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SEDUCING THE SINGLE TICKET BUYER: CONVERTING SINGLE TICKET
BUYERS TO SUBSCRIBERS AT THE BINGHAMTON PHILHARMONIC

BY

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B.A, BINGHAMTON UNIVERSITY, 2008

CAPSTONE PROJECT

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Masters in Public Administration in the Department of Public Administration in the
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2010

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Accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Masters in Public Administration
in the Graduate School of
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Abstract

Declining interests in classical music have left many performance based organizations scrambling to maintain subscription rates, ticket revenue and attendance. The Binghamton Philharmonic has a substantial single ticket buyer base which if converted to subscribers, would secure revenue and attendance each season. This study explores the motivations and attendance levels of the Binghamton Philharmonic single ticket buyer population. Using frequency distribution charts, cross-tabular analysis and independent samples *t*-tests, variables of motivation were compared to the single ticket and subscriber populations. This project discusses the factors affecting single ticket buyer motivations for attendance, effective methods for encouraging greater attendance, and provides an overall socio-economic picture of the single ticket buyer population. Recommendations on how to convert single ticket buyers into subscribers are presented, suggesting that the Binghamton Philharmonic explore opportunities to strengthen relationships with single ticket buyers by addressing these motivational factors and appealing to their specific preferences.

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Introduction

In response to changing social, economic and technological trends arts organizations are placing increased emphasis on patron participation and development. Non-profit arts organizations are facing a difficult demographic challenge that threatens long-term sustainability. The arts have begun to face issues in mortality as their cultural relevance begins to weaken. The United States has seen a steady decline in attendance since 1982, resulting in a flurry of attention attempting to follow these increasingly troubling trends. The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) 2008 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts concluded that classical music has seen their adult population attending performances drop from 13% of the general population in 1982 to just 9.3% of the population in 2008. The steepest drop came between 2002 and 2008 (29%), indicating that the classical music community has an ever increasing responsibility to not only provide quality music programming but strengthen commitment to community development and marketing strategy (Rentschler, Radbourne, Carr & Rickard, 2001).

The majority of arts audiences in areas such as opera, symphony and dance programming are white middle to upper class individuals over the age of 50 (NEA, 2008). While this demographic has typically provided a healthy patron population, the glaring absence of younger generations is apparent as arts audiences' age. While these individuals once supported organizations with reliable attendance, their ability to attend performances drops as they grow older. With these seats empty, many organizations find themselves wondering who will fill them. These art forms are seemingly lost on younger generations and in order to continue their success it is important to learn how to connect and entice these populations into becoming supporters. A demographic gap has emerged

between our eldest generations and those below the age of 55, where classical music has had less exposure and appreciation. This lack of contact is negatively impacting the symphonic community.

The art form must now find a way to reconnect with younger generations that have typically remained detached. Symphonic music is finding it difficult to maintain relevance in a society where popular music and culture holds the most significance. In addition to the cultural shift, the financial structure of Philharmonic productions affects organizational stability. In times of economic crisis, Symphonies do not have the ability to rely on typical cost-saving measures. Symphonies simply cannot cut positions or salaries. Production costs will always remain constant amid a turbulent economy.

Problem Statement

The Binghamton Philharmonic performs classical and pops concerts for the general public. Patron development is a main focus of the organizations fundraising efforts. Patrons fall into two categories; subscribers and single ticket buyers. Subscribers purchase a ticket package for the season, they attend multiple concerts and their ticket revenue is secured generally in advance of the season. Single ticket buyers are individuals who buy one or more tickets to one concert at a time. Philharmonic staff collect little demographic data about those who purchase tickets. Collected data gives no indication of a buyer's reason for attending or what encouraged them to attend. These pieces of information are crucial to the organization as research shows that the revenue potential for converting single ticket buyers to subscribers is substantial. For example, one study of 9 of the largest symphonies in the nation indicated that single ticket buyers who buy a ticket for the first time contribute an average of \$148 in ticket sales and \$51 in donations.

For a subscriber these numbers increased to an average of \$2,530 in donations and \$2,366 in ticket sales (Oliver Wyman, 2008). There is a difficulty in generalizing these results because symphonies differ dramatically between each region and often operate differently. In this case these organizations are substantially larger with a much greater and more diverse patron population. However, these findings still suggest that the benefits of converting single ticket buyers to subscribers will likely be an important component to the continued financial and cultural strength of the Philharmonic.

The single ticket buyer base for the Binghamton Philharmonic represents a substantial portion of its attendees. Between the fall of 2008 and January 2010 the Philharmonic secured 1,018 single ticket households. In comparison, the 2008-09 season included 447 subscriber households and the current season (09-10) 463 households. Single ticket customers may attend concerts presented as part of a classical music series or a pops concert series. Subscribers purchase ticket packages for either the classical music series, consisting of 4 concerts for a discounted price, or the pops series, consisting of 3 concerts for a discounted price.

For the 2008-09 season, only 14% of single ticket buyers attended more than one performance, that is, 85% of these individuals did not return during the season for a second performance. The potential for financial gain by converting single ticket buyers to subscribers is highlighted in that, hypothetically, if that 85% of single ticket households bought a subscription package, the Binghamton Philharmonic would make:

- For classical music series: \$69,224 at the adult/senior rate
- For pops music series: \$57,109 at the adult/senior rate

In addition to the increased ticket revenue potential, converting single ticket buyers to subscribers has additional financial benefits. The Philharmonic spends approximately \$1 per customer in marketing expenses for single ticket buyers, while spending only pennies on the dollar in marketing for their subscriber population. Considering 85% of single ticket customers do not return, a significant loss of resources occurs in marketing to individuals who will likely attend only one performance within the season. In addition, the high correlation between donors and subscribers within arts organizations indicates that those who feel some sense of relationship with the organization will likely donate (RAND, 2001). Therefore subscribers offer the organization an increase in secured revenue for the season, secured attendance, greater potential for donation revenue and savings in marketing costs.

In order to maintain its financial strength and cultural relevancy, it is crucial that the Binghamton Philharmonic gain a greater understanding of its substantial single ticket buyer population and how to convert these individuals into subscribers. By developing a greater understanding of their single ticket buyer population, they could gain a much-needed perspective of how to entice supporters and grow patron commitment. For the Philharmonic the question becomes, what does our single ticket buyer base look like and what would encourage them to become subscribers?

Research Question: What does the Binghamton Philharmonic single ticket buyer base look like and how can they be encouraged to become subscribers?

Conceptual Framework

The Binghamton Philharmonic must identify single-ticket buyer motivations for attendance in order to deepen their participation. The literature addressing audience

participation and development falls into two broad categories; empirical and theoretical. The empirical research discusses participation trends and associations between key influences and the types of and levels of commitment typically seen. The theoretical literature discusses audience participation in the context of economic models, using marketing and consumer behavior concepts to discuss participation. The theoretical literature also addresses how individuals choose leisure activities to frame the decision-making process of attending art events. While both the empirical and theoretical literature available shed light onto the various aspects of audience participation, little directly discusses participant motivations for attendance.

Literature Review

Participation in the arts has been the subject of a number of national and local survey and practitioner literature as organizations struggle to increase the amount and kinds of patron commitment. The concept of participation provides the framework with which all literature pertaining to this topic is discussed. Although the term participation connotes a singular type of action, it actually encompasses a number of different activities. This is an important distinction, as the types of participation will influence the types of participants and the strategies to increase it. Participation in the arts can result from creating art, through attendance, or through exposure through media sources (RAND, 2001a). Not all types of participation are equally relevant to an organization and the identification of which types of participation are most important is essential to creating strategies to address that. Levels of participation in the arts refer to the amount of commitment of each participant. Participants are generally broken down into three

categories: those that rarely participate, those that occasionally participate and those that frequently participate (RAND, 2001a).

Empirical Literature

Arts participation is a topic that has been widely studied through the use of national and local surveys since the early 1980's. The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) provides the most extensive empirical literature on the subject. Tracking arts participation in the nation, the NEA publishes multiple studies each year discussing various aspects of the national arts community. These studies generally discuss the types, patterns and levels of participation. In addition, participant demographics are analyzed providing a social and cultural picture of these individuals and the demographic similarities and differences that indicate reasons affecting their participation.

While the percentage of adults attending arts performances continues to decrease drastically, the arts remain an important leisure activity in the United States with one in three adults attending an art museum or an arts performance between May 2007 and May 2008 (NEA, 2008). Modes of participation continued to shift as in recent years, with the media playing a large part in arts participation. As technological advances increase access to performances and artwork, individuals are more apt to experience art forms through digital downloads and broadcasts. More Americans view or listen to recordings of arts events than attend them live. Specifically, classical music broadcasts and recordings attract 17.8% of the U.S adult population of total viewers/listeners, the greatest number of adult listeners of all tracked art forms. In general, the empirical literature shows that more people participate in the arts through the media than by attending performances and more

people attend performances than create art. While the empirical literature provides little discussion of the reasons for this occurrence, there is some indication that the cause is in the availability of media. Most media activities are well-suited to the fast paced and manic lifestyles that many Americans face (RAND, 2001a). Listening to the radio or viewing a piece of art on a website are ideal for multi-tasking and require only small bits of time. In addition, they require little financial commitment and are easily accessible in areas where performances may be scarce. The flexibility provided offers the most opportunity for participation in a culture where time and resources are slim. (RAND, 2001a)

These studies also discuss the socio-economic factors that affect who participates and with what mode of participation. Education level is the most closely correlated factor affecting participation in the arts (NEA, 2008). College educated adults, including graduate and professional level education, account for the highest percentage of the U.S adult population attending arts performances. Specifically, 60% of classical music attendees have a college or graduate degree (NEA, 2008). Income level, which is generally associated with education level, is also closely correlated with attendance with those that earn more, more likely to attend a performance (NEA, 2008). Education and income levels as key indicators of adult participation through attendance have been a consistent trend in national arts attendance studies (NEA, 1996). This strong correlation between education and classical music participation is also seen in other modes of participation as adults with college or graduate degrees three times more likely than those with only a high school degree to watch and listen to classical music through the media (NEA, 2008). The reasons for the correlation between education and participation are not

entirely clear. Some writers suggest that during the course of their education, these individuals were exposed to and developed an understanding and/or appreciation for the art forms. This familiarity with the arts leads to participation and enjoyment, as is similar with most leisure activities (Kelley & Freisinger, 2000). McCarthy and Jinnett (2001) surmise that as attendance also happens to be the most social form of participation, social factors such as the preferences and views of family and friends have a significant impact on participation through attendance.

Empirical studies indicate that a fundamental shift is occurring in age and attendance demographics. The average arts attendee is increasingly older than the average U.S adult. Since 1982, the population of 18 to 24 year olds attending arts events has declined significantly for all art forms and between 2002 and 2008 45 to 54 year olds, typically the population with the greatest representation, has shown the steepest declines of all age groups (NEA, 2008). This information indicates that the younger generations have a lower and lower likelihood of participating in the arts through attendance.

What motivates individuals to participate at the rate and mode they do are not addressed in the empirical literature; however research does indicate that the reasons individuals decide to attend are based on a number of practical factors such as cost, schedule flexibility, access and information (NEA, 1993). It is important to note that the influence of these factors is seemingly dependent on the level of participation of each individual. Those who frequently attend performances but would like to attend more are most likely to cite the factors listed above as reasons for attendance or non-attendance (NEA, 1991). This suggests that motivations for attendance vary depending on the level of participation of individuals, an important distinction to make when discussing the

Binghamton Philharmonic's attempt to increase participation in those who are currently categorized as rare participants.

Theoretical Literature

Participation in the arts and motivations for attendance is discussed more generally in theoretical economic models and the related literature on leisure activity. Traditional economic approaches identify participants as consumers who choose their type and level of commitment based on outside factors such as income and cost (Heilbrun & Gray, 1993). As the income of an individual increases and the price of attendance decreases, participation will increase. Likewise, as price increases, individual participation decreases. This effect is sometimes discussed as the income effect (RAND, 2001a). The term price refers to both the cost of attendance and the loss of time or inability to participate in other activities while attending performances. If income is of higher importance to an individual than arts participation, the loss of work time will be enough to deter participation, creating what is sometimes referred to as the opportunity-cost effect (RAND, 2001b). This effect has the greatest influence on individuals of the low and middle classes, while the income effect seemingly dominates the decision making of the upper class. This pattern is reflected in the greater participation of higher income and higher educated individuals in arts attendance (Felton, 1992).

In addition to the economic model, theories of leisure participation discuss factors affecting the level and types of participation in leisure activities (Backman & Veldkamp, 1995). This work emphasizes the amount of time and mode of participation as central to the decision to participate. According to Robinson and Godbey (1997) individuals can

spend their time three ways: on work and work related activities, on daily essentials of life such as eating and sleeping, and on leisure. As the amount of time in a day is fixed, individuals must make the decision to divide their time among the three possibilities. Those with irregular work hours will find leisure activities that are flexible and fit into a fragmented schedule. These types of schedules are increasingly prevalent and leave individuals with less opportunity to participate in activities that require a pre-designated and substantial amount of time (Robinson & Godbey, 1997). Leisure literature also identifies the importance of what each individual seeks through leisure participation as main factors affecting forms of participation. For example, individuals whose preference for participation is a social experience will look to social events as their mode of participation. Their level of participation will be affected by what they seek through this activity: entertainment or fulfillment. If an individual seeks entertainment their participation will be casual, becoming a rare or occasional participant. Should an individual seek fulfillment through participation their attendance will increase to frequent participation (RAND, 2001b). This is important in determining the motivations of the different levels of participants. For organizations looking to increase the level of participation among their patrons, understanding the differing factors affecting the decision to participate is crucial.

Behavioral Models of Participation

A problem in relying on empirical and theoretical literature in analyzing participation exists in that there is little discussion of the actual motivations of an individual in choosing their level of participation. While the empirical data and

theoretical literature discuss the who, the what and the how of audience participation, there is little that discusses the why of audience participation (RAND, 2001a). The scarce literature that does attempt to identify motivations of participation builds upon behavioral models of participation. The Rand Corporation has created a framework for building participation in the arts based on this behavioral model concept. McCarthy and Jinnett argue that in order to understand why someone participates in the arts at the level of involvement they do, you need to understand that their decision-making process is more complex than the decision to participate or not. Instead this model “recognizes that an individual’s decision to take a specific action involves a complex mix of attitudes, intentions, constraints, and behaviors, as well as feedback between past experiences and the mix of attitudes and intentions.” (RAND, 2001a)

The Rand model of participation assumes that an individual’s decision to participate is developed in several stages and that different factors affect each stage. There are four stages that house the decision-making process to participate in the arts:

1. Background Stage: Deciding whether or not to consider the arts as a potential leisure activity
2. Perceptual Stage: An assessment of the benefits and costs of participating in the arts that leads to the formation of an inclination towards the arts as a leisure activity.
3. Practical Stage: Evaluation of specific opportunities for participation.
4. Experience Stage: Actual participation followed by a reassessment of the costs and benefits of that experience.

The continuous flow from each stage into the next connects background factors to preconceived ideas, these ideas to decision-making, this decision-making to action and that action to future action. The participation model in Appendix A depicts the complex set of factors that affect each stage of the decision-making process. It emphasizes socio-demographic and cultural factors as having a significant effect on the development of an attitude towards the arts. This attitude then impacts any future decisions and/or interactions with arts. Organizations should target individuals using this framework in order to develop strategies to deepen participation. Swanson, Davis and Zhao (2008) extend this research by investigating the relationship between a number of motivating factors and participant attendance. Their results indicate that four motivations (aesthetic, education, recreational and self-esteem motivators) were significantly associated with participation behavior of attendees. In addition, subscribers were more likely to be motivated by the above factors than rare or occasional attendees. These findings are consistent with most theoretical literature on leisure. However, both of these discussions of participant motivations lack the ability to clearly identify the motivating factors of rare or occasional participants in attending arts events and encouraging motivators to significantly affect their behavior.

Summary

Empirical and theoretical literature address concerns of audience participation and development by identifying common factors that influence participation. Empirical literature highlights the common characteristics of arts participants, helpful in assessing who these individuals are. Theoretical literature discusses factors affecting participation, useful for creating environments that will encourage attendance. However, little directly

addresses the specific motivations for attending an event and what motivates continual attendance at the Binghamton Philharmonic. The behavioral model proposed by the Rand Corporation addresses possible motivational factors, suggesting that organizations can group their patrons according to each stage and better identify the tactics to be taken towards deepening commitment. Although helpful, the literature does not specifically address the motivations of the single ticket buyer base of the Binghamton Philharmonic.

Methodology

In order to gain insight into the motivations of single ticket buyers and their level of participation, a questionnaire was sent to all single ticket and subscriber households from the past and current season. The survey was sent electronically to those with listed email addresses and through direct mail to those with only a listed home address. In total, 1,312 individuals were asked to participate, 761 through email and 551 through direct mailings. Email participants received an email from the Binghamton Philharmonic asking for participation in the online survey. A link was provided to the survey, which was created through surveymonkey.com, an online tool used for generating custom survey instruments. Email respondents received one follow-up email reminding them about the survey. Direct mail participants received the same survey, printed and sent with a return envelope with postage. Preceding the survey participants were introduced to a brief explanation of why they were being contacted and the content and expected benefits of the survey.

The questionnaire was designed to shed light on two aspects of the population: 1) who the Binghamton Philharmonic single ticket buyer population is and 2) motivations

for attending and methods for increasing participation. This was achieved with questions that fall into the following categories:

- Experiences at Binghamton Philharmonic performances
- Knowledge of classical/pops music
- Participation level
- Motivations for attendance
- Access to Information
- Demographics

The questionnaire included close-ended questions with response options designed from interviews conducted with both single ticket and subscriber participants prior to survey data collection. As previous research provided limited guidance for creating the surveys, interviews were used to supplement the literature and gain practical information about motivations. In addition, numerous questions included an “other” category inviting participants to add their own responses. Investigating both the subscriber and single ticket buyer bases allows for a comparison between the two groups, valuable in deepening analysis of the differences between the single-ticket buyer population and those who subscribe.

Data Analysis

The survey was conducted over a ten day period in March and April 2010 and resulted in an overall response rate of 22%. Of the 761 possible email participants 20.7% responded, while 23.7% of direct mail responses were received. Of the total single ticket buyer population (1,018), 11% participated in the survey. Survey results were analyzed using inferential and descriptive statistics, supplemented with a thematic analysis of

written survey responses. Cross-tabulation analysis was chosen to identify key indicators of single ticket behavior and motivations for attendance. Cross-tabulation analysis provided clear insight into how the variables inter-relate. Cross-tabulation and frequency distribution charts were used on all experience and motivation based questions to determine the differences between the single ticket and subscriber base. Questions requested participants to choose the two response options that most applied, leading to data points in multiple categories. Because categories were not mutually exclusive chi-square tests could not be performed. Instead, independent samples *t*-tests were used to look at the differences between groups in two ways. The independent samples *t*-tests used for variables of motivation and non-attendance looked at those who selected a particular response as opposed to those that did not select that response to see if any significant relationship appeared between the response and the demographic variables and attendance frequency. In addition independent samples *t*-tests were used to analyze factors such as age, income, education level and level of musical knowledge to compare the means between the single ticket and subscriber groups. A thematic analysis of responses provided in the “other” response section was used to supplement the findings of the cross-tabular analysis and independent samples *t*-tests.

Findings

Descriptive and inferential statistics indicate that Binghamton Philharmonic single ticket buyers closely resemble Binghamton Philharmonic subscribers in demographics, level of musical knowledge and likes and dislikes about their experiences at Binghamton Philharmonic performances. Independent samples *t*-tests revealed that the variables income, education level, level of musical knowledge and whether children under 18

reside in the home were not statistically significant. However, age was shown to have a statistically significant relationship with single ticket and subscriber bases (Table1). That is, the mean age for subscribers was statistically different from the single ticket buyer population. Frequency distribution tables revealed single ticket buyers held the majority of respondents below the age of 54 while subscribers held the majority of respondents over the age of 55.

Table 1: Summary of Independent Samples *t*-test Findings

<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Finding</i>
Age	.000***	Significant
Income	.577	Not Significant
Education Level	.679	Not Significant
Level of musical knowledge	.981	Not Significant
Children Under 18 in residence	.117	Not Significant

Note: *** $p < .001$

Single ticket buyers reported attending performances frequently. Table 2 illustrates that the majority of single ticket buyers reported attending either twice a season or more than twice a season. Respondents elaborated on this theme using the “other” response option and adding comments like “I attend as many as I can get to” and “I attend all non-Saturday performances”. This is a contradiction to the information provided by the Binghamton Philharmonic that only 14% of single ticket buyers return for a second performance each season. The differentiation is most likely due to the response rate of single ticket buyers, of the 11% that responded these are most likely individuals who already feel a connection to the organization and attend most frequently. Of the types of concerts to attend, 29% attended only classical concerts, 16.2% attended

only pops concerts, while 55% have attended both classical and pops concerts. Single ticket buyers also reported a high level of knowledge regarding the discount and subscription packages. 62.5% of single ticket buyers selected “I know up to date information about the discounts/subscription packages offered”. Together, these results construct a picture of the single ticket buyer as a frequent attendee, most likely to attend both classical and pop concerts, who know up to date information about subscription packages and discount offers.

Table 2: Frequency of Attendance of the Single Ticket Buyer Population

<i>Attendance Levels</i>	<i>Single Ticket Buyer (Number of Responses)</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Once a season	25	21.3%
About twice a season	46	39.3%
More than twice a season	31	26.5%
I have only attended one performance	6	5.1%
Other	9	7.7%
Total	117	

Single ticket buyers have attended Binghamton Philharmonic performances because of the quality of the orchestra (33.8% of responses), the chance to hear live classical music (28%) and the music programming (23.3%). This stands in contrast to subscribers who overwhelmingly reported that they have attended performances for the chance to hear live classical music (65.3% of responses), with all other response options receiving significantly less attention. Both single ticket and subscriber populations reported in the same ranked order that the quality of the orchestra, the conductor/performers and the wide variety of programming were what they liked the

most about their experience at the Binghamton Philharmonic. The selections “the discounts offered” and “affordable ticket prices” were largely dismissed by both groups (See Appendix E).

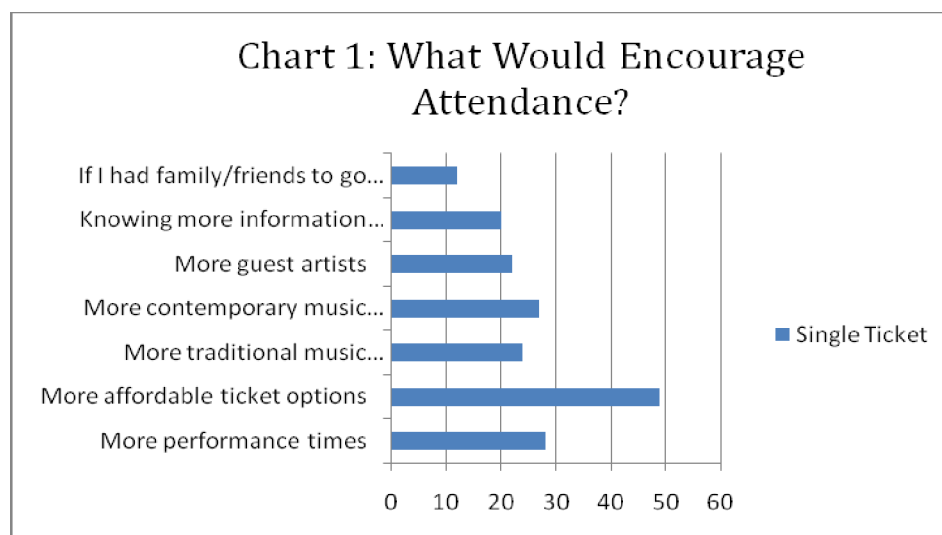
The top reason single ticket buyers reported they did not attend more frequently was that they are only interested in certain composers and/or pieces of music (32.2% of responses). For those who know about available discounts and attend more than twice a season, this may be the motivating factor for why a subscription package is not purchased. These individuals seem primarily interested in the specific pieces/composers rather than the overall offerings of the Binghamton Philharmonic and do not believe that subscriptions to an entire season are appropriate for them.

Single ticket buyers also responded they do not attend more frequently because of the difficulty in scheduling time to see performances (25.1%) and their inability to afford ticket prices (21.9% of responses). Independent samples *t*-tests revealed that a statistically significant relationship exists between those who selected the response option “I can’t afford ticket prices” and attendance frequency. Those who selected that response had a lower average attendance frequency (Mean = 1.90) than those who did not select that response (Mean = 2.20) (See Appendix D). However, income was not found to have a statistically significant relationship with the response option “I can’t afford ticket prices”. These results indicate that ticket price negatively affects attendance frequency for single ticket buyers regardless of their income level. Ticket prices are perceived as too high by the single ticket buyer population.

The difficulty of scheduling time to see performances received the second largest number of responses. For those who know about subscription packages but attend more

than twice a season, the need to schedule and/or commit in advance to performances is a motivating factor behind not purchasing a subscription package. Independent samples *t*-tests revealed that response options concerning performance times and scheduling were statistically significant with age and income. That is, those who are most concerned with the time component of performances had a higher mean income and lower mean age than respondents who did not select these options (See Appendix D). Responses provided in the “other” section provide elaboration such as “we do not subscribe because it is difficult to commit to all of the concert dates so far in advance”. A number of responses noted that Saturday performances were a reason they could not attend or that more non-Saturday performances would increase their level of attendance. While no elaboration was given, it can be inferred that one reason for this preference may be the time of the performance. All Saturday performances are scheduled at 8p.m while Sunday performances are scheduled for 3p.m.

Responses for what would encourage single ticket buyers to attend more performances yielded similar response percentages in most categories. As chart 1 illustrates, the response option “more affordable ticket prices” generated 26.9% of responses, while the remaining responses fell between 10 and 15 percent. More performance times ranked second, with 15.3% of responses, further informing the fact that the time component of performances is a primary motivational factor.



Combining the significance of more affordable ticket options with the high attendance frequency of single ticket buyers and the reportedly high knowledge of up to date discount/subscription offers results in a conflict of logic. The Binghamton Philharmonic's current subscription package prices reflect the cost of two single ticket purchases, meaning that a single ticket buyer can save money by becoming a subscriber if they attend more than twice a season. Reasons for this contradiction could be attributed to inaccurate reporting of the frequency of attendance or issues in validity with the question asking for attendance frequency. Most likely, a problem with the perceptions of the single ticket buyer base is to blame for the contradiction. While many patrons believe they know up to date information about the subscription and discounts available, they may not. The likelihood that inaccurate perceptions play a role in the acceptance of subscription packages is also supported in that single ticket buyers reported ticket prices negatively affected performance frequency even though income level was irrelevant. The inaccurate perceptions of single ticket buyers become a factor affecting the motivation to attend more frequently.

Recommendations

The study identified three noteworthy motivations for single ticket buyer attendance: ticket price, the scheduling of performances and the interest in certain composers and/or pieces. In addition, the study revealed that single ticket buyer perceptions of ticket prices affect the decision to become a subscriber. Although there is no indication that ticket prices are actually unaffordable, single ticket participants perceive these prices to be too high. These findings should inform future initiatives to convert single ticket buyers to subscribers. The Binghamton Philharmonic should take actions that address the need for affordable ticket prices, address scheduling concerns and attend to the musical preferences of their single ticket buyer base.

Recommendation 1: Explore the Pricing Misconception

The study revealed that ticket price was a primary factor affecting attendance at Binghamton Philharmonic performances. The majority of single ticket respondents selected that more affordable ticket prices would be the greatest encouragement for attending more frequently. However, there is no indication that patrons can not afford ticket prices and no direct link to suggest that if ticket prices were reduced attendance would increase. Regardless, if the perception of ticket prices as too high really is restricting attendance, the organization should be aware. I recommend that the Binghamton Philharmonic conduct further research with patrons, for example focus groups or interviews, to gain a greater understanding of the price misconception. By exploring the realities of the perception of prices, the organization can determine whether or not reducing ticket prices is a logical step.

Recommendation 2: Explore New Marketing Strategies to Reshape Perceptions and Subscription Opportunities

The findings illuminate the issue of inaccurate single ticket buyer perceptions of what is required to become a subscriber at the Binghamton Philharmonic. I recommend that the Binghamton Philharmonic focus efforts on employing a new marketing strategy for their current exchange policy and subscription packages. The current exchange policy allows subscribers to exchange their ticket for a ticket to any other Binghamton Philharmonic concert if they are unable to attend one of their own concerts. Staff believe that the exchange policy offered is largely unknown. Shifting focus to the development of marketing strategies that can be used to educate patrons can rectify the problem of inaccurate perceptions of subscription and ticketing offers. Methods should emphasize the ability to let attendees experience the Philharmonic their way, as opposed to fitting into the expected ideals of the organization. The current exchange policy is one way to address the varying musical preferences of single ticket buyers. If it were marketed in a more effective manner, its ability to encourage conversion to subscription may be enhanced.

In addition to the exchange policy, I recommend that the Binghamton Philharmonic focus on the perceptions of becoming a “subscriber” as a primary reason for reluctance to purchase a package. Most notably, it is the perception that to be a subscriber one must commit a substantial amount of time and money and have a blanket interest in classical music. Marketing can again be employed to reshape these misconceptions and open the eyes of single ticket buyers to the ways that becoming a subscriber applies to them. It is my recommendation that the Binghamton Philharmonic

explore the development of marketing strategies that address the specific motivational factors affecting their single ticket buyers in a way that speaks directly to them. By speaking to single ticket buyers through the factors that are most important to them, the organization can educate these individuals to the actual opportunities available.

Recommendation 3: Increase Attendance Options

The Binghamton Philharmonic should provide participants with greater flexibility to attend performances through increased performance times and opportunities. The study revealed that the difficulty to schedule time to see performances was a major factor negatively affecting attendance. When responses were written, the specific request for more Sunday performances was identified to hold the largest amount of requests. It is my recommendation that the Binghamton Philharmonic assess the possibility for more performances times, specifically daytime and/or Sunday performances. The Binghamton Philharmonic, realizing this may be an issue, has scheduled one additional daytime performance for the coming season. The Binghamton Philharmonic should monitor attendance at this performance and the subsequent night time performances to determine if attendance increases for that performance, and identify any affect on total attendance and types of attendees (single ticket or subscriber) for night concerts of the season.

The current Binghamton Philharmonic subscription packages require a selection between the classical music and pops concert series. 55% of single ticket buyers reported attending both classical and pops concerts. In order to convert single ticket buyers into subscribers, subscription packages must appeal to their musical preferences. Restricting attendance to one musical offering or the other does not address current preferences of single ticket buyers. I recommend that the Binghamton Philharmonic explore the

possibilities of expanding subscription offers to include more diverse musical selections. In the past, the Binghamton Philharmonic has implemented a flex-package offer, which allows patrons to select between the different music concerts and create their own subscription package regardless of series. This attempt was unsuccessful. Currently, the Binghamton Philharmonic offers their flexible exchange policy in attempt to address the diverse musical preferences of patrons, however, it is believed by staff to be ineffective. Although its content may be directed towards addressing this issue, it is still an exchange policy rather than a direct offer that provides patrons the flexibility they want in selecting their music programming. It is my recommendation that the Binghamton Philharmonic revisit the flex-package option in conjunction with the recommendation to engage new marketing strategies. If flexible packages were marketed with an emphasis on reeducating single ticket patrons to the ways the Binghamton Philharmonic applies to their specific preferences, patrons can connect to the offers they receive and build an inclination to participate.

Recommendation 4: Explore Expanding Performance Access

Single ticket buyers are most motivated by the performances of specific composers and/or pieces. To suggest that the Binghamton Philharmonic design its musical programming around the preferences of single ticket buyers is nonsensical and unrealistic. However, the Binghamton Philharmonic should explore the possibilities of expanding the range of its performance types, sizes and locations. The single ticket buyer base is attracted to performances for the specific musical selections offered at that particular concert. In order to encourage continual attendance the Binghamton Philharmonic needs to appeal to these individuals on a different level, since redesigning

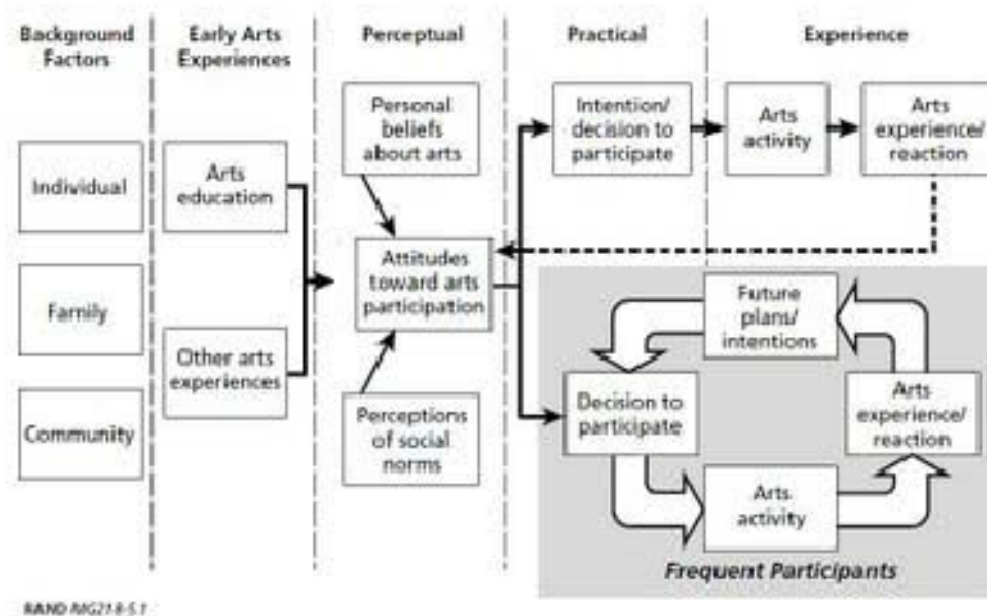
programming is not an option. By significantly scaling down performances the Binghamton Philharmonic could perform at smaller venues throughout the Binghamton area. Using venues known for their unique musical offerings will expose populations that would not normally frequently attend full-scale performances. The Binghamton Philharmonic chooses the Anderson center for its performance venue for many reasons, one being its acoustics. As the organization is concerned with providing quality classical music performances their primary focus is on sound quality. In order to attract the single ticket population, the Binghamton Philharmonic should understand that their focus should be adjusted. While quality should always be important, the focus of these performances should be building a stronger connection with infrequent attendees and new audiences. Rather than expect single ticket patrons to value Philharmonic performances the way the organization does, the Philharmonic should address this population in a way that speaks to them. By creating more inventive performances focused on the overall experience of the event, the Binghamton Philharmonic opens the door to a meaningful connection to single ticket buyers. Using the venue or the type of performance, for example an outside performance during the summer or choosing a small eclectic setting like the Lost Dog Cafe, as the attracting feature has the ability to connect with patrons in a different way. This recommendation, like those stated previously, is a means for enticing single ticket buyers to attend full-scale performances more frequently by first appealing to them on their level and building a relationship on their own terms.

Conclusion

The Binghamton Philharmonic has the potential to secure substantial ticket revenue and attendance through the conversion of single ticket buyers into subscribers. Maintaining their financial stability and cultural relevancy is crucial to their sustained success, and subscribers provide secure ticket revenue and attendance. Findings of the study suggest that single ticket buyer attendance frequency is most affected by the factors of ticket price, the scheduling of performances and the performance of specific composers and/or musical pieces. In addition, inaccurate perceptions blind single ticket buyers to the benefits and opportunities subscription packages offer. In order to convert single ticket buyers into subscribers the Binghamton Philharmonic should explore opportunities to strengthen relationships with single ticket buyers by addressing these motivational factors and appealing to their specific preferences.

Appendix A

Figure 5.1
RAND Participation Model



Appendix B

Date: March 25, 2010

To: Lauren Elicks, MPA

From: Anne M. Casella, CIP Administrator

Human Subjects Research Review Committee

Subject: Human Subjects Research Approval

Protocol Number: 1386-10

Protocol title: *Seducing the Single Ticket Buyer: Converting single ticket buyers to subscribers the Binghamton Philharmonic*

Your project identified above was reviewed by the HSRRC and has received an Exempt approval pursuant to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) regulations, 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) .

An exempt status signifies that you will not be required to submit a Continuing Review application as long as your project involving human subjects remains unchanged. If your

project undergoes any changes these changes must be reported to our office prior to implementation, using the form listed below:

http://humansubjects.binghamton.edu/2009_Forms/012_Modification%20Form.rtf

Any unanticipated problems and/or complaints related to your use of human subjects in this project must be reported, using the form listed below,

<http://humansubjects.binghamton.edu/Forms/Forms/Adverse%20Event%20Form.rtf>

and delivered to the Human Subjects Research Review Office within five days. This is required so that the HSRRC can institute or update protective measures for human subjects as may be necessary. In addition, under the University's Assurance with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Binghamton University must report certain events to the federal government. These reportable events include deaths, injuries, adverse reactions or unforeseen risks to human subjects. These reports must be made regardless of the source of funding or exempt status of your project.

University policy requires you to maintain as a part of your records, any documents pertaining to the use of human subjects in your research. This includes any information or materials conveyed to, and received from, the subjects, as well as any executed consent forms, data and analysis results. These records must be maintained for at least six years after project completion or termination. If this is a funded project, you should be aware that these records are subject to inspection and review by authorized representative of the University, State and Federal governments.

Please notify this office when your project is complete by completing and forwarding to our office the following form:

<http://humansubjects.binghamton.edu/Forms/Forms/Protocol%20Closure%20Form.rtf>

Upon notification we will close the above referenced file. Any reactivation of the project will require a new application.

This documentation is being provided to you via email. A hard copy will not be mailed unless you request us to do so.

Thank you for your cooperation, I wish you success in your research, and please do not hesitate to contact our office if you have any questions or require further assistance.

cc: file

David Campbell

Diane Bulizak, Secretary

*Human Subjects Research Review Office
Biotechnology Building, Room 2205*

85 Murray Hill Rd.
Vestal, NY 13850
dbulizak@binghamton.edu
Telephone: (607) 777-3818
Fax: (607) 777-5025

Appendix C

You are invited to participate in a research study to determine what motivates individuals to attend performances at the Binghamton Philharmonic. The research concerns your reasons for attending performances at the Binghamton Philharmonic and why you might decide to attend more frequently. Your responses will help the Philharmonic strengthen its connection with its audiences and continue to create a welcoming environment. You are being asked to participate because you have attended a concert during the past or current season. The survey will take approximately 5 minutes. Your response will be confidential and your decision to participate is voluntary. Your decision to participate will not affect your relationship with the Binghamton Philharmonic or Binghamton University. You do not have to answer all of the questions and can stop at any time.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact Lauren Elicks at Lelicks1@binghamton.edu

Will you participate in this study?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

2. Why do you attend performances at the Binghamton Philharmonic? Please check the two that most apply.

- ☐ Music programming
- ☐ Offers a rare cultural experience
- ☐ Chance to hear live classical music
- ☐ My family/friends go, so I do too
- ☐ The quality of the orchestra
- ☐ Affordable ticket price to see a live performance
- ☐ Other (please specify)

3. What do you LIKE about your experience(s) at the Binghamton Philharmonic? Please check the two that most apply.

- ☐ Quality of the performances
- ☐ The wide variety of programming
- ☐ Affordable ticket prices
- ☐ The discounts offered
- ☐ The conductor/performers
- ☐ Other (please specify)

4. What do you DISLIKE about your experience(s) at the Binghamton Philharmonic? Please check two that most apply.

- ☐ Quality of performances
- ☐ The conductor/performer
- ☐ The variety of programming
- ☐ Difficulty of traveling to performances
- ☐ Other (please specify)

5. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being no knowledge and 5 being a great deal of knowledge, please rate your level of knowledge of classical and/or pops music

	1				5
Level of knowledge	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. Which type of Binghamton Philharmonic concerts have you attended?

- ☐ Classical music concerts
- ☐ Pops music concerts
- ☐ Both classical and pops concerts

7. How frequently do you attend performances? Please check one.

- ☐ Once a season
- ☐ About twice a season
- ☐ More than twice a season
- ☐ I have only attended one performance
- ☐ Other (please specify)

8. Are you currently a Binghamton Philharmonic subscriber?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

9. How much of an impact would the following offers have on your decision to attend more frequently?

Little Impact

Some Impact

Significant Impact

	Little Impact	Some Impact	Significant Impact
Discounted tickets	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Little Impact	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Some Impact	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Significant Impact
Free last minute exchanges	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Little Impact	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Some Impact	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Significant Impact
Advance mailings of program notes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Little Impact	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Some Impact	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Significant Impact
Group travel arrangements	Little Impact	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Some Impact	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

10. Why do you not attend Binghamton Philharmonic performances more frequently?
Please check the two that most apply.

- ☐ It is difficult for me to schedule time to see performances
- ☐ It is difficult for me to travel to see performances
- ☐ I can't afford ticket prices
- ☐ I am only interested in certain composers and/or pieces of music
- ☐ I am not interested in classical music
- ☐ I only go when my family/friends do
- ☐ The concerts are not enjoyable

Other (please specify)

11. What would encourage you to attend more performances each season? Please check two that most apply.

- ☐ More performance times
- ☐ More affordable ticket options
- ☐ More traditional music programming
- ☐ More contemporary music programming
- ☐ More guest artists
- ☐ Knowing more information about upcoming events
- ☐ If I had family/friends to attend performances with

Other (please specify)

12. What do you know about discounts and the subscription packages offered by Binghamton Philharmonic?

- ☐ I don't know anything about the discounts/subscription packages offered
- ☐ I have received information about the discounts/subscription packages but didn't read it
- ☐ I know about up to date information about discounts/subscription packages offered

Other (please specify)

13. How do you find out information about Binghamton Philharmonic concerts?

- ☐ Newspaper
- ☐ Radio
- ☐ Binghamton Philharmonic mailings
- ☐ Binghamton Philharmonic website
- ☐ Binghamton University media
- ☐ Friends/Family
- ☐ Other (please specify)

14. What is your age?

- ☐ Under 25
- ☐ 25 to 34
- ☐ 35 to 44
- ☐ 45 to 54
- ☐ 55 to 64
- ☐ 65 to 74
- ☐ 75+

15. What is your highest level of education?

- ☐ Some high school
- ☐ High school graduate
- ☐ Some college
- ☐ College graduate
- ☐ Technical school graduate
- ☐ Postgraduate degree

16. Are there children under 18 residing in your home?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

17. What is your approximate household income?

- ☐ Under \$10,000
- ☐ \$10,000- \$19,000
- ☐ \$20,000 - \$29,000
- ☐ \$30,000 - \$39,000
- ☐ \$40,000 - \$49,000
- ☐ \$50,000 - \$59,000
- ☐ \$60,000 - \$69,000
- ☐ \$70,000 - \$79,000
- ☐ \$80,000 - \$89,000
- ☐ \$90,000 - \$99,000
- ☐ Over \$100,000

18. What is your zip code?

Zip code

Appendix D
Table 1: Summary of Independent Samples t-test Findings

<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Finding</i>	<i>Means</i>
Age	.000***	Significant	Subscriber: 5.96 Single Ticket: 5.26
Income	.577	Not Significant	Subscriber: 7.57 Single Ticket: 7.44
Education Level	.679	Not Significant	Subscriber: 4.91 Single Ticket: 4.69
Level of musical knowledge	.981	Not Significant	Subscriber: 3.61 Single Ticket: 3.33
Children Under 18 in residence	.117	Not Significant	Subscriber: 1.95 Single Ticket: 1.93

Note: *** $p < .001$

Table 3: Independent Samples t-tests, Reasons for Non-attendance:

It is difficult for me to schedule time to see performances

<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Significance</i>	<i>Means</i>
Income	***.001	Significant	Selected: 7.51 Non-selected: 5.29
Age	**.005	Significant	Selected: 5.02 Non-selected: 5.78
Education	.636	Not Significant	
Attendance Frequency	.386	Not Significant	

I am only interested in certain composers and/or pieces of music

Income	.460	Not Significant	
Education	.295	Not Significant	
Age	**.002	Significant	Selected: 5.20 Non-selected: 5.77
Attendance Frequency	.650	Not Significant	

The concerts are not enjoyable

Income	.206	Not Significant	
Education	.358	Not Significant	
Age	*.047	Significant	Selected: 4.60 Non-Selected: 5.69
Attendance Frequency	.691	Not Significant	

It is difficult for me to travel to see performances

Income	.627	Not Significant
Education	.509	Not Significant
Age	.557	Not Significant
Attendance Frequency	.940	Not Significant

I can't afford ticket prices

Income	.095	Not Significant	
Education	.774	Not Significant	
Age	.064	Not Significant	
Attendance Frequency	*.040	Significant	Selected: 1.90 Non-selected: 2.27

I am not interested in classical music

Income	.074	Not Significant
Education	.165	Not Significant
Age	.258	Not Significant
Attendance Frequency	.325	Not Significant

I only go when my family/friends do

Income	.417	Not Significant	
Education	.783	Not Significant	
Age	.730	Not Significant	
Attendance Frequency	*.038	Significant	Selected : 1.40 Non-selected: 2.20

Note: p<*.05

**.01

***.001

Table 4: Independent Samples *t*-tests, What would encourage more frequent attendance:*More performance times*

<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Significance</i>	<i>Means</i>
Income	** .007	Significant	Selected: 7.46 Non-selected: 5.39
Education	.591	Not Significant	
Age	** .002	Significant	Selected: 5.00 Non-selected: 5.74
Attendance Frequency	.133	Not Significant	

More guest artists

Income	.301	Not significant	
Education	.738	Not Significant	
Age	** .003	Significant	Selected: 5.78 Non-selected: 4.40
Attendance Frequency	.852	Not Significant	

More traditional programming

Income	* .011	Significant	Selected: 7.45 Non-selected: 5.42
Education	.568	Not Significant	
Age	.090	Not Significant	
Attendance Frequency	.819	Not Significant	

More contemporary music programming

Income	.963	Not Significant	
Education	.836	Not Significant	
Age	.727	Not Significant	
Attendance Frequency	.725	Not Significant	

Knowing more information about upcoming events

Income	.174	Not Significant
Education	.937	Not Significant
Age	.303	Not Significant
Attendance Frequency	.373	Not Significant

If I had family/friends to attend performances with

Income	.940	Not Significant
Education	.150	Not Significant
Age	.328	Not Significant
Attendance Frequency	.541	Not Significant

More affordable ticket options

Income	.177	Not Significant
Education	.057	Not Significant
Age	.499	Not Significant
Attendance Frequency	.127	Not Significant

Note: $p < .05$

**.01

***.001

Appendix E

Table 5: What Would Encourage You To Attend More Performances?

<i>Response Options</i>	<i>Single Ticket Buyer Response Counts</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
More performance times	28	15.3%
More affordable ticket options	34	21.9%
More traditional music programming	24	13.1%
More contemporary music programming	27	14.8%
More guest artists	22	12%
Knowing more information about upcoming events	20	10.9%
If I had family/friends to go with	12	6.6%

Table 6: Why Don't You Attend Performances More Frequently?

<i>Response Options</i>	<i>Single Ticket Buyer Response Counts</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
It is difficult for me to travel to see performances	15	9.6%
I can't afford ticket prices	34	21.9%
It is difficult for me to schedule time to see performances	39	25.1%
I am only interested in certain composers/pieces	50	32.2%
I am not interested in classical music	6	3.8%
I only go when my family/friends do	6	3.8%
The concerts are not enjoyable	5	3.2%

Table 7: Why Do You Attend Performances?

<i>Response Options</i>	<i>Number of Responses: Single Ticket</i>	<i>Number of Responses: Subscriber</i>
Music programming	65	42
Offers a rare cultural experience	16	16
Chance to hear live classical music	78	111
My family/friends go so I do too	2	4

The quality of the orchestra	94	49
Affordable ticket price	23	23

Table 8: What Do You Like About Your Experience(s) at Performances?

<i>Response Options</i>	<i>Number of Responses: Single Ticket</i>	<i>Number of Responses: Subscriber</i>
Quality of performances	100	124
Wide variety of programming	46	73
Affordable ticket prices	28	22
The discounts offered	9	3
The conductor/performers	47	86

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