demands for diversity of musical works are being acknowledged, sometimes comical reportorial homogeneity can occur at the same time.

The public interest towards orchestral repertoires has also provoked discussion of musical styles, particularly the challenges of establishing contemporary music's foothold in concert programs. A recent book by contemporary composer Osmo-Tapio Räihälä, *Miksi nykymusiikki on niin vaikeaa?* (2021) even took its title from the public belief that contemporary music is difficult to understand and doesn't sound pleasing. In the book, Räihälä explains the history of orchestral music and finds reasons why contemporary music has such an odd reputation and a minority position in the repertoires.

As orchestras are public institutions, they always need to be under critical review. To allocate public funds to certain arts sends a message of what kind of culture is nationally recognized as valuable. The orchestra institution as an important part of our culture, but it also needs to be scrutinized for its cultural sustainability: social responsibility is required from cultural institutions just as well as from the population. The public discussion of societal and gender equality, as well as discussion of diversity regarding musical repertoires has its justified place within our culture, and there is also always need for academic research towards societal values.

### **1.3 Aim of the study and research questions**

This master's thesis is examining the repertoire selection of symphony orchestras. I am investigating the processes, strategies and decision making of how orchestras plan their concert seasons, and I'm especially interested in the understandings and meanings that



the orchestras give to certain musical concepts regarding repertoires, such as the Western musical canon and contemporary music. Through theories and concepts of the musical canon and music history I'm analyzing the discourses of the knowledge and beliefs that orchestras have as basis for their program planning.

I'm also reflecting on the societal dimension of symphony orchestras as institutions: is it possible to identify societal elements in repertoire planning, in addition to the core mission to perform music? What kind of non-musical elements orchestras perceive in their repertoire selections, for instance issues regarding gender equality, sustainability, or diversity? How do orchestras see their power position and authority towards giving opportunities to living composers, to ensure vitality for contemporary culture?

Symphony orchestras as cultural institutions are an interesting research topic from many angles. First, Western art music is a historical part of European culture, a musically diverse and carefully maintained ecosystem that not only has tempted generations of composers, but it also requires a deep professional ability of musicians and conductors, trained by a high education that concentrates on the very best talent. It's built around the best premises to be performed in grand concert houses located in cities' centers, and as a cultural phenomenon it creates figures that can be declared as national heroes. Western art music is very much dependent on its traditions, and as an art form or even as a behavioral ritual it is extremely conservative, reluctant for changes. The much-discussed gender inequality is one clear indicator that society around the Western art music culture is demanding change; in more racially diverse countries such as United States, the societal demand for change has more intersectional claims, because their population is more heterogenic.

When academic music research evolved in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, its interests were purely centered around Western art music, disregarding all other musical forms or cultures (Sarjala 2003, p. 16—17). Western art music was studied under strictly theoretical research paradigms, underlining the aesthetical autonomy of music—for musicology, music was an independent phenomenon, sheltered from any external influence. Only

after the rise of ethnomusicology and other research interest to emerging paradigms such as cultural, philosophical, or sociological musicology, music was understood as a cultural, communal activity constructed around the norms, values, beliefs, and myths of society. For this research, the orchestra institution and the discourses surrounding it are seen as socially constructed entities that reflect our societal values.

This research is leaning towards the concepts of musical canons and the historicity or written history of Western art music. The concept of musical canon is formed around processes of inclusion and exclusion—processes of giving or accepting value and authority. On a theoretical level, canons are quite comprehensively studied in musicology, but there aren't too many studies where canon theories are applied to practice or used in analyzing discourses. The critical research has evolved through gender musicology: pioneer feminist musicologist Marcia Citron (1993, p. 1), commenting on women excluded from the Western musical canon, concluded that “canon practices that ignore the production of half of its member are not honest about the identity they are instilling.” It's obvious that gender inequality has provoked to challenge canon practices, questioning the dominance of all-male panel of the musical canon. Chanda VanderHart and Abigail Gower (2021) remind that, if women are missing from the canon, whenever we try to justify it through an abstract term of *musical quality*, we should ask are we conscious and content in ignoring 50% of society's contributions to culture (p. 181). As a practical study that seeks information of how theoretical concepts are used for decision making, the research gap for my thesis is obvious. Also, as my research takes part in the public discussion, it can answer to questions not only of academic demand but also of the music field in Finland.

#### **1.4 Terms and classifications**

As a concept or a genre, defining Western art music is problematic. Classifying music is always bound within its culture: what can be considered as Western art music depends on the context. (Mantere & Moisala, 2013, p. 201). Generally, Western art music consists of

the overall musical genre from the renaissance period to this day, and it includes music performed with traditional orchestra instruments or by voice. A commonly used synonym for Western art music is *classical music*, but that can also refer to a certain musical period in Germany and Austria mostly known by the music of Beethoven, Mozart, and Haydn. Term *contemporary music* also has several different definitions, so it has similar problematics.

To avoid misconceptions and incoherency, I try to avoid using too general classifications, genres, or other definitions. Instead, I let the subjects of my thesis to give their own definitions of musical terms. In fact, one of the interest points in this research is to analyze how vague musical terms are defined within the professionals of music: the discourses in which they speak can reveal relevant understandings behind the terms.

I also avoid using words or phrases that refer to aesthetic choices of music, as they lack neutrality and are submissive to the discourses and environments where they are used. I do not use aesthetic descriptions myself, but they might occur in the analysis chapter from the persons I have interviewed.

### **1.5 Structure of the thesis**

This thesis is divided into six chapters, followed by references. The introductory chapter provides background information to the subject, presents some of the public discussion around it, explains the research interest and presents the main research questions.

This is followed by a chapter of theoretical framework, research paradigms and an overview to the previous research on the topic. For previous research, I present some of the recent studies of orchestra management and repertoire statistics. For theoretical framework, I present overview of previous research of the different concepts and theories of the Western musical canon and contemporary music. Theoretical framework is partially intertwined with the previous research: some of the theory comes from previous studies.

The third chapter introduces research and data collection methods and a consideration of my position as a researcher. In the fourth chapter I present my empirical findings, conducted by interviews, and reflect them over the previous research and theoretical framework.

The fifth chapter focuses on discussion and analysis of my research and brings together the key literature and empirical findings, followed by a final concluding chapter and references.

## 2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND PREVIOUS RESEARCH

### 2.1 Theoretical framework and research paradigms

This research is situated under a multidisciplinary theoretical framework of musicology and arts management. Under arts management, the interest of research is to examine the decision-making process of orchestra management towards repertoires: what kind of process is the overall planning of an orchestral concert season, what is the organizational structure and strategy and who are involved in the decisions.

In musicological research paradigms this thesis is situated in several frameworks: it examines philosophical, sociological, aesthetic, and cultural phenomena of music. Under music philosophy and music aesthetics, the research interest is focused on the ideology behind the concepts, understanding, meanings and values in orchestra management; how this ideology materializes in the program planning.

Under music sociology and cultural musicology, this study is interested in the societal aspects and social responsibilities of an orchestra: what kind of relationship an orchestra institution has with the society and how it defines itself as a public organization in the arts and culture sector.

According to Markus Mantere & Pirkko Moisala (2013), Western art music has been a traditional subject in musicology since its beginnings, but only after ethnomusicological research paradigms evolved in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, Western art music has been studied not only as musical structures and styles, but as socio-cultural practice. In fact, cultural and ethnographical research methods can reveal critical approaches to concert institutions, orchestras and music education. (p. 203—207, 211).

Juha Torvinen (2016) has done relevant studies in music philosophy, also investigating motifs of Finnish composers. He writes that music is ontologically a societal phenomenon, defined in societal structures of politics, religion, economics, judicial, communications and social classes (p. 12). Välimäki et. al. (2016) argue that the relationship between music and society must be always taken into consideration when discussing the justification of publicly funded institutions, such as orchestras. They ask whether music or artists should pay attention to societal problems and if yes, how it should be done. (p. 3)

Välimäki et. al. (ibid.) argue that the relationship of music and society is a central theme in the philosophy and sociology of music: according to the authors, in these research paradigms music is seen as a social force, a practice of action and communication that constructs socio-cultural meanings. The different orientations of cultural musicology have proved that music has always had socio-cultural definitions: music research is always sociological, because ontologically music is a social phenomenon. Music practice has always been composed, performed, listened, and used as part of societal circumstances, by different social classes, communities, and institutions, through certain rituals. (p. 5—8).

## **2.2 Orchestra management studies**

Previous academic studies of orchestra management are quite meager, but in Finland there are a few studies that examine the orchestra as an organization. The most recent one is Anni Bouyahia's master's thesis (2020) of Tapiola Sinfonietta, a symphony orchestra in the city of Espoo. Bouyahia studied the circumstances, position and challenges a symphony orchestra has in the current cultural setting, and identified three

key attributes the orchestra sees as its purpose: 1) high quality throughout in all levels of practice from artistic planning to customer service, 2) high attendance rate, to measure the satisfaction of the audience and to justify the need for continuous funding, and 3) the close relationship to the audience through hospitality work, to gain new audience and clarify the purpose of an orchestra as a socially sustainable organization. (p. 46—49).

In her PhD dissertation, Nina Koivunen (2003) studied the leadership of symphony orchestras. Her source of data was two symphony orchestras, and she applied her research using a relative social constructionist method, identifying different leadership discourses. Koivunen's research pays attention to the relationships between orchestra members and staff and the different characteristics of leadership. One of the main findings was the demanding nature of orchestra management and the different leadership discourses they are exposed to: they are expected to be experts in every aspect of the orchestra, with also having a deep artistic understanding and knowledge.

Hilppa Sorjonen's (2004) comprehensive research about art organizations' marketing and business orientation examines and evaluate the factors that arts organizations use for to promote and communicate themselves to audiences. Sorjonen's study revealed that contrary to public beliefs, arts organizations are dependent, interested and serious towards audience and customer happiness. The study also noted that a market-oriented arts organization doesn't have to be only commercial but can maintain a balance of popularity and artistic integrity towards more "challenging" artistic content (p. 181—182). However, the study also concludes that in the intersection of popularity and artistic integrity—fulfilling the sales goals while maintaining artistic quality and significance, the orchestra management is in a demanding position (p. 85—87).

### **2.3 Orchestral planning and repertoire studies**

William Weber, in his several publications about musical canons, has analyzed orchestra repertoires not only by theoretically but also in quantitative methods. Weber has studied especially the concept of musical canon and can be seen as a key figure in this field

(Weber 1999; 2003). His key observation behind his main arguments about the formation of a musical canon was based on the big change in 19<sup>th</sup> century orchestral repertoires, when orchestras shifted from performing new music to favoring older works, settling on a standard repertoire, and slowly but fundamentally creating the phenomenon of a musical canon (Weber 2003). Weber's finding was based on gathering data of concert programs and analyzing the repertoires: he found out that in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century the amount of music from living composers in concerts was as high as 89%, whereas in 1910 it had dropped to 18%. This meant that by the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, already the major share of musical works in concerts were composed by a dead composer, pushing living composers into marginal positions. (Weber 2003, p. 89).

Weber (2003) claims that the academic field is currently lacking systematical studies of orchestral and opera programs, which can lead to troubles when trying to evaluate the formation of musical canons (p. 344). However, during the last years there has been an increasing interest towards evaluating orchestral program planning and keeping track of repertoires. This interest seems to stem from two different interest groups: the more general interest and curiosity to the subject, as well as interest to study the repertoires from societal viewpoints regarding gender equity, race, and other diversity issues. In Finland there's also been new interest from professional composers and orchestras to measure repertoires and analyze the possibilities living composers can have for their careers. Studies have been conducted both from academic perspective as well as from specific interest groups: as stated in chapter 1.2, several public or NGO organizations with varying interests have produced statistics of orchestral repertoires.

Some of the academic repertoire studies give insight for this study and serve as key background information. The main benefit in these repertoire studies is that they reveal not only the specific numbers of performed works, but also the division between popular and unpopular composers: the definition of standard repertoire. The most recent study of orchestra repertoires in Finland is Aapo Tähkää's analysis (2022) of all musical pieces performed by Finnish symphony orchestras during 2010—2019. Tähkää has used transparent quantitative analysis of concert lists gathered by The Association of Finnish

Symphony Orchestras (SUOSIO) and analyzed the repertoires from many different angles, displaying results in a comprehensive format. Tähkää's time frame for concerts is well-thought, as it focuses on a ten-year period that ends right before COVID-19 pandemic started to disrupt the standard frequency of established concert seasons. This ten-year period gives valid data to analyze repertoires consistently, but also enables a more theoretical approach to discuss the Finnish musical canon.

Tähkää's research emphasizes on statistical and numerical data, even though he argues that his methods are primarily qualitative. What is perhaps most notable is that he uses the term *canon* mostly as a synonym for repertoires (p. 8—9, p. 70), and it can be viewed as a logical outcome for a quantitative study: simply put, the most performed musical works form a standard repertoire that can also be labelled as the musical canon. However, as I will explain further, it is problematic to use the term canon as a synonym for repertoire, even though it is often used that way. Nevertheless, Tähkää's research is up-to-date and serves as a fruitful source for further research, as he also has remarked himself.

Another recent statistical study of Finland's orchestral repertoires, conducted by The Society of Finnish Composers along with Association of Finnish Symphony Orchestras, analyzed the ratio between contemporary and classical music in the calendar year of 2021 (Supponen 2021). This study was a joint pilot project that is expected to continue in the following years, as the two organizations behind the research have similar interests to produce detailed information about repertoires. The results of the study show that during the year 2021 the share of contemporary music in orchestral repertoires were 27% and 73% older music, which was categorized as musical works older than 30 years. This study has raised public discussion and noticed by the major media companies in Finland such as Helsingin Sanomat and Yleisradio, indicating that repertoires are an important subject to discuss within the cultural sector.

The research by Supponen doesn't quite carry out the principles of an academic research, and while it provides valuable information, the timing of the research period dates in the



middle of the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has a troubling effect for the concert season in many ways, canceling scheduled concerts and obstructing traveling of both domestic and foreign artists to participate in concerts. Also, it can be argued that a calendar year is not the best period for analysis as symphony orchestras plan their concert seasonally from autumn to spring. Furthermore, the research is co-commissioned and at least partially conducted by the Society of Finnish Composers whose main interest is to promote their members' conditions to have their music performed by the orchestras. That is not to say that the research wouldn't fulfill objectivity principles but needs to be taking account when analyzing the data. The study also raises a general problem in classifying musical styles such as contemporary and classical: these terms always have to be defined, as they can be viewed as musically aesthetic and stylistic choices but they can also refer to certain time periods.

Other mentionable repertoire studies in Finland are Pirjo Kauhanen & Marke Vornanen's *Mitä orkesteri soittaa?* (1997), analysis of several orchestra's repertoires, as well as interviews and qualitative research about orchestras as art organizations. This research provides insight to orchestra management and leadership along with Nina Koivunen's study (2003). Aapo Tähkäpää's research (2022) also makes comparison and comments on Kauhanen & Vornanen's research and together they provide a temporal aspect to repertoires from the 1990's to 2010's in Finland.

Antti Pajamo (1997) studied the concert programs of the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra (RSO) for its 70-year existence period from 1927 to 1997 and compiled a database of all the performed works. Pajamo's research is limited to measure how much Finnish music was performed as well as what was the share of contemporary music in the programs. Pajamo's definition of contemporary music was specified to be "any piece whose composer is alive at the time of the performance" (p. 32). This research concluded that in the existence of the Radio Symphony Orchestra, the percentage of Finnish composers in the repertoire has been quite stable of around 30%, but percentage of contemporary music has been gradually decreasing from 50% to 20% during a 70-year period. The results are interesting for historical perspective, but the study only focuses on

one orchestra, limiting it from comparative analysis with other orchestras at the time. However, comparing the results to William Weber's data (2003), it is interesting to notice that RSO has performed a considerably high amount of contemporary music in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, while many European orchestras have already settled to perform mostly historical works.

Mafalda Gómez-Vega and Luis César Herrero-Prieto (2018) have analyzed the musical repertoires of Spanish symphony orchestras through indicators that they claim to evaluate the "quality" of the orchestras. This research setting is peculiar: the phrase *quality* usually rings all alarm bells when discussing art, personal tastes and opinions – there is no such thing as quality that could be objectively measured in art. The authors approach the term quality from a cultural economics viewpoint: how the orchestras reach their goals set by cultural policy. The authors have chosen three "quality" indicators: 1) contemporaneity: the amount of contemporary music that effects on risk and originality based on assumption that contemporary music alienate audiences, 2) composer popularity: the most well-known composers' music, and 3) conventionality: the diversity and originality of the repertoire in the overall terms. While the research is interesting from the cultural policy point of view, it could be argued that the word "quality" should be changed into a more neutral word that doesn't connote with quality of music which is a matter of taste and a highly problematic term in academic research.

## **2.4 The history of music and Western musical canon**

Studies about musical canons and especially the concepts of canons have been increasing during the last two decades. William Weber criticized in 1999 that academic research is lacking to problematize the western musical canon because research fails to recognize the ideological authorial position that canons hold. Weber's criticism was based to an argument that to understand the canons we must detach ourselves from it and from the discussion surrounding it, and only then we can question it and understand its musical and social foundations. (Weber 1999, p. 336—337).

Finnish music historian Jukka Sarjala (2003) criticizes music research from a similar viewpoint. He reminds that many researchers who are defending the existence of the Western musical canon have admitted that the written history of music promotes the dominating canon by not only programming canonized music to concert programs but also through publishing biographies and histories of mostly composers from the canon. (p. 15). This remark is also highlighted by a group of other historians (Heikkinen et. al., 2017), arguing that even today some scholars produce history of music from a traditional narrative of pinpointing composers and works and maintaining a traditional idea of the musical canon as an authoritative force (p. 3—4).

Sarjala (2003) also concludes that the tradition of writing music history has driven itself into a crisis, because music historians problematize the traditional positions of repeating the great story that already dominates how we see the past events. Music history has been traditionally written from the canonical viewpoint of great works and composers, but there is no reason why this tradition could not be examined from a completely different research paradigm. (p. 17). Eero Tarasti (1998) highlights that written music history is always an ideological act: it's an act of narration, under the laws of narration, and thus always has a subject position. If this subject tries to proclaim objectivity, it is only trying to hide the ideological connection to its discourse. Tarasti also writes about the importance of postcolonial music research and how it investigates the mechanisms of power and oppression in the Western musical canon. Postcolonial research criticizes, questions, and illuminates the hidden assumptions in musical canons, especially the “universal” values that German music has had in the music history. Tarasti argues that these values have transformed unnoticeable into the oppressed and marginal discourses, and postcolonial music research is needed to expose these conceptions. (ibid., 149—150)

Musicological research has since Weber's, Sarjala's and Tarasti's articles taken much more critical role in questioning the oppression and exclusive elements of the Western musical canon that is dominated by deceased white male composers and their works. Chanda VanderHart and Abigail Gower (2021) have listed numerous studies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century that raise awareness for alternative historiographical narratives. These narratives are

essential for re-writing history by different practices: publishing gender studies, creating gender study programs and institutes, arranging digital resources, organizing concert series (of non-canonized and/or female composers' works) and generally advocating for visibility of female composers and other marginalized groups. (p. 180).

Tarasti finds interesting that postcolonial music research has had such a small influence on music research, being more influential in other arts research such as literature (Tarasti 1998, p. 151.). Over twenty years later, this argument is presented in VanderHart's and Gower's article: they write that while attempts to present female composers for alternative narratives in classical music practice have done much for the female identity, majority of the musical canon is still dominated by "white, European, Christian men." (VanderHart & Gower, 2021, p. 181).

Gender in music has been a contemporary topic in composer and orchestra studies during the 21<sup>st</sup> century. There are numerous new studies about female composers, both in historical perspective as well as in studying current, living female composers, also reaching to other genders and non-binary people working in music. The spark of gender research and the lack of female composers can be closely linked to the musical canon studies as the canon is so fiercely dominated by a hegemony of male composers. Tia Väyrynen (2021) notes that before the 21<sup>st</sup> century only women have been a "gendered" subject in music, because white heterosexual masculinity has been an unquestionable norm (p. 2). Väyrynen has studied media texts about composer Kaija Saariaho and concluded how the issue of gender is still visible in the discourse if the subject is female, although lesser than twenty to thirty years ago (ibid., p. 79).

Weber (1999) examined the orchestral repertoires and noted that in the turn of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century it was unusual for music to be in circulation for more than a generation. The environment for music was in courts for the nobility, and only later music became a commodity for the bourgeoisie. This new "middle class" was interested to learn about music; the great works and composers, and so it developed into music education. (p. 337, 353—354). By 1910 the cultural framework for musical canonization had been set up:

orchestras had systematically started to include much more repetition of older works, and new music was largely isolated from public life. The public was more sceptical towards new music, and a recurrent theme was a critique towards new music. Audiences complained that composers only write music for each other, fuelled by symphony orchestras resenting modern composers. (Weber 2003, p. 79—91). A cultural shift towards enlightenment and sophistication enabled the canon practice to formulate (Weber 1999, p. 354).

Weber (2003) notes that in the latter stages of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was a transitional stage when the integration of new and old works was performed in more equal terms. This period of around fifty years ended to the victory of canonical works, leaving new works a little space in concert programs. (p. 85). Weber further writes that "[n]ow the idea of what a new work constituted became entirely different from what it had been in 1800. Any new work, was, on the one hand treated with reference to hallowed canonical standards and, on the other hand, defended by the composing profession as amoral good to which the public had to pay allegiance. Neither proposition had existed before." (ibid., p. 91).

Anne Shreffler (2013) also addresses that the environment for musical canon(s) to emerge could not be born until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, due to music being such a difficult phenomenon to communicate. Shreffler notes that musical canon originated much more recently than the literature or visual arts canon, because it required development of musical communication. Only when it became easier to notate, reproduce, preserve, and possess music by organizing the publishing system of sheet music, music could gain the cultural validity it has. Before developed techniques of notation, musical pieces were extremely difficult to copy and contextualize. (p. 1—2).

Marcia Citron (1993) argues that the repertoires settling to perform same works repeatedly instead of performing new works wasn't enough for canon formation. She suggests that anthologies played a key role conferring a master work status to a musical piece, as writing anthologies involved self-conscious and active selection of inclusion and

exclusion. Citron argues that once a work is labeled as masterpiece, it raises the status of the collection (anthology) where it appears. In turn, this makes the piece worthy of being performed and written about. (p. 32—33).

Lydia Goehr (2002) raises historically ideological questions in how the strengthening of musical canon(s) was connected to emerging nationalism, especially in Germany in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Goehr suggests that, even for today, defending the canon serves as an antidote against pluralism, relativism, extremes of democratization and fluctuating ideologies. She notes though, that if the debate about canons is polarized into conservative and liberal standpoints, critical thinking about canonization is unlikely. The ideological debate is not about musical works or composers, but about how a national or collective identity is constructed through the existence of a canon. (p. 312—314). Riley & Smith (2016) suggest that the formation of canons in the 19<sup>th</sup> century were projects of monumentalization and historicism that appealed strongly to emerging nationalists, most visibly in the German-speaking world (p. 192—193).

In Goehr's text canons can be seen as authoritative positions of value, making them as societal forces deciding what music is given a value in a society and what music is left out in a marginal. The power in musical canons is also visible in the history of music: the selection of what is included in the written history connects music to society. This very visible and notable aspect of canons is highly societal. The remarks about canons by Weber and Goehr are from twenty years ago, and after that United States and Europe has seen new waves of conservatism and nationalistic movements, as well as attempts to create "cultural canons" that I will briefly explain later.

In a journal article of *Musiikki-lehti*, Olli Heikkinen, Vesa Kurkela, Markus Mantere and Saijaleena Rantanen examine the nationalistic tendencies of the Finnish music history. In Finland, the written history of music has been for long dominated by a paradigm that emphasizes the birth of a national music culture. When examined through a nationalistic scope, the history is by and large seen as a national identity of what is "Finnish" music, regardless of genre. The past is narrated from a given feature that at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup>

century Finland created its own nationalistic-romantic musical life with its first professional orchestras, the first conservatory, patriotic concert repertoire and an aesthetic musical style lead by the most famous Finnish composer Jean Sibelius. This narrative is written teleologically, where the history is seen through the present day with the success and reputation it has today. (Heikkinen et. al. 2017, p. 3—4).

Western musical canon has nationalistic sub-tendencies, but their cultural borders are not shared by the geographical map of Europe in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. According to Lydia Goehr (2002), the relationship between a canon and a nation is far more complex. Goehr writes about the incongruence between Germany and Austria and how Austrian music had dominated the German music, especially in the Classical period, creating tension between which composer is considered foreign and on the other hand whose music is “German”. (p. 320—321).

#### **2.4.1 The concept of a musical canon**

Jim Samson writes in *Grove Music Online* article “Canon” that it is “[A] term used to describe a list of composers or works assigned value and greatness by consensus.”

Canonical inclusion promotes the autonomy character of musical works, rather than a commodity character. This autonomic character enables an independent status for a musical piece, detaching it from musical fashions or trends and thus raising it above change. (Samson, 2001). For Riley and Smith (2016, p. 192), the definition of canon is “a repertoire of high-status music from the past, set apart from everyday entertainment and regularly and reverentially performed in an ongoing tradition.”

Canon can be perceived as a standard or an ideal that is used to qualify values and norms. Canons summarize discourses of value, where national and cultural narratives are constructed. Power within canons is visible in celebrations, rituals, and landmarks. At the same time canon is aware of what’s outside of it in the marginal, and the marginal questions the existence and reasons of canons. (Tarkka 2022, p. 7).

William Weber (1999) notes that the term ‘canon’ is not only a musical term but a social and can refer to anything that is deemed essential by a society to establish order, discipline and measuring worth (p. 338). In musical applications, Weber suggests that a musical culture has three major kinds of canon: 1) scholarly canon, that conceptualizes music in theoretical terms. Originated from antiquity, it was a high academic tradition that was not practiced by musicians but philosophers and scientists. This scholarly canon made way at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century to 2) pedagogical canon, which was born on a more musical and theoretical level, tied to the teaching of music and composition and emulation of previous works. The pedagogical canon eventually was a strengthening agent in forming a base of great works around the music of Classism: Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven; composers whose music became canonized, standard repertoire in concert programs in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. (ibid., p. 339—340.)

Weber’s third major kind of canon is the performing canon that structures the repertoires and gives authoritative power to certain works. Weber argues that performing canon is ultimately the most significant type of a musical canon, and the essential force comes from its public recognition: where scholarly and pedagogical canons are closed for a certain (professional) group of people, the performance canon constructs the public concerts and is widely known. (Weber 1999, p. 340.)

Vesa Kurkela (2013) adds to Weber’s theories that as an academic research music history established on the grounds of what sources were available. Only music that had a written source was viewed as valuable, and even this wasn’t enough; only the cream of the crop was selected into pedagogical use and to concert repertoires. (p. 153—154). Following the classification of William Weber, the scholarly canon can be seen as an authority to the pedagogical and performing canons, essentially deciding the historical worth.

Weber’s division of canons into three different sub-types is somewhat problematic, because they have different meanings: while all of them have grounds on actual musical works, only the performance canon can be considered as a “list” of works and composers. Aapo Tähkää (2022) notes that when discussing canons, a division must be made about



theoretical (scholar) canon and a practical (repertoire) canon (p. 15). Also, it is important to notice that the general term ‘canon’ is sometimes a synonym to what Weber defines the performing canon: canon is the collection of the most widely known musical works and composers: the most visible surface of the phenomenon called Western art music.

When we ask what a canon is, we need to examine how a musical piece gets included into the canon. As already covered, canons began to form in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by neglecting new music and increasing repetition of certain musical works and composers. Anne Shreffler (2013) suggests four main indicators for a musical piece to be canonized, that are not individually sufficient for canonization, but together form a validating process: 1) number of performances of a musical piece, 2) number of books and articles written about the piece and/or composer, 3) resilience: that the piece holds its value and place in the canon through generations (a somewhat tautological indicator) and 4) historical significance: that the piece marks some kind of definitive moment in music history. (p. 9—10).

Following Shreffler’s indicators, a musical work does not become canonized only by being played in the repertoire. Also, it is not left out of the canon immediately if orchestras stop performing the work. The lifespan of a canonized work is much longer. What is noticeable in Shreffler’s canonical indicators is that they only focus on musical works but not on composers: for Shreffler, a canon seems to be predominantly about musical works. What could be added to Shreffler’s indicator theory is the composer’s legacy. We can argue if a musical piece can be included to the canon by following the four-stage criteria, but all the criteria except number of performances can be fulfilled by the composer as well. Often canonized works are composed by people who have multiple canonized pieces, and their historical significance, records in historical books, biographies, and academic studies as well as resilience of being a figure of authority.

William Weber (1999) identifies four “intellectual bases” of canon: 1) craft, 2) repertoire, 3) criticism and 4) ideology. According to Weber, craft is merely the skill level of a composer to produce music according to existing stylistic and theoretical ideals that were

commonly shared by the peer group of composers. Repertory is an indicator of how much a musical piece has been included into concert programs and how established position it has. Weber notes that orchestral repertoires need much more studying to gain a more comprehensive information about the practices of how orchestra programs are planned. Criticism is an aspect that Weber gives original credit to Joseph Kerman (1983), that basically means a level of authority above repertory: a critical discourse to empower repertory, that reaches the public and has its approval. And finally, ideology: justification of moral, spiritual, and civic forces within the society to legitimize the choices that are made. The ideology of the musical canon eventually decides the tradition and hierarchy of the genres. (p. 341—354).

The formation of a western musical canon goes hand in hand with established repertoires in the turn of 20<sup>th</sup> century, which lead the orchestral institution to gaining cultural authority. As Weber explained (1999): “Canonization was more than a literary process [...] It was influenced by a complex variety of social forces, ideologies, and rituals that can often be quite difficult to sort out.” (p. 349). Similarly, Anne Shreffler ties the canon to tradition that has authoritative power to set the standards of what is culturally or musically considered as “quality”, and it determines what are the norms of genre and language (Shreffler 2013, p. 4).

Marcia Citron (1993) suggested that the canon is “a narrative of the past and a template for the future” as well as “a means of instilling a sense of identity in a culture: who the constituents are, where they come from, and where they are going”. (p. 1).

Lotte Tarkka (2022) concludes that the canons are often defended by their “objective” aesthetic value, that this value would somehow seem as something natural and unquestionable – until it is questioned: from the beginning of 1990’s canons have been criticized widely, referring to various theories such as Marxism, post-colonialism, multiculturalism, gender diversity and value inequality. Tarkka reminds that every nation is heterogenic, and not one canon can claim to represent a national culture. These claims are powerful tools for inclusion and exclusion. (p. 8).

## 2.4.2 Contemporary music and the musical canon

The term ‘contemporary’ holds different meanings depending on the context it is used, and because of its plurality it can be both misunderstood as well as misplaced in temporal setting. Patrick Valiquet (2020) writes how the adjective ‘contemporary’ can be understood in both as a term meaning presence and distance: it has more of an abstract relation *with* time rather than a specific place *in* time (p. 187). Just like the musical period of ‘modern’ music that implies to the musical style in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, without the musical context the word ‘modern’ implies of being ‘latest’ in something – which ‘modern music’ surely is not anymore.

Mikko Heiniö (1984) writes about historical awareness of a (contemporary) composer. He concludes that composers will always have an awareness to the past, that is both an understanding of the distance between history and today, but also the continuity of past events. This is followed by a position that emphasizes the alternating nature of present day rather than a timeless, almost absolute nature of musical phenomena. (p. 10). Heiniö (2005) continues the theme twenty years later, arguing that new art has always been stigmatized as difficult to understand, until it has managed to claim its position. Some new works have been an instant success, while others never break through. Therefore, there is no simple answer to the crisis of the 20<sup>th</sup> century modern music, whether it drifted too far from the audience or not. Nevertheless, only supporting the diversity of art and freedom of expression can secure the existence of marginal. (p. 7—8).

Tanja Tiekso (2015) argues that avantgarde art form started as a radical movement against tradition: in music, it was to set free from the prison of classical music. Instead, contemporary music has submitted to the historical tradition of classical music, that are both now performed in the same concerts with the same physical surroundings, and for the same audience. According to Tiekso, the promised freedom of expression in contemporary music is an illusion; it restrains the whole contemporary music culture, that cannot question the tradition anymore but has become part of it. (p. 97).

Discussing the term ‘contemporary’ in this chapter needs definition: even music professionals, including orchestra management and musical directors can have different opinions of what the term means, and it is being used in the orchestra setting when mediating and describing works, composers, or aesthetics. For this reason, it is necessary to try to evaluate the position of contemporary music as well as its position in the musical canon.

In the context of musical canon, contemporary music has a special nature as its present status of being today’s music rules out its possibility to be written in the history. Only through the test of time today’s music will or will not be included into the historical narrative. Saijaleena Rantanen (2018) writes about how written music history is always a selective and teleological process of “winners” that molds our understanding of the past events from the viewpoint of those who fit the narrative (p. 75). Traditionally music history narrative has consisted of theoretical and aesthetic-stylistic content of composers and works, owned by the bourgeois male elite, but the recent research paradigms of the 21<sup>st</sup> century have broadened the ways that history is written. (ibid., 75—76).

Anne Shreffler (2013) points out that the cultural ruptures and expansions of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have massively shifted the boundaries of the traditional canon, both in attempting to de-canonize the normative “canon” [sic] as well as creating many co-existing canons of different subcultures and styles. The 20<sup>th</sup> century can be seen not only as a watershed to different styles and the neglect of the past in the classical music field, but also as a huge movement of popular culture, mass media and globalization. Shreffler writes about tradition: “it can be exerted by a specific social class, or by a group of practitioners with shared values and knowledge”, defining that as “an epistemic community”, implying that all canons require a similar kind of tradition just like the classical music canon. (p. 4)

Marcia Citron (1993) concludes that the cultural concept of canonicity holds enormous power in representing certain interests while excluding others. Citron agrees that canons can change through inclusion and exclusion, but changes happen only over time as

canons tend to resist major changes in short time. One reason is that humans tend to prefer things over others; to rank them from top to down, where in classical music the top is the canon. However, Citron underlines the social element of canons and hints that canons as social constructions cannot have a universal, unchanged nature. (p. 231—232).

Shreffler (2013) argues that it is necessary to add new works to the canon to maintain it. While a core repertory of classical works performed by orchestras and opera companies exists today, the repertory has been expanded at both ends: wide swaths of eighteenth-century music and twentieth-century music such as Shostakovich, Ives, Prokofiev, Hindemith, Richard Strauss, Stravinsky, Britten, and Bartók have entered the standard repertory, while the music of Massenet, Borodin, Delius, and Delibes does not enjoy the respect it used to.” (p. 6)

Political forces also affect canons. Perhaps the most visible example from our history is music from Soviet Union, where the communist party prevented Russian music to be performed. Only at the end of the 1940’s Russian composers such as Prokofiev, Shostakovich, Bartok and, little later Stravinsky, could be performed in concerts (Heiniö 1984, p. 6). Nowadays, all the mentioned composers have a stable foothold in the Western musical canon.

### **2.4.3 Canons in music education**

Finnish composer Riikka Talvitie writes in her article *Productive Mimesis* (2022) how composer education is ultimately based in imitation of what others have previously done. The pedagogy of composition, the methods of how writing music is taught to new generations of students is based on musical examples from the past. Composers establish their position in the continuity of Western art music by mimicking deceased and living composers, and what they learn about music is generally based on the Western musical canon and its male hegemony. Talvitie suggests that if we demand action towards gender equality and diversity in music, we also need to critically view how we teach music to new generation. (Talvitie, 2022, p. 153—160). Talvitie (2019) has also pondered this in her

own teaching in an essay: how to teach music history through non-canonized examples of composers, musical works, or music theory examples.

Mikko Heiniö (1984) has written about the same lineage of new composers being exposed to accept the written history of music. He argues how the contemporary composer is working in a musical culture that in many ways is focused towards the past. The education of a composer consists of learning the history of music and the historical methods of expression. In trying to communicate with their own music, the composer must wrestle with colleagues that have born 50—200 years earlier. (p. 9). Heiniö argues that perhaps in music the past is present more than in any other art form. (ibid.)

VanderHart and Gower (2021) write about the same problematics of male-dominated mainstream music history: women are underrepresented in music education and in the widely published music biographies and anthologies: the neglect of women in music history continues as these biographies are continuously republished. (p. 181).

The influence of the Western musical canon for music education should not be underestimated: children who start playing an orchestral instrument are being exposed to classical music through examples of famous pieces and composers. In the light of Weber's theory of the pedagogical canon (1999), there is a very visible path from learning music to becoming a music professional and repeating what has been taught – the pedagogical canon works as an enculturation process to classical music.

## 3 RESEARCH METHODS AND DATA COLLECTION

### 3.1 Qualitative research

Jennifer Mason (2002) writes about how qualitative research aims to produce contextual understanding from a rich, nuanced, and detailed data. It is a holistic approach, grounded to a position which is concerned of how the social world is interpreted, understood, experienced, produced or constituted. Mason categorizes few key elements of qualitative

research: 1) it should be systematically and rigorously conducted, 2) it should be accountable and not judgmental, 3) it should be strategically conducted yet flexible to the sensitivity of changing contexts, 4) it should involve critical reflexivity and 5) it should produce explanations or arguments. (p. 1—9).

The data collection method used in this study are semi-structured interviews. According to Hirsjärvi et. al. (1997), interviews have usually been one of the primary methods for data collection in qualitative research. Interviews have advantages as well as disadvantages and some of them are intertwined. (p. 200—201). For example, interviews can be socially awkward situations but also place the informant to a position where they answer biased on what the interviewer is interested in hearing.

Pirkko Moisala and Elina Seye (2013) write about interview methods in music research: an interview is an effective method to document the knowledge of the person of interest. Interviewing music professionals require a carefully constructed set of questions, aiming to create an interactive conversation between the interviewee and interviewer. The intention is a situation without too many preconceptions, to allow the interviewee to not fear for using complex or professional terms. Through a flowing conversation the interviewee is also free to come up with valuable information or themes that the interviewer might have not asked. (p. 48—49).

### **3.2 Research data and analysis process**

The research data consists of interviews of three Finnish orchestra general managers: 1) Radio Symphony Orchestra (RSO) general manager Tuula Sarotie, 2) Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra (HKO) general manager Aleksi Malmberg and 3) Turku Philharmonic Orchestra (TFO) chief executive officer Nikke Isomöttönen. All three persons have a similar role within their orchestras: they are the managers of the orchestra from an operational viewpoint, but they also collaborate to the artistic planning and repertoire selection. They are well-known professionals of their field and as informants for the interviews their level of knowledge and experience is high.

The interviews took place in February and March of 2023 and were executed as live, face-to-face interviews. They were recorded to a laptop and a handheld recorder for a backup, but not on a mobile device where the interview data could accidentally be sent into an online cloud storage. This way the researcher has a full control over where the interview files are stored and for how long. After recording, the interviews were transcribed with Microsoft Word Online and the raw transcription text was edited by the researcher.

The research topic features a multidisciplinary approach to the subject and the interview questions were designed with this approach in mind. To cover both the operational elements of orchestra management as well as the philosophical and socio-cultural research interest of how an orchestra mediates, communicates, and ultimately executes different musical concepts, I designed the interview into three themes:

- 1) repertoire strategy, artistic committee, and operational planning process
- 2) the understanding of the concept of the Western musical canon
- 3) the role of contemporary music and the societal aspects of an orchestra

These three interest points were thematically constructed to six different interview questions. The interviews were conducted in Finnish language and the answers I chose as relevant for the analysis were translated into English to be displayed in the analysis section in chapter 4.

I must take into consideration that the orchestras I've chosen for my research perform a greater variety of music than on an average in Finland. Recent statistical study on orchestra repertoires confirms this assumption (Tähkäpää 2022). For these orchestras, the amount of contemporary music as well as music from living composers is reasonably higher than in many other orchestras in Finland. As the orchestras do not represent the average repertoire of a Finnish orchestra, I must beware of generalizing the results of my analysis and be aware that overall, a sample of three interviews as research data is quite small. On the positive side, I can expect to have a more variety in the conversations due to the more stylistically diverse repertoire the orchestras have and their willingness to discuss it.



### 3.3 Social constructionism and ethnographical discourse analysis

According to Johannes Brusila (2013), constructivism (or social constructionism) is a theory and a research paradigm that examines how societal and cultural phenomena and understandings are socially constructed in human discourses. Constructive theory argues that the way we understand something does not only describe its essence, but the understanding of it is constructed through socially agreed and communicated knowledge. Constructivism has had an effect to music research during the last decades, especially on how music is studied as a cultural and social phenomenon. (p. 137). Simon McKerrell (2016) writes that social constructionism is an epistemological approach used to understand how talk and text work constructing our social lives (p. 425).

Studying a musical culture through constructive methods can provide new information about how established principles and ways of thinking are constructed, molded, and passed on to new generations. Brusila (*ibid.*) describes how cultural phenomena tend to be constantly given new meanings in relation to others. For instance, tradition is not anymore perceived as something given or unchanged, but as a constantly changing social process based on re-definitions. (p. 142).

Marcia Citron (1993) writes about the canon and constructivism; how history is a constructed narrative of our values and how it reflects our desires of how we would like the past to represent. For her, history is a constructed panorama of filled and rearranged details according to new insights about what has happened and what is present today. Citron suggests that the musical canon is a “meta narrative” of value, interpretation, and ideology – sometimes a coherent large work of art. An example of socially constructed meta narrative is the periodization of Western art music: periodization entails chronology. (p. 210—211).

Vivien Burr (2003) writes how “discourse analysis is an analysis of a piece of text in order to reveal either the discourses operating within it or the linguistic and rhetorical devices that are used in its construction.” (p. 202). Discourses are connected to the social and

institutional practices of how we see and live our lives and adjust our behavior according to prevalent norms. (p. 75).

Markus Mantere and Pirkko Moisala (2013) write that Western art music as a culture has traditionally been defined by its history that dates many centuries back in time. This history still has a strong influence on how the Western art music is socially constructed and communicated: how it is interpreted and received. The authors visualize this cultural tradition by well-known examples of how a composer is sometimes labeled as a “genius” or a “national hero”. This myth of genius is still very much alive in the musical canon and in the images of how an artist (composer, conductor, or a musician) is perceived. (p. 209—210).

Mantere and Moisala (ibid.) write how Western art music has in the last decades become an interesting research topic from an ethnographical research paradigm: how the music is studied as human social behavior, norms, and ways of listening. An ethnographical, cultural view to the art music culture can bring a critical view to deepen the knowledge of Western art music as a cultural phenomenon. From an ethnomusicological and ethnographical point of view the traditional way of music history, with its genius myths, hero characters and autonomic aesthetic of musical works, can be critically examined and deconstructed. The aim for these research methods is see the art music as a social phenomenon, with a pluralistic view of the world. (p. 210—211). Mantere writes elsewhere (2008) that in Western art music, the autonomy aesthetic of a musical work is very much alive: it claims that ontologically, musical works are entities that the performer interprets. The interpretation actualizes the musical piece, and the performance is judged by its “authenticity” or “loyalty” as measures of success. (p. 131).

Lydia Goehr (1992) writes about the concept of a musical piece and how it can be contextualized in two different ontological angles: *analytical* and *historical*. The analytical approach assumes that the musical piece is an entity, and how in it is perceived in different times. In the historical ontology, the approach focuses on how the concept of a musical piece and its role have changed over time, as a cultural phenomenon. To Goehr,

a historical ontology is an open subject, without too strict conditions. (p. 92). According to Elina Packalén (2008), there has been a growing critical discourse towards the ontology of a musical piece during the last decades: the idea of a musical piece as an independent entity, without reception or interpretation has been problematized. (p. 129—130).

I examine the orchestra institution and its understanding of cultural concepts such as musical canons, repertoires, contemporary music, living and deceased composers, but also the management, strategy, and decision-making. I study the theoretical frameworks and previous studies and conceptualize them in a cultural setting, and my interviews follow the constructive method: I seek to find information of how the orchestras themselves define their field of work. Pirkko Moisala (2013) writes about how an ethnomusicologist seeks meanings of music as a social action: how music is understood, mediated, and interpreted (p. 10). Following an ethnomusicological approach, these questions are in the core of my research.

Constructivism used as a research paradigm alongside discourse analysis provides an effective, though a demanding method. Brusila (2013) writes that in cultural research discourse analysis method usually involve a critical approach, that is used to compare why certain ways of thinking become normative instead of others Critical discourse analysis tries to find the mechanisms of how power and authority is created or gained. (p. 143).

### **3.4 Critical reflections, ethical considerations, and research position**

Eero Tarasti (1998) notes how research on canons and their suppressive mechanisms towards minorities is always an act of activism, just as the attempts of de-canonization. According to Tarasti, majority of older musicology is based on racist, patriarchal and essentialist assumptions, and postcolonial research aims to examine and identify these mechanisms. (p. 148—149).

Even if a researcher tries to stay neutral and objective towards their research interests, it could be argued that the decision to focus research on a chosen topic is an act to make a

change, to have someone's voice heard. Lotte Tarkka (2022) writes how cultures include different power positions, communicating with the marginal. This interplay cannot be avoided, because cultures are defined by structural power and spatial images. However, to analyze and identify how they are constructed, accepted, denied, and practiced helps us to gain understanding of our culture. By research, we can enhance the dialogue between different parties. (p. 19).

In Finland, as in some other countries, academic music research has recently been influenced by activist research approach. Mononen, Torvinen and Välimäki (2016) write on the manifest for activist research that activist music research aims to dismantle unsustainable, suppressing cultural practices in music, society and in research. Activist approach examines musical practices that produce and mediate societal injustice or inequality and how an activist researcher can help to expose them through music and research. The approach also investigates suppressing structures in music institutions, organizations, media, and other places and how they could be deconstructed changed. (p. 8—9). My research approach does not openly declare activism, but I understand and accept the attempts for activist research and understand and admit that there can be meta narratives in “non-activist” research as well. According to Välimäki et. al. (2016), the meaning and signification of music always arises in practice and in interaction, and participatory activism has a growing role in modern times of music and society. (p. 9)

Vesa Kurkela (2013) writes about research positions. He reminds that a music researcher usually comes from a certain background of music, having own musical experiences or having played an instrument that has led to socialization to that musical culture. A researcher that comes outside of a particular social circle can pay attention to cultural objects, angles, understanding and behavior that another researcher inside that social circle might have missed, bringing a fresh approach to the research. On the other hand, Kurkela argues that studying an “unfamiliar” musical culture requires an enormous amount of background work before a researcher can conduct a plausible study. (p. 167—168).

Music historian Saijaleena Rantanen (2018) argues against Kurkela's demands towards researcher having to socially enculturate themselves into a musical culture: for instance, the vast knowledge of music theory is not required to conduct a comprehensive study about Western art music. Rantanen argues that the traditional research paradigm to Western art music has too much focused on studying music through individual works, composers, and musical structures, and there is also importance in diverse research methods over traditional music theory and history. (p. 76—77).

My research position is neutral, as I don't have a personal connection with the orchestra institutions or the people I interview. I also don't have a musical education in Western art music but in other genres of music, so I'm not enculturated or socialized to orchestral music through pedagogy. My professional and academic interest stems from orchestras being powerful cultural and arts institutions, and their history in society is fascinating. I go to symphony orchestra concerts, but I'm more interested in musical pieces outside of the Western musical canon. This interest of minority positions has always driven me, and through academic research I'm interested to examine its mechanisms.

## 4 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS OF INTERVIEW NARRATIVES

The interview narratives chapter brings together the empirical findings for my thesis and it is divided into five themes. The first theme investigates the orchestras' strategies and organizational structure regarding program planning. The second theme examines the elements of program planning in depth: the different factors, limits, and opportunities. The third and fourth themes are constructed around the definitions of a musical canons and contemporary music: how are musical canons defined inside the orchestra's management and program planning and what kind of meanings orchestras give for contemporary music, individually and in relation to their understanding of musical canons. And finally, the fifth theme investigates social aspects of orchestras: what kind of

responsibilities orchestras have as cultural institutions and how they understand their authority and power positions.

#### **4.1 Strategy and organization**

A symphony orchestra concert season typically runs from late summer or early autumn to the following year's spring, with a summer break in between seasons. During the season major orchestras have usually approximately 50-60 concerts, varying from one to three concerts per week. All orchestras I interviewed have a designated concert hall: the two Helsinki orchestras perform in the Musiikkitalo and Turku Philharmonic Orchestra is moving from an old concert hall to a new one in 2026.

None of the orchestras have an independent organizational strategy, but they all follow a strategy from an upper level: state-owned RSO follows the Act on Yleisradio, Yle's strategy and Yle Code of Conduct (yle.fi, 2023b) while HKO and TFO follow their respective cities' public strategies (hel.fi, 2023, turku.fi, 2023). None of the orchestras display their strategies or values in their web pages or seasonal brochures.

In all three orchestras repertoire selections are made by a group of people, but the assembly of people varies quite much in each orchestra. The principal conductor and general manager are involved in all orchestras with HKO and TFO having also an additional artistic committee of elected orchestra musicians. In the season 2023-2024 HKO will change the program planning structure as they will establish an artistic leadership of a principal conductor, visiting artistic director and a residence composer as well as maintaining the artistic committee of musicians and the general manager. TFO also has a residence composer, whose music will be performed in concerts. RSO has the most centralized program planning, as the principal conductor and general manager are the primary decision-makers but involving guest conductors in their own concerts and constantly discussing with the orchestra musicians about the repertoire and listening to suggestions for visiting artists.

To clarify, I will use the title “general manager” for the people I interviewed for this study, but the title “intendant” is also sometimes also used. Especially in Finnish language the general manager is called *intendentti*.

The role of the general manager in the program planning is an executive role that overviews the programs, sets budgets, boundaries and limits and carries the final responsibility of operations. Tuula Sarotie (2023) describes that Radio Symphony Orchestra’s (RSO) centralized model has become their standard way of planning the orchestral season, as it allows for an effective way of execution without too many meetings that would encumber the planning process. Sarotie says that the program planning is an ongoing process for not only one but several orchestral seasons ahead, and it needs to be advance effectively. Similarly, Nikke Isomöttönen (2023) of Turku Philharmonic Orhestra (TFO) speaks about the need for continuous progress: program planning doesn’t happen in just one day but constantly, piece by piece.

Aleksi Malmberg (2023) of Helsinki City Orchestra (HKO) describes that HKO has two main strategic goals that are set together with the city administration: the orchestra must be an internationally impressive and acclaimed art organization that represents the tradition and future of the symphony orchestra. In addition, HKO is predominantly the orchestra of the citizens of Helsinki, that holds a relationship with its citizens and pays attention to the growing diversified cultural needs in Helsinki. According to Malmberg, these two goals—to succeed being international as well as local—are not conflicting with each other, and they work as the foundation for the program planning. The strategic goals come to action in two focus points: to keep alive the tradition of the Western musical canon and being responsible to perform new music of the current day. Sarotie (2023) categorizes RSO’s goals similarly into two main elements: RSO has an obligation and a mission to work as a pioneer and preserve the high level of Finnish music, as well as trying to maintain a certain freshness in the Western musical tradition.

During recent years HKO has launched a joint project with several research institutions and cultural organizations to evoke forgotten historical women composers and perform

their music in concerts. This project, called *HUOM – Historian unohtamat orkesterimusiikit*, focuses on historical Finnish women composers and aims to fill gaps and raise awareness of the gender issues in how women have been left out of the history books. This project serves as an example of putting music research into practice: it aims to uncover silenced women composers, to form a more accurate understanding of the music history in Finland. HKO performs this music in designated concerts and enhances the image of Finnish cultural heritage. The research aims to re-examine music history has deep roots in music research and in postcolonial paradigms; Eero Tarasti wrote already in 1998 how music research should study the history of the oppressed for a more polymorphous understanding of our cultural ancestors (Tarasti 1998, p. 151).

A comparison of the role of the general manager in the artistic planning to a previous study of Pirkko Kauhanen & Marke Vornanen (1997), it seems that all three managers are more included in the artistic decisions than in a previous study. The managers interviewed in Kauhanen & Vornanen's research had more administrative role, leaving the artistic planning to conductors and artistic committee members (p. 54—56), although not all of them were only administrative managers (p. 64). Overall, organizational principles and responsibilities of orchestra management have been similar throughout the 25—30 years.

#### **4.2 Elements of program planning**

When discussing about different factors that constitute the concert program, artistic choices are just one of them. All three managers stated that program planning includes so many different elements and components that using purely aesthetic or artistic criteria for selecting musical works is impossible. An orchestra must consider numerous different elements before confirming a concert program. Majority of the variables in consideration are related to the musical works and their compatibility to work together, but non-musical factors play a large role. As Christopher Small (1998) has suggested, on a general level, symphony orchestra concerts are very much bound to their tradition of place, time



and setting. A concert happens in a designated concert hall that is divided into a stage and audience; it happens in a specific time that usually last for around two hours with an interlude, and it follows a strict ritual of behavior and values (see p. 30—38, also 39—49). Hilppa Sorjonen (2004) also identified a set of visual, audible, and behavioral rituals not only in concerts, but in the culture as well, such as awards and public recognitions (p. 89). Through these rituals and artifacts, the concert tradition offers a readymade template for the program planning, and while in the program planning the orchestra has an enormous pool of musical works to pick from, the music must not interfere with the physical limitations of a symphony concert tradition.

The physical and temporal setting took shape in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and for the institutional basis for the orchestra. Inside this institutional structure, orchestra management handles numerous variables. To begin with, Sarotie (2023) notes that scheduling of guest conductors and soloists plays a key role in what kind of works are selected to the repertoire: guest artists will have their say in what they wish to perform. Some guests have a reputation of favoring certain kind of music, so an approach to invite a reputable artist can already define the aesthetic direction of a concert. Orchestras sometimes use a thematic approach to their seasonal planning, for instance highlighting certain composers or countries. Sarotie says that when inviting guests, depending on the reputation and experience, they might quite have precise demands of what they wish to perform. Malmberg (2023) has a similar notion in the experience level of the conductor: more experienced and sought-after conductors hold more power to choose their works in their concerts. On the contrary, young guest conductors are more willing to let the orchestra decide the concert programs by being careful not to displease the negotiations. Malmberg and Sarotie both note that the planning process of each concert doesn't follow a single unitary pattern: it can be driven by the guests' choices, by musical works and by commissioned works that are scheduled for premieres.

All the managers emphasize the complexity of program planning. Malmberg (2023) classifies some of the elements that the management needs to pay attention to, such as logistical, temporal as well as performers' health conditions. For instance, orchestras have

only a limited time to rehearse for the concerts that needs to be taken into consideration in rehearsing unfamiliar or technically complex pieces. Also, the overall volume of the music must not become a burden for musicians' ears: as Malmberg brings up, some orchestral pieces are so loud that it could become a health issue if musicians expose to loud music for long periods. Some works include instrumentation or other stage placement that requires a lot of arranging in between pieces, and this needs to be taken into consideration in the planning.

Sarotie (2023) mentions that the orchestra needs also to include pieces in their repertoire that maintain the orchestra's high level of consistency. For example, RSO performs baroque music not only for aesthetical or artistic reasons, but also for baroque music's structural attributes to enhance musicians' skills for interplay and timbre, which further helps the orchestra in performing other music as well. For Sarotie, baroque music consists of elements that serve as the basis of the later periods of Western art music, and it's also musical period that RSO wants to specialize at least once every year.

A recurring theme in the program planning is maintaining a balance. All three managers raise up the issue of balance many times in the interviews: it is a fundamental, common goal to find balance in many different areas from musical styles, solo instruments, audience expectations and varying tastes to budgeting and to the ratio of living and deceased composers, as well as gender equality of performers and composers.

Audience plays a specific importance to the orchestras, and they try to maintain close awareness with their audiences' tastes and requests. Malmberg (2023) underlines that without the audience the orchestra has no justification: HKO's mission is fulfilled only when they have an audience to play for. Isomöttönen (2023) uses almost entirely similar wording and states that the program planning should always be viewed from the perspective of the audience: the personal taste and special interests of orchestra staff must not overrule the demands of the audience. Majority of the audience wishes to hear the most famous musical pieces of Western art music, whereas orchestra performers and staff

knowledge is far more diverse, possibly being biased towards more unknown music in relation to an average concertgoer.

Before COVID-19 pandemic the concert attendance of RSO, HKO and TFO was over 90%, but the attendance has been slightly lower after the Covid restrictions have been lifted. The average attendances and ticket sales being high, managers feel that the orchestras are generally successful in their mission. Malmberg (2023) contemplates the relationship between easily affordable ticket prices and sold-out concerts and problematizes whether the ticket prices are too low to disturb the overall market mechanism of live music. He feels that the orchestra must also maintain a balance in the popularity factor of concert programs: as a heavily funded public institution, the orchestra can choose aesthetically ambitious repertoire without having to think only about how to sell as many tickets as possible. Both Malmberg and Sarotie (2023) argue that overall, the concert programs are aesthetically more diverse than in Central Europe or United States, where the repertoires are more focused on historical works from the Western musical canon. Statistically, these arguments are somewhat in line with the recent statistics (Bachtrack, 2023), although especially in the United States concert repertoires have greatly diversified during the last years (Deemer & Meals, 2022).

According to Sarotie (2023), the overall situation of attendances and concert programs is healthy in the way that audiences are interested in all kinds of music and every concert draws attendance. In fact, the predictability of which kind of concerts draw most attendance is difficult and often the expectations of concert popularity can prove wrong. Isomöttönen (2023) concludes that while generally unfamiliar repertoire can result in slightly lower attendance, he agrees to Sarotie that the behavior and curiosity of the audience cannot be entirely predicted. Isomöttönen states that in Turku a Thursday concert will usually consist of standard audience, whereas Friday concerts draw more random people, sometimes even resulting in applause between symphony parts. Sarotie finds the versatility in audience's interest a positive development and feels that in overall the attendance to concerts has become more stable, even though the attendance level hasn't yet returned to pre-pandemic levels.

A topic that raises different opinions between managers is the popularity aspect of guest conductors and musicians. Sarotie, who of the interviewees is the most experienced by professional years, argues (2023) that the field of Western art music has become less dependent on so called international star performers. She notes that the overall quality of orchestras as well as freelance artists is much higher than what is used to be, resulting in less emphasis for RSO to rely on their brand image through guests: the brand value of RSO has grown and became more trustworthy: Sarotie feels that the audience comes not to listen to the star performer, but the orchestra as well. Malmberg (2023) has a different overview: he sees that the “cult” of star performers is very much alive in the global market and feels there is too much emphasis on the persona of the performer. Malmberg feels that there is perhaps still too much emphasis marketing concerts through the guest performers. Isomöttönen (2023) agrees to Malmberg’s notions and feels that generally the Western art music field is very much driven by the personas of the performers, not musical works, or composers. Isomöttönen and Malmberg both agree that Western art music field does have its own phenomena of trends: for instance, Isomöttönen sees a trend in women composers and Malmberg notes that within conductors’ there are varying preferences; even older composers can become suddenly popular, with Malmberg mentioning 19<sup>th</sup> century composer Anton Bruckner.

Returning to the matter of balance, Isomöttönen (2023) raises the importance of balance regarding solo instruments. In the program planning he pays attention that during a concert season the orchestra would perform enough concertos or other solo pieces so that each solo instrument is given a concerto or other solo work. Similarly, Malmberg (2023) plans the orchestral season to equally involve solo instruments, paying attention also to gender balance in performers and composers, as well as some kind of proportions in composers’ nationalities. Isomöttönen also considers gender balance but makes a notion that it’s a difficult task. He feels that within musicians, gender balance is easier to reach, as there is more numerical equality.

### 4.3 The concept of Western musical canon in program planning

When asked about the role of Western musical canon in program planning, every manager responded that the question is at the same time difficult but important. The idea here was to allow managers to reflect over their knowledge, experience, and discussions that they hold with the artistic committees and analyze how they construct their understanding over the Western musical canon. For one, the discussions revealed that in orchestras' internal discussions the exact word "canon" comes up very rarely, if ever. It is a theoretical term, and not applied to everyday discussion, although technically it does come up in conversations due to its synonymous nature to the term "standard repertoire". To all managers the existence of Western musical canon is not questioned or problematized: managers are aware of its inclusive and exclusive power and how the orchestra repertoires heavily favor music from the canon.

As suggested by several scholars in the theoretical framework chapter, the overlapping between ideological canon and actual repertoire is evident in the interviews. Reflecting on William Weber's (1999, p. 340) three types of canons, the *performing canon* is closest to the meanings and understandings that orchestras refer as musical canon. Sarotie (2023) connects canonization and repetition: for her, RSO is creating its own canon by creating a bond to musical pieces they have found valuable to perform and come back to, adding them to their standard repertoire. For Sarotie this process can happen with commissioned works that RSO has premiered, but it can apply to other pieces as well. Sarotie suggests that canons could have a personal or an internal nature: every nation or even every person has their own canon. For her, canon can be understood as a subjective bond of personal taste. As an example, Sarotie mentions that Finnish composers such as Kaija Saariaho and Magnus Lindberg belong to "RSO's canon": there is a special relationship between RSO and a composer. Malmberg (2023) also notes that the common argument about single Western musical canon is misleading: to him, when talking to foreign colleagues it's evident that there are national differences and different canons, Finland having one of its own. To Malmberg, canon refers to musical works rather than composers, and Malmberg suggests that as a repertoire the canon has an alterable nature:

the orchestra's program choices restructure the canon. Malmberg also notes that different kind of orchestras have different canons: period orchestras have their own canon.

The ideas of different canons have strong connotations to Marcia Citron's (1993) ideas of socially constructed, multiple canons that can exist alongside the canon of "great works". Indeed, there is a "general" canon that includes all the most famous composers and works; alongside there are local, national canons as well as even orchestra-related canons, as Sarotie (2023) suggests. The idea of an orchestral canon can also be quite visible with some orchestras having honorary composers; someone who is involved in the history of the orchestra by residence or through a private bond, created by long collaboration.

Malmberg (2023) notes that HKO shares a common perception of what is a Western musical canon, and that term can be analyzed as synonymous to the "standard repertoire". When referring to canon's nature as a standard repertoire the orchestra's artistic committee has discussed whether there should be a timespan in within certain musical works would be circulated – for instance a 5-year period to include Brahms' symphonies and so on. In these discussions HKO has realized that this timespan would quickly run into problems, as the standard repertoire is so large that no time frame could be enough to cover all the works of the repertoire.

An interesting notion is that while repertoires consist of works, for the managers a canon implies to both a musical piece and a composer. These two entities are used almost synonymously: during the interview situations the discussion moves seamlessly back and forth from a "canonized piece" to "canonized composer". These are not synonymous, as Isomöttönen (2023) reminds that many canonized composers have a lot of works that cannot be considered to belonging to the repertoire canon. Many studies and statistics of program planning focus on musical works, analyzing the number of performances and constructing the canon out of a repertoire, but canonized composers have lots of music that is hardly ever performed. Isomöttönen (2023) talks about expanding the borders of canon: for him there is value in finding musical pieces that are not in the traditional canon, but close to it, such as lesser-known pieces from well-known composers.

Malmberg (2023) describes elements of HKO's program planning from a slightly similar point: he finds it important to look back into history; to examine if there is something relevant for today's audience or musicians to be found and brought up.

The importance of maintaining the tradition of Western art music comes up in all three interviews, and it is in each orchestra's core mission. Malmberg (2023) notes that tradition needs to be kept alive by performing it, because music only exists for the moment when it is heard. Sarotie (2023) makes a similar ontological notion and underlines the interpretation that happens in the performance: a musical piece is very exposed to the way it is performed. Sarotie remarks that within conductors there is a strong emphasis to interpret traditional great works from the history, to find value in the uniqueness of interpretation. Sarotie finds that within RSO there is a uniform understanding to perform the great works, a desire shared by all parties: conductors, musicians, and the audience. A recurring notion for all orchestra managers is that performing works from the Western musical canon is easily justified by the high demand from the audience.

Tradition is a way to preserve history, and an orchestra is a powerful institution to sustain the historical continuity of Western musical canon. William Weber (1999) argues about the performing canon that it is the most significant type of a musical canon that gains its essential force from its public recognition: where the scholarly and pedagogical canon are closed for a certain (professional) group of people, the performing canon also includes the public (p. 340). Ultimately, the authority of the canon is given to it by the audience; the value is generated by the interaction of the audience and the orchestra to ensure that certain works and composers constitute the tradition.

The orchestra managers' understandings of the musical canons have obvious significations relating to Anne Shreffler's (2013) theory of three blended processes in the musical canon. 1) the maintenance of the existing canon, 2) the inclusion of newer works and 3) the formation of parallel canons within different repertoires (p. 6). All these three

processes are evident in the orchestras' program planning; it is more about finding the right balance between different music in the repertoires.

When discussed about different musical periods, none of the orchestras affirm that they would use segmentation or pre-determined percentages to allocate them in the repertoires. Isomöttönen (2023) describes that program planning doesn't happen in one day where everybody would get together to decide next season's program: repertoires are constructed gradually and organically during the season. Isomöttönen and Malmberg (2023) speak about following rough percentages of musical periods and Sarotie (2023) brings up that intuition is something that she finds helpful in program planning: not everything has to be reasoned in numbers. Isomöttönen (2023) says that there is also often an element of luck, or coincidence, in program planning. Sometimes being in the right place at the right time opens a door for a musical piece to fit in the program and resolve a need.

While repertoires do not form through segmentation of musical periods, all managers do pay attention to some level of quota of musical styles. This is justified according to audience needs. Isomöttönen (2023) reminds that ultimately, it's the audience who decides what the orchestra should play. Part of the professionalism is the experience to listen to the audience, and, as Sarotie (2023) says, the audience of RSO are very aware of what they want to hear in concerts. Sarotie also refers that national composers such as Sibelius always draw a lot of audience, justifying its dominance in the repertoire.

Isomöttönen (2023) feels that a whole concert season doesn't have to have a solid scheme, but a season can include several smaller themes. Different themes can serve a purpose for different kind of listeners in the audience. Malmberg (2023) also speaks about building different thematic experiences to target different audiences: how to choose music that serves people with varying aesthetic tastes, while maintaining a coherence in the concert season. On systematically finding unheard music from history for orchestral repertoires, like HKO does, Isomöttönen comments that they do not simply have enough staff resources or working hours for that, even if they wanted to. In TFO the members of the



artistic committee have an obligation to follow the current musical trends and tendencies, but deeper archival work cannot be done within the orchestra's resources.

#### **4.4 The position of contemporary music**

Statistically, the percentage of contemporary music in concerts is relatively high in Finland. According to Aapo Tähkäpää's analysis (2022), during 2010—2019 the percentages of reportorial music from living composers were 20,4% for RSO, 16,6% for HKO and 14,1% for TFO. The managers consider the situation good in Finland and feel optimistic towards reportorial variety and diversity. On an international level, Finland has a pioneer position in performing new music, but as stated in chapter 4.2, the percentage of contemporary music around the globe is rising rapidly.

In the interviews, the answers in defining the character and role of contemporary music included similarities as well as some differences. Each orchestra performs contemporary music on a regular basis. For Sarotie (2023) it is without a doubt obvious that RSO performs new music. During Sarotie's tenure she has worked with several principal conductors, and each of them have never questioned the importance of contemporary music in the repertoires. In all orchestras contemporary music is programmed to concerts alongside older music, and Sarotie mentions that nowadays the musical style of contemporary music can vary tremendously from a modernist style to almost something that could sound like a movie soundtrack. Isomöttönen (2023) also emphasizes the aesthetic variety of contemporary music and states that it cannot be categorized into a single style: for Isomöttönen, contemporary music sometimes even has reminiscences of older periods of music. According to Sarotie, contemporary music works as part of a concert program alongside traditional music if all the musical pieces go well together and the conductor is suited for the concert. Sarotie mentions that RSO doesn't have purely contemporary music concerts other than when they perform at Musica Nova festival, a festival for strictly contemporary music, where HKO also performs.

Patrick Valiquet (2020) problematized contemporary music's lack of aesthetic character: for Valiquet, contemporary music is a vague term that really doesn't have a relation to a certain time: it doesn't have a beginning nor an ending (p. 187). Malmberg (2023) also problematizes the timescale of contemporary music. Like Sarotie, he also feels that there is no single style to contemporary music: aesthetic styles and methods of expression are vast, and to Malmberg it's more relevant to categorize contemporary music being music by living composers.

Isomöttönen (2023) argues that the definition of contemporary music is difficult, as the term itself is also so abstract. To Isomöttönen, contemporary music can have a multi-dimensional definition, and depending on the context it can refer to a musical style, to a certain period of time or to the status of whether the composer is alive or deceased.

Isomöttönen feels that probably the most general definition is to say that contemporary music is music that has been composed during the last twenty years but understands that for untrained ears it can be purely an aesthetic style.

For all three orchestras contemporary music exists in the concert alongside historical and canonized works. Reflecting the practice where a contemporary or other lesser-known musical piece is accepted alongside canonized works has been covered in Christopher Small's (1998) book *Musicking*, where he examines the symphony concert being a ritual to celebrate the musical canon. According to Small, a concert is a holistic experience, consisting of numerous different elements, all carefully guided towards experiencing the symphony concert in a certain correct way (Small, p. 185). A new element such as a contemporary piece can be included but it must suit to the existing pattern: the preconditions of performing canonical pieces must apply for non-canonical pieces as well. Reflecting on Tanja Tiekso's (2015) arguments to contemporary music culture not wanting a freedom of expression, to break away from classical traditions, none of the orchestra's raised issues about the performative differences between contemporary and classical music. In this sense, contemporary music is a musical style among the classical concert setting that has accepted the norms and values of traditional concerts.

The discussion of contemporary music is also a discussion of living composers work opportunities. A topic that has been quite strongly discussed in the media, Isomöttönen (2023) feels that there is a stronger public demand to support the works of living composers, and TFO has gradually started to pay attention to more inclusion in that matter, but the task isn't easy: Isomöttönen feels pressure in wanting to find space for new music, as well as maintaining a good amount of popular works in the repertoire.

The existence of a contemporary canon raised deliberation among orchestra managers. As briefly discussed in the chapter 4.3, Sarotie (2023) suggests that contemporary music already has its own canon: she mentions composers such as György Ligeti, Lucio Berio, Thomas Adés and the Finnish Kaija Saariaho and Magnus Lindberg and states that the contemporary music canon obviously has a figure of its own. Malmberg (2023) brings up Magnus Lindberg's breakthrough work *Kraft* as an example and suggests that the piece has a status in the musical canon, even if it's rarely performed. The difference between canonical status and status in the standard repertoire appears here: as Patrick Valiquet argues (2020), a musical piece doesn't have to have a stable presence in a repertoire to be canonized; an argument also supported by Anne Shreffler (2013) and William Weber (1999).

#### **4.5 Social responsibility of an orchestra**

The final theme of the interviews was to touch upon social and societal aspects of a publicly funded symphony orchestra institution. Social aspects are not only an individual theme, but in fact they are entangled in other themes as well: the authoritative position of musical canons holds a massive amount of cultural and social capital, and the orchestra as the primary embodiment to represent the Western art music is a key figure to use this capital. Recently there has been a small trend in some Finnish orchestras performing musical works that address societal issues, and the spark for this interview theme comes to examine how orchestras feel about their social responsibility.

The responsibility in leadership to maintain a neutral stance is common among all three managers. Isomöttönen (2023) speaks carefully about the importance of having a critical attitude towards the music TFO performs: while it is not written in TFO's strategy, Isomöttönen feels personal responsibility to scrutinize the orchestras relationship to our existing culture and enhance the diversity for example to include more women composers' works in the programs. It is a part of the leadership to pay attention to diversity, and Isomöttönen underlines the social consciousness in decision-making and calls for rapid changes to gender equality. Sarotie (2023) makes a similar notion about women composers: it is a societal issue of wide public discussion, and the orchestra closely follows the public discussion, to being able to react to the demands of greater gender equality.

Sarotie (2023) makes an interesting insight to the discussion of gender equality in classical music. As she has also stated publicly in *Hufvudstadsbladet* (Kvist, 2019), Sarotie notes that while the demand for women conductors is currently very high, the gender ratio is not equal by profession: women conductors are a minority, and currently there are just few women conductors that many orchestras around the world are pursuing. Sarotie also reminds that when planning who to hire to conduct, ultimately the most important thing over gender issue is that the person suits together with the orchestra.

Isomöttönen (2023) points out that with contemporary music it is much easier to reach gender equality, because living composers' gender ratio is much more equal. The difficulty is when programming older music and music from the canon: it is over-dominated by white men. The problematics of gender balance crystallizes in Isomöttönen's comment: the demands for cultural diversity and sustainability are difficult to answer by performing the most popular and celebrated music from the Western musical canon. This debate has also been visible in public discussion: musicologist Susanna Välimäki (2019a) argued in *Hufvudstadsbladet* (5.9.2019) that the orchestral repertoires maintain patriarchal culture in continuing to favor Western musical canon over other music.

When looking the orchestra institution through this lens, its conservative and outdated features come into consideration. For example, some music researchers have argued that the difficulty of finding historical works by women composers is exaggerated, that there is plenty of music to be found. Along with Susanna Välimäki (*ibid.*), VanderHart and Gower (2021) argue that there are numerous historical women composers to be represented, such as Lily Boulanger, Louise Farrenc, Amy Beach, and countless others. VanderHart and Gower hint that often the non-inclusion of women composers is justified by the inferior quality of the musical canon, which happens to be dominated by male composers. VanderHart and Gower problematize the question of quality, a subjective opinion, and remind that inclusion should always go beyond quality. (VanderHart & Gower 2021, p. 182). In the reasonings to favor the Western musical canon for its “quality”, Jim Samson remarks that in the postmodern age it has been increasingly difficult to argue that the idea of canon as a measurement for some kind of absolute quality would be sustainable (Samson, 2001).

While VanderHart and Gower raise up the issue of “quality”, all the orchestra managers feel that quality is not a valid term to be used in program planning. It’s a term that is too subjective, abstract, and difficult to be justified as an attribute. Isomöttönen, Malmberg and Sarotie all underline that the decisive factor is the suitability of musical pieces together with the orchestra, the conductor, the audience, and with the concert program. There is a clear understanding between managers that the amount of suitable music for repertoires is extremely larger than what orchestras can ever perform, and new music is composed all the time. Sarotie (2023) feels that the situation is quite heart-breaking from the composer’s point of view: there are simply too many composers for all of them to be included in repertoires. Isomöttönen (2023) also states that the situation is difficult on how much new music can be performed from living composers: ultimately the listeners decide what the orchestra performs.

Malmberg (2023) also recognizes that the orchestra’s artistic decisions play a key role for composers’ livelihood. According to Malmberg, the field of orchestra music is very much centered around performers, managers, agents, and promoters. Isomöttönen (2023) makes

a similar notion: concert promotion and the visibility of a symphony orchestra is for the most part constructed around the performer, not the composer. Malmberg suggests that there is a built-in paradox in the relationship: there wouldn't be any orchestras or music without composers, yet the composer has the least amount of power in the ecosystem. Malmberg states that this is one of the reasons HKO has decided to include a composer to their upcoming artistic committee to enhance the composers' voice in the program planning, although he doesn't specify further how this works in practice.

As orchestras have recently increased their attention to some social issues, such as the previously mentioned composer gender balance, one of the research questions was to find insight to the criteria of how music is selected into repertoires. Aesthetical attributes and popularity of musical works are obvious factors for inclusion, but are there other criteria that would have impact on repertoire selections? Recently, some orchestras have performed contemporary pieces that are influenced by societal issues such as climate warming, refugee crisis or political extremity: some composers feel obliged to speak out of issues they are concerned of. The interest of non-musical issues being motifs for composers' work seems to be increasing: According to a study by Juha Torvinen (2016), especially younger composers' feel obliged to address their concerns through music.

When asked about what the orchestras standing in addressing societal issues, all managers were hesitant to take a strong position. For them, orchestras are art institutions that need to stay neutral in political or societal issues, and it's also an obligation of being a public service. Isomöttönen (2023) proposes that orchestra's relationship between societal issues is related to the people who manage the orchestra: if a conductor would have personal interests towards societal issues, they could have an influence in selecting musical works that address these interests. In some situations, it's easier to join to a collective front: Isomöttönen raises up the ongoing war in Ukraine, and how there is a common, obvious interest to support Ukraine through performing Ukrainian music. However, Isomöttönen suggests that because the majority of repertoire is by and large consisting of historical music with no political or societal agendas, this reflects in the neutral image symphony orchestras have in the society.

Malmberg (2023) suggests that Western art music is intrinsically only music, and to him music has a non-secular nature. Malmberg justifies that orchestra has an obligation to leave the interpretation of music to the listener, though he admits that an orchestra cannot exist without values. He feels that if the orchestra decides to make an argument towards a societal issue, it must be done carefully: orchestra is not only a public institution, but also a workplace for over hundred people of varying personal opinions.

Sarotie (2023) and Isomöttönen (2023) both feel that while the orchestra institution must be careful in expressing opinions, it can still act as an enabler for those who wish to have their voice heard. For Sarotie, it is obvious that there are societal issues to be corrected such as gender balance, and the society is going through a crucial period to ensure a better future. In the process of enhancing inclusion and diversity, each orchestra needs to find the right partners for fluent and suitable collaboration.

The final social theme in this chapter is the question of power and authority of the musical canon. Sarotie (2023) and Isomöttönen (2023) both have contemplated the idea of canonization – why and how some musical pieces become canonized, and how this canonization process is functioning. To Sarotie, it is a social process: it begins with performers deciding to repeat a musical piece, and the audience reacting positively to the performance. Sarotie suggests that the audience is both reactive to the musical piece, but also how the orchestra performs and interprets the piece – it is not only how notes and rhythms are constructed in the score, but how they are played. Sarotie also muses that there must be an element of luck in who has been canonized: timing, as well as master-apprentice relationships have played a role in the process. Isomöttönen (2023) also speculates that the music or the composers in the canon could be different, but the canon would probably still exist, functioning as authoritative power like it does now.

## 5 DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

This research attempts to seek answers and information to the question of how orchestra managers perceive the orchestra program planning in the established authoritative structure of the Western musical canon. When analysing the discourses of research interviews, there seems to be a common understanding towards a more diverse program policy, motivated not aesthetically but by social responsibility: a common notion is that Western art music and the orchestra institution cannot isolate itself from the diversifying and developing society that surrounds it. As Isomöttönen (2023) contemplates, ultimately orchestras are managed by people and their decisions construct the way orchestras work. The level of attention to diversity, sustainability and equality seems to be increasing within orchestras—at least the ones examined in my thesis. It seems likely that the future will bring further changes to program planning and gradually more inclusion to the Western musical canon, or a decreased authoritative power of the canon in dominating the concert repertoires. However, it could be argued that the power of the traditional canon is strong and rooted in the institutional premises and the educational system of orchestra musicians and conductors. To overcome the ethical issues in the inclusion and exclusion of the canon, it should be systematically challenged and questioned.

The three orchestras in my thesis are financially supported to operate on a satisfactory level, and they are able to invite guest conductors and musicians. Guest performers are important for promoting the orchestra and improving ticket sales, and they also take part in the program planning, usually being already biased towards performing certain kind of music. Overall, the program planning is a continuous process of planning, negotiation and booking, and it comes together piece by piece, in each orchestra aiming for a predetermined balance. Orchestras have their own established structure in the artistic planning: RSO has the most centralized, while HKO is moving into a model that aims to have more input through collaboration of external artists.

William Weber (1999) identified three different types of canons inside the Western art music: scholarly, pedagogical, and performing canon. I would conclude that the orchestra



institution follows all these canons: it understands and accepts the scholarly canon by acknowledging that performing the great works is mandatory; it can only hire musicians and conductors that have been professionally educated through the pedagogical canon and enculturated to the consensus of valuable repertoire and aesthetics; it accepts the repertoire of great works and ensures that they are performed on a regular basis. It is paradoxical that the Western musical canon is at the same time the tip of the iceberg of all available orchestral music; a curated collection of the “very best”, but at the same time it is large enough that some musical works inside the canon can bring a freshness of irregularity, without repertoires having to seek non-canonical music to offer alternatives.

Anne Shreffler (2013) argues that the European musical canon (sic) has been under threat since the 20<sup>th</sup> century for multiple societal, economic, and ideological reasons such as wars, mass migrations, decline of power of intellectual elites, electronic media, rise of popular music, increased participation of women to Western musical life, globalization of European classical music etc. (p. 2). However, her arguments or fears of the decline of Western musical canon seem to miss the target: repertoire statistics, as well as other research about how musical canons exist and hold their power, clearly prove that the historical music tradition is deeply rooted in the core of how the Western societies practice the art of classical music. My analysis also backs up this argument: Western musical canon is not being replaced by other music, but as Shreffler herself also concludes, the canon changes over time.

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, modern and contemporary music have been included in orchestra repertoires, but their share is small compared to historical works. In fact, it could be argued that they hold a minority position reflecting the representation of our current world in the scope of gender, race, social class or even the average age. As orchestra managers are aware, involving more contemporary music leads to much more diversity towards gender, race, and social class, so increasing the percentage of contemporary music in orchestra repertoires also increases societal diversity.

The musical canon can be viewed as a surface level of Western art music that needs to be consciously penetrated to become familiar with other, non-canonical musical works and composers. Other than canonized music appears to have a character of alternativeness, and seeking alternatives for the canon reveals its dominance. The three orchestras in my research regularly perform new works, contemporary music and in some cases even historical, forgotten music, and in Finland they can be viewed as the forerunners to diversify the orchestra institution. Especially Tuula Sarotie (2023) of RSO breaks traditionality for identifying a more unique, personal definition of musical canon. However, the discourse of program planning reveals a wariness or concern of ensuring that the traditional repertoire is always performed—justified by audience demand, but also because musicians and conductors want to perform the tradition. They are enculturated into the tradition through education, what can be identified as the pedagogical canon through William Weber's theory (1999). Also, orchestras are careful to not promote or stimulate issues that could provoke the audience or make them uncomfortable: as Aleksi Malmberg (2023) states, the Western art music community strongly tends to see music as an autonomic art form, external to societal issues. Audience is expected to enjoy concerts, free from societal concerns.

The high level of aesthetic autonomy in the classical music world plays one part in the reasons why the classical music field tends to isolate itself from societal issues. As Juha Torvinen (2016) has examined, the conservative, independent and self-sufficient idea of "absolute music" remains strong in composers' motives to their work, and it is also identifiable in my analysis, for instance through conductors' strong will to interpret historical works; to give the most value to the unique interpretations of familiar pieces instead of presenting something new in the concerts. But as Markus Mantere (2008) writes, the common definition of a musical piece is formed through actualization—our experience of music is never just an auditive perception: it is based on how we categorize the work in the continuous line of history, how we imagine the composer as a person and what kind of other knowledge we carry when experiencing music (p. 141). Mantere reminds that we already are enculturated to listen and contextualize music that is

transmitted through history: we listen to music through established aesthetic norms (ibid.).

Orchestra managers contemplate that orchestras and concerts give value and focus on performers: conductors, musicians, and also very much for their guest performers. A part of the orchestra music ecosystem is based on freelance conductors and soloists, who are hired to visit to create a unique experience for the audience and for the orchestra. Guest performers have technically special abilities and a high reputation, and they maintain a cult of star performers. They are also used for marketing concerts: often, a concert advertisement doesn't even describe whose music is played but instead who is playing and conducting. Orchestra managers admit that for composers, the Western art music world is a difficult and challenging environment. An anecdotal and slightly ironic example of this is in a documentary *Klassinen Suomi* (2016), where composer and conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen describes how he as a conductor is supported by a business machine of agents and concert promoters, whereas as a composer he is a small figure, all alone.

Through this dichotomy of composers against performers, in my analysis I identify a peculiar aspect of the Western musical canon: the musical canon is for the composers and musical works, but not for the performers. The performers are in the absolute center of the orchestra institution: their reputation drives the business, they are celebrated in concerts and they have a key role in whether a concert is considered successful, but when they stop performing, they have no role or value in the ecosystem anymore. Only the very best can establish a reputation where they are remembered and celebrated after their demise. Instead, the canon is a place for composers and their works to gain value afterwards: through the test of time, some musical works can become canonized.

Historical perspective tends to add value, and the inclusion to standard repertoires, anthologies and pedagogical material ensures being part of the canon as a musical legacy.

Lotte Tarkka (2022) write about canons as exercise of power: canons are based on a discourse that the aesthetic value of canonical works is claimed self-evident; that certain art has some kind of internal value that justifies its greatness. This discourse uses its

power to exclude and mute groups of people and define them as “others”. (p. 8). This practice has been visible as gender inequality in Western art music for centuries: only recently orchestras and music education have started to realize their discriminating and misogynist practices and attitudes. Aapo Tähkää (2022) concludes that the narrow standard repertoire is a problem only if it’s understood as one (p. 18). To this I would argue that to struggle for parity, equality, and intersectionality in our culture it is a huge problem: like VanderHart and Gower ask (2022), can we ignore half of our population in the practice of one distinguished form of art? This profound and incredibly important question has also been raised in the public discussion (see Kvist 2019a; 2019b) and remains a hot topic that needs to be transparently debated.

According to my findings, orchestras are aware and acknowledge the power position that they have towards inclusion and exclusion. Acknowledging this is the first step of being flexible and acceptive to change: to understand that canonical practices maintain the authoritative position of the canon, and challenging these practices can change how canons can have less influence on repertoires as well as on societal and cultural values.

For orchestras program planning, the Western musical canon and its great history is at the same time a wonderful chest of treasures, as well as a restricting burden. The historicity and different, celebrated musical periods in proportion to the temporal and physical limits of orchestral concerts creates a demanding working environment for those who decide on repertoires: there are so much exciting and pleasurable music from all musical periods. Public discussion emphasizes on more versatility for concert programs, and younger generations of composers express addressing more social responsibility through music. According to the interviews, the need to perform contemporary music and music from living composers is increasing, and recent statistics suggest that orchestras have started to answer these needs. As Isomöttönen (2023) notes, measuring the balance of different music in repertoires is not easy, and Malmberg (2023) reminds of a continuous need for criticism towards the repertoire decisions. In this light, orchestral program planning seems acceptable for change, but it can also very easily invoke for tradition.

## 6 CONCLUSION

The orchestra institution is a distinguished part of Western culture. It is in many ways a fascinating phenomenon: a heavily subsidized and largely culturally appreciated, but strongly leaning backwards in time and functioning with practices formed in a completely different world. The orchestra is a conserving phenomenon just as well as a conservative one. Because of its dependency of financial support from public money, it also must withstand critical analysis of what is understood as valuable for today's culture, and for my thesis I am lucky to have been able to converse with orchestra management to examine their views and definitions of orchestra repertoire policy, criteria, and reasoning of orchestras as cultural institutions.

Reflecting on this research, the findings reveal an impression that the orchestra institution is a complex ecosystem that can be investigated through numerous different approaches, from financial resources and cultural policy models to philosophical and ontological questions of what is a musical piece. I am lucky to have interviewed orchestra managers because their wide knowledge is a fruitful platform for discussing the orchestra institution from many angles. As this thesis uses different approaches to analyze the discourses of program planning, a combination of management and artistic and even philosophical argumentation, the results of my analysis provoke questions for public discussion as well as for further research.

In public discussion of arts and especially financial support for arts, it's difficult to avoid the arguments that Western art music is for the elite and a luxurious cultural product for the bourgeoisie. It's a tool for social distinction and a classic example of Pierre Bourdieu's famous theory of different tastes of social classes. Almost as often as referring to the elite, the public discussion is forecasting, claiming, or mourning that Western art music is dead or at least taking its final breath. Anni Bouyahia's (2020) thesis of Tapiola Sinfonietta concludes that orchestras need to critically review their operations and not stay stagnant to answer the societal and cultural needs, and orchestra development more often comes outside the orchestra than from the orchestra itself. Bouyahia also concludes that

orchestras might have to prepare for financial cuts, and as we've already experienced, Kemi City Orchestra was close to being shut down because of financial struggles (Kaipiainen 2022).

The orchestras included in my thesis are based in the largest and culturally vibrant cities in Finland, and their concert attendance has been very high, at least before the COVID-19 pandemic. As they are heavily subsidized, their ticket prices are very affordable—in fact often cheaper than in other musical genres such as popular music. The claims of orchestral music being a niche for elitist class doesn't apply financially, rather vice versa. When the attendance is high, orchestras are not forced to lure new audience and reach social or age segments that do rarely go to symphony concerts, such as young adults. The question is, if a high attendance of homogenic audience of mostly middle-aged and elderly people is a problem or not—not for ticket sales, but perhaps for diversity and inclusion it is.

The cult of star performers and concert promotion through marketing guest performers is perhaps an inherent phenomenon that occurs in all human life—the need for specialty and unique characteristics, to experience something other-worldly. However, this raises a question of how to give more appreciation to the regular members of the orchestra, being just as highly educated and committed to their profession as those who are idolized and lifted onto the pedestal—quite literally when standing in front of the orchestra. Tuula Sarotie (2023) was happy to conclude that nowadays the orchestra has more worth as a brand, that relying on star performers isn't so necessary anymore as it used to be. Here, a certain kind of progress of diversity has taken a step forward.

Younger generations of composers and musicians, and hopefully management as well, are bringing new approaches to Western art music and it cannot be seen as anything else than a very welcomed movement. For composers to use their art to express opinions, just as they do when voting as private persons (see Torvinen 2016), the classical music culture should encourage for societal awareness. Other forms of art such as theatre, literature and fine arts have much more closer connection to society—for many of them expressing

opinions is an intrinsic part of making and experiencing art. We have good examples of smaller music organizations showing that things can be operated differently: for instance, a chamber music festival Aava-festivaali, managed by young musicians, describes how they are consciously planning their repertoire outside of the Western musical canon, aiming for equality (Tirkkonen, 2022). Young artists are not comfortable with the traditional methods and have started to seek their own.

For further research, a much closer approach to the connection (or disconnection) of the orchestra institution and society would give us crucial information to analyze the position and purpose of the orchestra institution. Many scholars have demanded for closer study of orchestra repertoires, but instead of traditional aesthetic approaches to gather lists of which musical periods and composers are represented in repertoires and for how much, repertoire studies of strategies, decision making, reasons, motives and argumentation would be extremely welcomed to reveal more about why the orchestral institution functions the way it does. In this research paradigm, music research should exit the loop of being interested only of scores, rhythms, pitches, and timbres. Music is a social phenomenon, and it's an essential part of humankind, an art form and a cultural behavior that almost everyone has a relationship with. To go further to investigate Western art music, the decisions in program planning, and their influence on our culture, especially through intersectionality, would give us more insight to reflect our lives with and advance equality.

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