

THE ASPECTS OF CHANGING NATURE IN ORGANIZATION MANAGEMENT OF GERMAN CLASSIC PROFESSIONAL ORCHESTRAS

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Abstract: *The purpose of this paper is to present the specific aspects that characterize classic professional orchestras (symphony, chamber music, radio and opera orchestras) as performing art organizations, the sound organism and the organization per se. In a society of rapid changes, it is intriguing to find out how one of the oldest art performing organizations, like the classical professional orchestra, is managed in the contemporary world, which are the innovative management methods that ensure the classical orchestra's success, what are the elements that have an influence upon the performance of the orchestra, or upon the level of satisfaction of the multiple stakeholders. As part of an extended research, this empirical paper represents the first part of our research and it is based upon qualitative research methods, interviews and observation of the existing situation in German orchestras. Germany offers an impressive variety of examples, since the country holds the largest number of classical professional orchestras, namely 131 out of 560 worldwide. Consequently, the emphasis is upon German orchestras (Kulturochester), where the value of cultural heritage and the responsibility vis-à-vis the cultural musical heritage acquired in hundreds of years of musical creation play a very important role. We will include the type of symphony orchestras, radio, opera and chamber music orchestras, and we will exclude universities' orchestras, project orchestras and amateurs' orchestras. We will obtain our data through archival access, observation, interview and later in the study, throughout the survey research method. At first, we analyzed and investigated two orchestras: one chamber and one symphony orchestra. The second part will contain the analysis of a radio and an opera (theatre) orchestra. Does the volatile environment generate innovations in the systems of management, informational, recruiting, promotion and reward changes, and in its functions of planning, organizing, leading and controlling? What strategies and best management practices are used by orchestras' managers to maximize the satisfaction of multiple stakeholders?*

Keywords: *organization; management; German orchestras; sound organism; change.*

JEL Classification: L82; M10; L32.

1. Introduction

The classic orchestra is one of the oldest type of organizations. It represents a group of people motivated by their talent, inclination and love for music, united by the desire to express their work through sound and interpretation knowledge acquired in

dozens of years, thousands and thousands of hours of practice, characterized by perseverance and dedication (Adrians, 2017). The etymology of the word *orchestra* comes from Greek language, but over the time it has suffered various meaning changes. In ancient Greek language, it means the semi-circular space/place between the stage (where actors were performing) and the public/audience. The space was designed for choir. In Rome, the place of the choir and implicitly the space called by the Greeks "orchestra", was reserved for the audience of the high society. In the baroque times, the orchestra did not exceed 25 members, and was composed exclusively of string instruments plus harpsichord. The classic orchestra, close to its current version, was born in the second half of the eighteenth century, during the classical musical period. The definitive role in forming the orchestra belongs to Joseph Haydn. Over the last 200 years, instruments were added to enrich with their unique timbre, the sound of the orchestra, and to meet the requirements of the musical composition. A professional classic orchestra, plays complex music, liturgical and secular in character, from a printed score format, where the author (composer) is known, or at least its pseudonym, from early Renaissance (circa 1400) until today.

The professional classic orchestra (symphony, radio, opera or chamber orchestra) falls under the category of organizational fields that, "in the aggregate, constitute a recognized area of institutional life: key suppliers, resource and product consumers, regulatory agencies, and other organizations that produce similar services and products" (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). The suppliers are the musicians and the management, the public is the service/product consumer, and the State is the regulatory agency.

"The organizational culture is the set of informal shared values, norms, standards of behavior, and expectations that influence the ways which individuals, teams, and groups interact with one another and cooperate to achieve company goals" (Dyck and Neubert, 2008). An art performing organization, such as the orchestra, has very distinguished characteristics that describe the organizational culture, starting with the goals, namely: high-quality musical service, to nurture the public's desire for culture, for music, to be ambassadors of and for their community, to preserve of musical heritage. Highly trained musicians, hours of productive individual and group practice in order to achieve technical and interpretative excellency, disciplined conduct and obedience to the conductor's indications, alongside with competent managers who can understand, support and promote the pool of talents that a symphony orchestra has to offer, and in the same time foster personal and group expectations, can contribute to the achievement of the organization's goals.

There are always 2 interdependent centers of power on stage (Khodyakow, 2014): the musicians and the conductor. Musicians are looking for artistic freedom, but due to the rigidity of the musical score and format, it is very hard to find it. Since the conductor represents the leader figure and determines the goal and the methods how to reach it (Boerner&Krause, 2001), the musicians find increased level of satisfaction if the conductor treats them with respect, empathy, trust, if they feel empowered, if they don't get stopped all the time, if they are allowed to correct themselves. The artistic performance of the orchestra is influenced by a good collaboration between the conductor and the musicians.

The organization's performance is the result of its management exercises through the organizational structure, and through the *sound organism*, the orchestra per se. Professional musicians, members of a classical orchestra, always face the challenge

of maintaining the balance between the legacy format of the artistic act, and its adaptation to the rapidly changing requirements and expectations of stakeholders in nowadays society (Heinrichs, 2006). "The soft-skills will elevate us above automation...and the place where humans excel and algorithms can't duplicate" (Yang, 2017) is the case of an organization, like the professional classical orchestra. In a world where robots replace people's work in many fields and areas and the competition for satisfying the leisure time is fierce, we consider that the artistic/cultural manifestations, as diverse and different as possible, need both, the artists' professionalism and excellency, and management's craftsmanship that lies behind the artistic act. The arguments being that it is not enough to have a large and well-trained orchestra (the "sound organism"), with talented musicians, to be successful and to satisfy all stakeholders, internal and external. It cannot be just about a "perpetuum-mobile" *composer-performer-audience*, without any interference (Rosu, 2014). Our assumptions are that it is requiring a good knowledge and awareness of all stakeholders' needs and requirements and all the elements that play a key role in planning, organizing, leading and delivering the artistic event, while achieving planned goals. Does the volatile environment generate innovations in the systems of management, informational, recruiting, promotion and reward changes, and in its functions of planning, organizing, leading and controlling?

2. Literature review

"General acceptance of the notion regarding an orchestra involves a group of instrumentalists who play together, whose original and essential nucleus plays string instruments, while the others play on various instruments of brass and percussion" (Petrovici, 2010). A group of musicians who play together a variety of instruments, following a written and printed score, under the baton of a conductor, represent the "sound organism" (German term – Klangkorpus) of an organization who is providing a musical service.

The organization's nucleus, the core of the organization is represented by the "*the sound organism*" – the orchestra with its musicians. "There is no other activity in which forty, eighty or one hundred twenty people are doing the same thing together, with a precision of a tenth of a second, starting and finishing together" (Turkov, 1998). The musicians, members of an orchestra, strictly adhere to the strategy represented by the repertoire, the score that was composed many years ago, even hundreds of years ago. Although the orchestra is a rigid structure in which all members are characterized by discipline and strictly follow a well-established scenario (musical score), creativity is the result of the unitary activity of the entire sound organism. "Inside this Klangkorpus (germ Klang = sound, Klangkorpus = sound-body) stretches a network of valences in all directions, through which only certain and specific qualities make navigation possible. The only one who preserves his importance and his place is the conductor, the instrumentalists being forced to plunge to the role the composer gives them, a role which constantly change" (Petrovici, 2010). Coordinating and conducting the musical interpretation of this sound organism named orchestra, is provided by the conductor. Facing the conductor, the orchestra is arranged in semicircle with the string instruments in the first rows, from left to right, behind them are the woodwinds and brass instruments, and in the last rows, the percussion and instruments with very strong and loud sound. The structure of the orchestra is a pyramidal one: at the pinnacle is the conductor,

then, next in line of authority and responsibility are the concertmaster and section-leaders (first-chair or principal players for each instrument), and the strict hierarchy disseminates to the rest of the orchestra members. Even when two musicians share a note stand, the lower ranked person always turns the pages to a higher ranked person (Flanagan, 2012).

“Professional (symphony) orchestras are defined as ensembles whose primary mission is public performance of those orchestral works generally considered to fall within the standard symphonic repertoire and whose members are compensated nontrivially for their services” (Allmendinger and Hackman, 1996). The mission of the professional symphony orchestra lies in the offering of high quality performance, high quality music service, systematically, during an entire season. Like the mission of an organization, which remains unchanged, this attribute is also reflected in the symphony orchestra’s mission, from its establishment to the present times.

How does innovation and best practices in today’s orchestra management reflect the stakeholders’ satisfaction? “We define innovation as the successful implementation of creative ideas within an organization” (Amabile, Conti, Coon, Lazenby, & Herron, 1996). If we refer to Germany, which has the largest number of professional orchestras, namely 131, there is a constant concern for innovation. The management department of German *Kulturorchester* embraces the awareness of a much-needed pro-active attitude for the organization’s success (Schneiderbraun, 2012). These include: permanently tracking the assertion of the role played by a symphony orchestra in nowadays life, aiming for the constant confirmation of its importance, its high quality and valuable service provided by the musicians, motivating the musicians by providing secure and long term jobs, stable incomes, strengthening the existence of the symphony orchestra in today’s society, reaffirming the role of close interdisciplinary relationship with the educational system, creating good working conditions, meeting the public’s expectations by hiring highly trained, virtuous, professional musicians, offering modern concert halls, best acoustic, for all categories of audience, to maximize the satisfaction of all stakeholders.

3. Methodology and Case Studies

The orchestra, as an entity, consists of front stage members, the employees who come in direct contact with the public, such as: the sound organism – the musicians, the manager (when he addresses to the audience, the musicians, the contractors, or the financiers), the ticket office personnel, the wardrobe personnel, etc., and the backstage office, such as accountants, stage engineers, librarians, archivists, etc.) Except musicians, members of the orchestra, other members of the organization do not create direct value. The direct performance value is the result of the orchestra's performance. The input elements are: the human resources (the artistic staff of the symphony orchestra, the administrative and auxiliary staff), financial resources (financial support comes largely from the State, but also from private donors, individuals or organizations / foundations), material resources (scores, instruments, desks, sound systems, etc.). The service resulted, payed and consumed by the public represents the output element. The value of the musical service offered by a symphony orchestra to the public is given by: the talent, experience and professionalism of the musicians, a good team-work inside the ensemble, the quality of the conductor and the guest soloists, the quality of the musical repertoire selected,

the concert venue (the concert hall) and, last but not least, the quality of the management that lies behind the orchestra's performance.

The German orchestras' management structure varies, depending on the type of orchestra (theatre/opera, philharmonic, radio or chamber music orchestra), on the legal form and the partnership with concert halls/venues. If we refer to symphony orchestra, the complexity of the management depends on the size of the orchestra; it is different to manage an orchestra of 12 musicians, rather than 185 musicians, Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, the largest orchestra of the world. Commonly, managers have the same functions and attributions: planning the budget, the concerts, the tours, etc., organizing concerts, rehearsals, tours, recordings, deciding the hiring on long or short term working contract of a musician, or the invitation of a soloist/conductor, hiring musicians from other orchestras for a particular concert, networking, negotiation with guest conductors, guest soloists, agents, advertisers, local authorities, sponsors, donors, controlling the results obtained, the success or failure, the positive outcome, or the mistakes, correcting the decisions, etc.

According to Schmidt-Ott, the organizational structure of a German orchestra, the management is represented by the orchestra's manager and the artistic director in strong bond with public relation and press release office. The general music director, who is also the principal conductor is the chief of the orchestra, top of the artistic board, and it is assisted by the first chair violinist (concert maestro) and the section-leaders to whom the *tuttis* subordinate. The sales manager is responsible for subscriptions and tickets office. When an orchestra has its own concert hall, there is also a department of stage technicians: stage, sound, light engineers and driver. The orchestra's office and music secretary are responsible for finding/inviting guest musicians, "Aushilfen" (musicians who are hired for a particular concert), finding, borrowing or buying the music score, planning the rehearsals, buying and ensuring the instruments, etc. The administration board is responsible for the sound organism's human resources. The accounting/bookkeeping and the general administration office is subordinated to the administration board.

If the orchestra is part of an organization, such as an opera, it will be managed by an orchestra director. The overall responsibility for the orchestra belongs to the general manager (Intendant), the principal conductor and the general music director. The theatre orchestra besides opera, operetta, musicals, performs also a series of symphonic concerts in a season.

In case of symphony orchestras, the situation is clearer since it involves a certain activity and the orchestra has its own concert hall. The symphony orchestra's general manager (Intendant) shares the economic, organizational and artistic responsibility with the principal conductor or general music director. The next in line of authority are the concertmaster (first-chair), the section-leaders, orchestra's board, public relations, *tuttis* - the orchestra musicians, administrative board with the human resources department, accounting, distribution, library, archives, stage engineer, sound engineer, light engineer, driver, etc. In Germany, not all orchestras have their own concert hall, and they must perform in various locations. If the orchestra has its own concert hall, such as the Berliner Philharmonic, besides managing the sound organism's activity, all the services and organizational structures of the concert hall, and/or rental to other partners, are added to the general manager's attributions. The orchestra with a concert hall has greater independence and greater opportunities for development: priority for planning its own series of concerts, booking dates before other orchestras, freedom to organize chamber music concerts or recitals, special

concerts, charities or concerts for attracting sponsors, possibility of organizing workshops, additional proceeds from rental and event organization, etc. In fact, this is considered an ideal situation for European orchestras, and it is valid for all large and medium concert orchestras in the United States of America.

Most German orchestras are directly integrated into the budget and the administration structures of the state as autonomous administrations. The general manager represents the head of organization, but with a relatively limited manoeuvring space. The so-called autonomous administration can open ways for its managers towards sovereignty and more flexible budget management. The legal forms of communal enterprise, Limited Liability Company and foundation lead to more space for manoeuvre, for action and organization. However, this depends on the concrete development of internal structures, the internal regulation, the influence of the supervisory committees, the long-term nature of subsidy contracts and, of course, the personal qualification of the persons involved (Mertens, 2010).

The radio orchestras (with the exception of the ROC Berlin and WR Big Band) are incorporated in the structures of their broadcasting stations. In many cases, the radio stations do not have a proper concert hall, and then the orchestra's activity is performed in rented concert halls. This negative aspect is blurred by the fact that the radio orchestras have their own source of advertising.

In this first part of our research, we have decided to analyze and investigate two different orchestras, one chamber and one symphony orchestra. On one hand, we have the structure of the chamber orchestra's organization according to its size: 12 musicians (two concert-maestros), one general manager, one deputy director with artistic director and press relations attributes, one principal conductor, one person for marketing department, one librarian, and an image counsellor. On the other hand, we have the symphony orchestra with a large number of musicians, namely 110, including 3 concert-maestros, 16 section-leaders, 13 soloists, and conducted by a principal conductor – *Chefdirigent*, who is also the general music director – *Generalmusikdirektor*. The structure of this organization is vaster: on top of the hierarchy is the general manager (Intendant) and the principal conductor, followed by manager assistant (1), administration director (1), orchestra manager (1), music secretary (1), artistic board (5), personnel representatives (3), administration board (3), public relations office (1), orchestra office (3), librarian (1), internship management students (3), concert pedagogy advisor (1).

First step was to attend the concerts performed by the two orchestras, then to require permission for face-to-face interviews. Two interviews were conducted: one in English, and one in German. Both interviews were open, non-structure, based on an open discussion. We were looking to find answers to the question: are there any changes/innovations in the leading function of management due to the changing environment?

There were more similarities than differences, although we were investigating two distinct types of orchestra: a small size chamber orchestra of 12 musicians without its own concert hall, and a large philharmonic orchestra of 110 musicians, with its own concert hall. Both orchestras share the same mission, like other professional classical orchestras: providing a high quality musical service/concert of a standard symphonic repertoire, in a high-quality performance to the client/public, systematically, during an entire season. The preoccupations are generally the same, disregard of the size, or typology of the orchestra: preserving, cultivating and

promoting the values of cultural-musical-historical heritage, and searching, identifying and capitalizing on new ways of presenting music.

Both managers shared the same concern regarding the future of the orchestra in times of changes, namely: "danger comes when a symphony orchestra thinks it is enough to play symphonic music well, but in our opinion, in the long run, it will not be enough...we must offer new reasons for being funded, showing our achievements from other perspectives", H. K. "We, as an orchestra, have to get out in the world and not to expect, like in the past, that people will come to us", M. G.

The challenge comes from the change of German society, which leads to finding innovative ways to face this unfamiliar environment. The two managers are aiming for getting the orchestra out of their "ivory towers", and "without pointing the finger, new roads, new paths and ways must be found to show and to present classical music", M. G. Older people are the loyal customers and subscribers. In the middle of Europe and being a country with great musical tradition that lasted over hundreds of years, the native Germans understand and feel in a certain way vis-à-vis the symphonic music. Lately, the decreasing of the interest for symphonic music which, of course, varies from one state to another, due to multiculturalism, is a fact. "Multiculturalism is not a phenomenon that can be stopped and is, in our case, seen as a threat, and not as an opportunity" H. K.

Finding new customers, new public, a new market, new stakeholders, attracting younger audience, can be considered a top priority on the manager's list. "If today we have a great successful night with a specific symphony program, maybe tomorrow the society will change so radical that it will no longer need us...or not in this format because the audience has changed. I care a lot about what we can do new! We always need to look for innovation because a new, successful product is generated by the innovation process. Stagnation leads to failure: success is the enemy of innovation" H. K.

There was an unanimously response from both managers regarding the musicians' reaction: "lack of flexibility among musicians, dormant attitude, especially from permanent members of a symphony orchestra, maybe because of the rigidity of the structure that characterizes the activity of a symphony orchestra", affirms M. G., on one hand. Their reaction towards innovative ways of presenting the service provided by the traditional symphony orchestra varies from one musician to another. The philharmonic orchestra manager noticed that: "the musicians from Eastern Europe who came to Germany and who had to make sacrifices, to prove their competence, to fight for their job, to be paid justly, are willing to adapt more easily, to be more spontaneous, more flexible".

The musicians' participation in the decision process is very important for both managers. New formats or new concepts of the musical act cannot be presented without orchestra members to agree. By their participation depends the success of the concert. There is less tolerance and acceptance when it comes to exiting their comfort zone, like playing in schools, for example, or concerts for families with very young children. School projects, for example, are not easy for orchestra members, they are not in their comfort zone, it is very noisy, they are worried and concerned about the safety of the instruments, but, as most of them have children, the musicians showed more tolerance.

According to the employment contract TVK (*Tarifvertrag für die Musiker in Kulturochester*) the permanent members of symphony orchestras are very well represented and protected. The managers don't have a lot of manoeuvre space. The

work contracts specify in a detailed and precise manner: how long the rehearsals should be, for example, without room for interpretation. If most members of the chamber orchestra have a second job, as teachers at the School of Music, or professors at the University of Arts, not the same can be said about the members of the philharmonic orchestra. Since the chamber orchestra is a small size orchestra, the management department adapts the rehearsal schedule according to the school schedule, to meet the expectations and needs of its musicians.

To answer to the questions: *what options I have with this orchestra, what do I want to achieve under the current conditions*, there is a different typology of manager, then it was 20 years ago. The management department needs to have endurance, to engage in long talks, to bring many arguments, to motivate the musicians' intention. The emphasis is on the stimulation of the musicians' creativity, fantasy, and imagination for a greater openness to such projects. "I think the most important thing for preparing a future manager of a symphony orchestra, is to acquire the knowledge about how I talk to musicians, or like a musician, to understand how musicians think, how to gain their trust, how to make them accept certain program. From the authoritarian and rigid reactions, indifferently to the wishes of the orchestra, the current situation is quite different. There are only a few who still share this attitude, very few who think so, and if as conductors you can still allow yourself to be authoritarian, as a manager, such inflexibility is incompatible with the position. The deputy manager of the chamber orchestra says that, although a certain distance between employer and employee must exist, so that everyone can do their job, "today's managers seek for an agreement between the two structures, and for the empowerment of the musicians, for increasing their work satisfaction: *"Denk doch mit"* (think with us) and if you have an idea, share it with us, and we will see how we can put it into practice" M. G. The management department aims to offer the musicians job satisfaction on one hand, and a safe future, on the other hand.

An important feature of today's managers is to have a good instinct for finding a business partner, for knowing or even anticipating what expectations he/she has, how you can work together, and regardless of the specialization written on the degree, to obtained very good results. Very important are the "skills acquired over the lifetime, especially in this position", affirms manager H. K.

"Commitment to the profession, rather than commitment to the organization, is expected to have the strongest effect on employee creativity" (Van Rossenberg, 2011). The musicians, members of a symphony orchestra, develop over the years of practicing an instrument how to be committed to the profession, even before becoming professional musicians. Without this kind of loyalty, it is impossible to build a career as a professional musician. How these innovations are communicated to the staff can contribute to the embracement or rejection of the new ideas. More ensembles within a large orchestra can be considered a new practice and a new concept in today's management. This practice raises the question: if we divide the orchestra into several ensembles would the orchestra become more effective than the standard organization? The Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra uses about 35 different ensembles, each with its own concerts inside and outside of the organization. The musicians are enjoying the freedom of artistic experimentation beyond the program of the standard concert season. The Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra is an organization based on democratic principles, in which every musician has a voice. We consider that we are dealing with an organizational innovation that is worth investigating it and finding out if this practice is used by other

German symphony orchestras. We intend to conduct our future field research to obtain results on this matter.

4. Conclusions

Although, in the German culture “music is the art of the German soul” (“Musik ist Kunst der deutsche Seele”), there is a constant concern for the find of innovative methods to ensure the organization’s positive performance. These include: permanently tracking the assertion of the role played by a professional orchestra in nowadays life, aiming for the constant confirmation of its importance, its high quality and valuable service provided by the musicians, motivating the musicians by proving secure and long term jobs, stable incomes, strengthening the existence of the symphony orchestra in today’s society, reaffirming the role of close interdisciplinary relationship with the educational system, creating good working conditions, meeting the public’s expectations by hiring highly trained, virtuous, professional musicians, offering modern concert halls, best acoustic, for all categories of audience, to maximize the satisfaction of all stakeholders.

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