

# Discussing the Impact of New Media Communication on Classical Music

Shijia Lian\*

*School of Music College, Guangdong Polytechnic Normal University, Guangzhou, Guangdong 510665, China*

*\*Corresponding author. Email: zsxsc@gpnu.edu.cn*

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to explore the survival path of classical music and the medium behind its development, the new media platform. A new perspective is chosen to study the impact of new media communication on classical music, using YouTube as an example. At the same time, the article selected Lang Lang, an internationally renowned pianist on YouTube, as a good example of promoting classical music to be studied. Therefore, this study finds that the development of the new media era is an inevitable trend that can promote the dissemination of classical music in different ways. New media is ultimately part of the development of present-day society, and it is also inextricably linked to capital. By exploring the positive and negative effects brought about by new media, we seek to bring about a more prominent effect on the dissemination of classical music.

**Keywords:** *classical music, new media, contemporary communication, individualization, commercial media*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Western classical music culture has a long history and is a representative of elegant classical music, so there are still many followers today who love and use classical music. When listening to classical music, different songs bring people different emotional experiences and help to improve people's cultural literacy and spiritual civilization. Music culture relies on the transmission and development of various modes of communication. Currently, with the continuous development of digital technology and network technology, the new media era has brought new forms of artistic communication, like Weibo, Tik Tok and YouTube. As mentioned in Liikanen's article, YouTube, as a social media platform where music can be uploaded and shared, has grown to be the most popular new media social platform in the world today[1]. Therefore, this paper uses the YouTube platform as an example to explore how new media platforms like YouTube and similar new media platforms can better disseminate classical music through their own social nature, global reach through content production methods, and platform management. From the perspective of new media development, classical music can gain a broader distribution platform while bringing greater influence.

### 1.1. Paper Method

This paper uses a literature research approach. In the process of researching and exploring new media, the author researched art, cultural industry and business literature and extracted revealing and useful insights from other authors in this field to provide the basis for this paper. Second, the paper employs both quantitative and qualitative analysis methods to investigate and analyze accurate data on certain representative musicians on the YouTube platform and to conduct qualitative analysis based on interviews with well-known musicians. The paper also employs an interdisciplinary research approach, involving various disciplines such as management, musicology, and business studies. In addition, the authors use case studies to dig deeper into the meaning expressed by individual behavioural surveys. It provides a collated empirical report for the judgment of our article, and also provides a basis for the judgment.

### 1.2. Paper Structure

The first part of this paper describes the features and nature of the YouTube social platform, including the creation of social platform personality tags and its social features. The second part discusses the platform's content production. The content it produces is widely circulated around the world and has greatly expanded the

international reach of classical music. The third part deals with the management of the platform, including the guidance of big data analysis and the diversity of commercial profitability. Then, the paper briefly discusses the audience limitations of such new media platforms. The fifth part summarizes the impact and significance of the new media era on the dissemination of classical music, and makes some suggestions for future development such as listener restrictions and security of users' personal information.

### **1.3. Paper Objective**

The purpose of this paper is to explore the significance of digital and online technologies that play an important role in the dissemination of music in the new media era. In the context of the rapid development of the new media age, it is worthwhile to pay attention to and study how to enhance the dissemination of classical music culture. By establishing a global social sharing platform, it is possible to extend the horizontal and vertical dimensions of classical music to the whole world. In this way, people increasingly prefer to recognize the meaning and impact of classical music through different modes of new media. Finally, classical music should be improved not only from the perspective of digital copyright protection, but also from the aspects of standardization of content operation and upgrading of its own technology. In fact, the existing new media still have many shortcomings and cannot give full play to its advantages to help the development of classical music. Therefore, this paper aims to explore better ways to disseminate classical music, making it safer, more popular and more reliable.

## **2. THE DIVERSITY OF COMMERCIAL PROFITABILITY OF THE PLATFORM**

### **2.1 Individualization**

In his research, Kim pointed out that the audience's recognition of artists depends on YouTube's specific interactive mode. The core of this interactive mode comes from the parasocial relationship established between the performer and the audience[2]. Gruzd further pointed out in his article that the basis of the cognitive process of this parasocial relationship comes from the artist's personal construction. For example, artists are encouraged to show their personalities and uniqueness in daily life, in order to establish a process of social interaction with the audience[3]. Classical musicians can use YouTube and other social platforms to create their own personalized labels to attract followers and audiences. In this way, their unique style can appeal to like-minded audiences with similar tastes and the audience will become more loyal to their favourite musicians. The original popularity and popularity of musicians can also be used to stimulate the interest of

audiences of other styles, so as to increase their fan base at various levels.

For example, Lang Lang, one of the greatest Chinese pianists in the 21st century, has won numerous followers around the world with his superb technology and unique insight into musical emotion and he also is a famous international pianist. Lang is considered by many as one of the most accomplished classical musicians of modern time[4]. His YouTube channel has nearly 190,000 follower subscriptions, and his performances have been viewed hundreds of thousands to millions of times. A significant reason why Lang stands out among many classical music performers is his long-term persistence in practising piano. Lang as born into an ordinary family in China. He practised the piano for 6-8 hours a day when he was very young, so it can be said that he devoted all his spare time to the piano. Therefore, his current outstanding achievements are closely related to his perseverance and hard work. A Chicago Tribune music critic called him 'the biggest, most exciting young keyboard talent I have encountered in many a year of attending piano recitals'[5]. According to author's survey, it is found that more than 70 percent of Lang's followers are classical music students who have similar piano learning experience with him. They were deeply attracted by his personal label of "genius and still diligence." These followers hope to become as good a performer as Lang through the same efforts. This is the reason why he has become the role model and target of so many classical music students. Compared with Li Yundi, a famous performer of the same period, the followers of the two will be quite different. The world's various authoritative media, such as The New York Times, praised Li's "sheer musical talent! ", praised his performance as unique, just like the natural sound, elegant and noble very poetic, is the most romantic and poetic contemporary pianist. Li Yundi's style is more courtly and more elegant, so his followers base is mostly elite. It is not difficult to see that Lang Lang's playing style is characterized by distinctive individualism. When he is playing, his facial expressions are all strong and slightly exaggerated, which made it easy to impress the audience after only one or two viewings. In comparison, Li Yundi is less accessible than Lang Lang's richer and more exaggerated performances. Naturally, the scope of the audience will also be limited. However, the exaggeration of Lang's expression of classical music is not acceptable and understood by all. There are also many people who look down on his unique style very much. Anthony Tommasini, the chief classical music critic of The New York Times, skewered Mr. Lang's 2003 Carnegie Hall recital, writing that his playing was "often incoherent, self-indulgent and slam-bang crass"[6]. Lang (2019) also points out that "I really want to carry classical music into some new areas," he said. "But sometimes I think, maybe it's too far? Maybe I should pull back a little bit?"

In addition, Lang has also participated in various

variety shows in recent years, frequently appearing in the public sight. What he showed in the program simple and honest lovely image is totally different with him, an “art freak” who is fascinated by music on the stage. The huge contrast between real life and elegant art also allows the audience to see a more common side of his life. Lang married Gina Alice Redlinger, a young pianist who is proficient in multiple languages in Paris, in June 2019. His love affair with Gina was an enviable one. They're often attending on reality shows and appearing on various events together.



**Figure 1.** June 3, 2019 Lang Lang and Gina

Although Gina is a foreigner, she is known to speak fluent dialect of northeast area. Their love story and funny life recordings made them close to public’s daily life, and it can break the boundary between the superstar and the public. This personalized tag of no sense of distance and sweet life makes Lang seem to be a variety show’s star and become more popular. Lang not only has been attracting a wide variety of followers, but also has been expanding his popularity, which vastly increases Lang’s commercial value.

As a result, his exaggerated, passionate and highly tensive label has attracted many followers. Whereas, off-stage Lang has a very real and funny side. In his teaching videos, he often uses a humorous tone to tell the audience how to practice complicated skills correctly. This not only makes the video more interesting, but also boots the relationship between him and the audience. It also let followers feel his amiable, patient and humble personality. This creates a ‘para-social interaction’[7] between the musician and the audience. Lang Lang's popularity has helped the spread of classical music to a certain extent. As people's love for him deepens, so does

their interest in classical music. That's why so many entertainment companies focus on helping their artists create unique personalities and personalized labels. A win-win situation can be achieved when capital is strongly cooperated with building a personal brand.

## **2.2 Sociability**

Preston pointed out that the core of YouTube’s social construction process lies in the linkage relationship between people in social networks. Video sharing, as a form of expression of the medium itself, is behind the first nature of social products—the ritualized behaviour of group identity[8]. As a social platform in the era of new media, YouTube can quickly establish social networks between audiences and musicians. Unlike the single acceptance of traditional media, the audience can only enjoy the works without communicating with musicians and expressing their own ideas. Its social nature is also reflected in that it can shorten the distance between viewers through communication and sharing between videos. They can make new friends who share their interests through comments at the bottom of the video and add each other to build a common circle of friends. In virtual cyberspace, users can post their preferences and communicate their feelings. It's a good way to break the time and space constraints. You can also see each person's interest in the like list. It allows audiences to form closer connections with each other while building social networks with musicians. However, this kind of virtual social platform that can freely express opinions on it is also full of dangers and unknowns. No one knows which remarks will make someone or a few people uncomfortable and unhappy, which will cause disputes and scolding on the Internet. In severe cases, these people even face the risk of cyber violence. In addition to making like-minded friends, it also allows music lovers to have a variety of discussions with different viewpoints. This kind of sound from all directions can not only broaden each other's horizons, but also enrich everyone's spiritual life, harvest unexpected knowledge and improve their artistic cultivation. All these can allow classical music listeners to have a more expedite communication platform.

## **3. MANAGEMENT FUNCTIONS OF THE PLATFORM**

### **3.1. Popularity**

As one of the most influential and efficient new media social platforms in the world, YouTube is so attractive that countless music creators use it as the preferred platform for sharing their work[9]. Compared with traditional media, YouTube, which is built on the Internet platform, breaks the limitations of space and region, greatly improving its transmission rate and efficiency[3]. It is like Moonlight by Debussy, the founder of modern

Impressionism, it not only can bring great auditory enjoyment to the appreciators, but also allow them to see the transformation of cold preheat, color and light, and see a gorgeous and colorful imagery scene, which is loved by many famous performers.

The spread of traditional music, such as television or radio, is limited and may only exist in different countries and regions. However, the way of sharing spread online can bring huge global influence and make people grasp the information they want more quickly and conveniently. On the Lang's personal page in YouTube, there are more than 190,000 followers, and only about 70% of them are probably pure classical music followers, and most of them are between the ages of 15 years old and 40 years old. The remaining 30% of followers come from all walks of life, and the survey shows that there may be migrant workers on construction sites or sanitation workers cleaning streets. They got to know Lang for some reasons, and they got to know and love classical music because of his great personal charisma. Before the development of new media platforms, they haven't had any channels to get access to music that seemed irrelevant with them. Such online video-sharing platforms like YouTube bring more popularity for it so that people who didn't know it before will have an opportunity to appreciate it, and people who love it will have access to richer resources. Therefore, the development of new media is also constantly expanding the audience of classical music. Moreover, the popularity of classical music itself is definitely lower than that of popular music and other more easily understood music genres. Its transmission has been in a relatively weak position. When talking about classical music, probably the first thing that comes to people's mind is musicians like Beethoven and Mozart. However, apart from knowing the names, their great works also need to be popularized among people. Take the fourth movement Ode to Joy from the Symphony No.9 in d minor of Beethoven for instance, the symphony is regarded by many critics and musicologists as Beethoven's greatest work and one of the supreme achievements in the history of music[10-11]. The melody is almost universally known, not only because there are Chinese lyrics that people can learn by heart, but also because videos of different versions of the song have been viewed hundreds of thousands of times on YouTube. However, not all classical music works are fortunate enough to be widely distributed, and there are many equally valuable works that are less well known to the general public. If they lose communication channels such as new media platforms, it will be more difficult for them to protect themselves and gradually fade out of people's sight. In particular, under the severe impact of the epidemic in the past two years, many offline concerts could not be held as scheduled, so most of the income source of musicians could be maintained by holding online concerts. New media platforms like YouTube can use live sharing to bring the same visual and auditory

feast to the audience all around the world. The clarity and smoothness of the video can be adjusted to achieve or even exceed the effect of going to the scene to watch.

The most obvious benefit of deepening the circulation of classical music content is to broaden the audience. This allows some musical works that were not valued to be discovered, retained and continued. People can use new media platforms to dig out this kind of very valuable works from being buried, so that many valuable videos will not be gradually lost due to too little influence.

### ***3.2. Guidance under big data analysis of the platform***

This involves the transformation of YouTube from a platform where user-generated content was primarily posted by independent creators to a platform with a large amount of professionally generated content. This movement runs counter to YouTube's existing myth of openness and democracy[12]. As the content of the platform becomes more specialized, the audience can be segmented. Take classical music as an example. One group is the audience with its own expertise, and the other is the general classical music followers. The more professional the content is, the more professional people will be attracted to play and learn, and then "fan stickiness" will be achieved through mutual recommendation among friends. In order to maintain various "fan stickiness", ordinary fans can recommend the appropriate videos according to their low professionalism, just to arouse their own interest.

When users register accounts on the homepage or browses the page for the first time, the platform will guide them to pay attention to their favourite topics. Next, when the user's like list and watch list will form a certain fixed preference style, the application will also push the corresponding preference according to the similar style that they like listening to recently. For example, when a user initially only likes to search for and pay attention to a few representative works of classical music in the Romantic period on the YouTube platform, the platform will then place more music works of the same period in the recommended place for users to know. In addition, the platform will also push other styles that are similar to the favourite types, allowing users to understand more music types, and unknowingly expand their preferences. For instance, if the audience A enjoys the romantic Chopin while the audience B is more inclined to the impressionist Debussy, the platform intends to recommend users A and B the types of similar works that each other likes, and to some extent discover the users' potential preferences.

The guiding purpose of big data analysis is to continuously strengthen "fan stickiness". When users get more of their preferred types through the recommendation of the platform, they will naturally pay

more attention to the platform and be more interested in spending more time browsing the platform. The platform can also push more updated content to allow users to gradually understand a more comprehensive style from a single style in the same category, so as to meet the spiritual needs of users and their knowledge reserves. It is entertaining while allowing users to try to understand and learn about new things. However, with the advent of the era when big data analysis and push are becoming more and more accurate, it also means that people's daily life and mood changes are being "monitored" by these artificial intelligences. The privacy of users is no longer entirely belong to their own. In the background of the application, everyone is an individual composed of transparent data, rather than a person with an independent personality. When the privacy of users is constantly being violated and leaked, should developers reflect on how to properly use technology as a "double-edged sword". Advanced technology should be used to benefit the people, rather than being used as an illegal and evil tool for trafficking in users' personal information for the private benefit of some people.

### ***3.3. Diversity of commercial profitability of the platform***

With the development and progress of the Internet and new media industry technology, the cost of producing and distributing music is greatly reduced compared to the traditional model period. Now it can be said that having a computer that can be connected to the Internet can be used as the basis of equipment to enter the field of music production[13-14]. Swords also pointed out in its research that the contemporary Internet-based music creation, production and distribution model is a win-win situation compared with the traditional model, because it is more flat and more digital than the past ways to attract investment—intuitive traffic can very directly attract the attention of sponsors[15]. The amount of video likes and playback and forwarding can become an important factor in attracting sponsors, and it can also become the most direct economic advantage of capital realization. Due to the possibility of obtaining huge economic benefits through low cost, many new artists have joined new media platforms such as YouTube. Brings international prestige and influence to such platforms. The investigation found that with the development of YouTube professional institutionalization, it is not only artists who share their works and videos alone, but also the industrialization of music has also been formed and participated on this platform, integrating social, cultural and performance capital. Independent musicians rely on the formed music industry to package themselves and expand their popularity, while the music industry uses the professionalism and ability of musicians to develop more cultural markets. Musicians and music industry are mutually beneficial and win-win cooperation. Like the

recent events that shocked both domestic and foreign is Li Yundi, the Chinese "Piano Prince", who was detained for hiring a sex worker. After the news of Li's detainment broke, many expressed shock and criticism on the internet, Companies terminated Li's brand spokesperson contracts and the Chinese Musicians' Association revoked his membership because of his "extremely negative social impact." [16]. It can be seen that once they are labelled as a notorious artist, it means that their careers are almost at the end. Capital will not choose to continue cooperating with artists with more negative influences. Naturally, platforms will no longer choose to push or promote their works.

However, such new media platforms also have certain audience limitations. For different media platforms, the popularity of popular content varies. This is closely related to the platform's own norms, cultural capital and social status. Of course, not everyone has equal access to capital. There are different norms, values and ways of growing social and cultural capital in different online communities. the field of YouTube is also unlikely to have universally applicable values for everyone. Its value norms are directed in a targeted way, which works for some and against others[17]. For classical music videos, there are sections and parts on YouTube for viewers to learn and enjoy. On a fast-paced short-form video platform like Tik Tok, the fun is slightly lacking for the average viewer, who will not spend much time watching. Second, the content accessed by the platform audience also faces the influence of political systems under different administrations. For example, in China, driven by the socialist system, more attention is paid to the influence of political education for the masses. However, in foreign countries, it has some propaganda and popular content contrary to China, guided by capital, due to its different values and social and cultural capital. Therefore, people need to identify and reject them independently at home.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

This paper investigates how the dissemination of new media platforms can bring better development and related effects to classical music in the era of rapid development of online technology. We combine theoretical and relevant data analysis to conclude that social platforms such as YouTube, for example, not only help artists create personal labels, but also reflect the social nature of the platform. Moreover, this type of platform not only helps classical music to better disseminate valuable works that may be lost, but also uses big data algorithms to analyze users' personal preferences, thus maintaining and attracting fans over time. Finally, a brief discussion of how the platform can achieve an operational model for commercial capital realization is presented. Although he has some drawbacks, such as listener restrictions and insecurity of users' personal information, we still think he

can greatly help and promote the dissemination of classical music. In the investigation process of this paper, there are still some relatively limited sampling scopes; nevertheless, this does not affect the results and research direction of the article. It is hoped that in the future, classical music will be better developed and more widely known and loved through new media.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Liikkanen, L.A. and Salovaara, A., 2015. Music on YouTube: User engagement with traditional, user-appropriated and derivative videos. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 50, pp.108-124.
- [2] Kim, J., Kang, S. and Lee, K.H., 2020. How social capital impacts the purchase intention of sustainable fashion products. *Journal of Business Research*, 117, pp.596-603.
- [3] Gruzd, A. and Hodson, J., 2021. Making Sweet Music Together: The Affordances of Networked Media for Building Performance Capital by YouTube Musicians. *Social Media+ Society*, 7(2), p.20563051211025511.
- [4] United Nations (2013). *Lang Lang*, <https://www.un.org/en/messengers-peace/lang-lang>
- [5] Rhein, J. (2000). 'Lang Leaves Audience Elated', *Chicago Tribune*.  
<https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-2000-03-07-0003070033-story.html>
- [6] Michael, C.(2019) 'Lang Lang Is Back: A Piano Superstar Grows Up', *The New York Times*, 24 July. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/24/arts/music/lang-lang-piano.html>
- [7] Horton, D. and Richard Wohl, R., 1956. Mass communication and para-social interaction: Observations on intimacy at a distance. *psychiatry*, 19(3), pp.215-229.
- [8] Preston, P. and Rogers, J., 2012. Crisis, digitalisation and the future of the internet. info.
- [9] Baek, Y.M., 2015. Relationship between cultural distance and cross-cultural music video consumption on YouTube. *Social Science Computer Review*, 33(6), pp.730-748.
- [10] Cook, N. and von Schiller, F., 1993. *Beethoven: Symphony No. 9*. Cambridge University Press.
- [11] Service, T., (2014) 'Symphony guide: Beethoven's Ninth ('Choral')', *The Guardian*, 9 September.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/music/tomserviceblog/2014/sep/09/symphony-guide-beethoven-ninth-choral-tom-service>
- [12] Hesmondhalgh, D., Jones, E. and Rauh, A., 2019. SoundCloud and Bandcamp as alternative music platforms. *Social Media+ Society*, 5(4), p.2056305119883429.
- [13] Morris, J.W., 2014. Artists as entrepreneurs, fans as workers. *Popular Music and society*, 37(3), pp.273-290.
- [14] Waldfogel, J., 2017. How digitization has created a golden age of music, movies, books, and television. *Journal of economic perspectives*, 31(3), pp.195-214.
- [15] Swords, J., 2017. Crowd-patronage—Intermediaries, geographies and relationships in patronage networks. *Poetics*, 64, pp.63-73.
- [16] Qu, Hanna, (2021) 'Music School denies Chinese social media rumors that detained pianist Yundi Li was offered a tenured professor role', *Yale Daily News*.  
<https://yaledailynews.com/blog/2021/11/05/music-school-denies-chinese-social-media-rumors-that-detained-pianist-yundi-li-was-offered-a-tenured-professor-role/>
- [17] Boxman-Shabtai, L., 2019. The practice of parodying: YouTube as a hybrid field of cultural production. *Media, Culture & Society*, 41(1), pp.3-20.