

Revitalizing the Classics: An Investigation into the  
Motivation, Ability, and Opportunity of Frequent and Infrequent  
Attendees of Classical Performing Arts to Patron such Events

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**Abstract**

According to the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), attendance at performing arts events (e.g. opera, ballet) dropped by 21.3% between 2002 and 2012 (NEA, 2015). The current study examines the importance of the arts and trends in attendance to such events. Then, based on a sample of 200 individuals who represent both frequent and infrequent attendees to classical performing arts events, Wiggins' (2004) Motivation, Ability, and Opportunity Model of audience development is populated to assess which factors have the biggest impact on participation for both groups. From here, marketing strategies are offered.

The Arts Council of England has been quoted as saying that “[b]eing involved with the arts can have a lasting and transforming effect on many aspects of people’s lives... not just for individuals, but also for neighbourhoods, communities, regions and entire generations, whose sense of identity and purpose can be changed through art” (Arts Council England, 2004, 3). Substantial research validates this belief and further suggests that engagement with the arts positively impacts a person’s health, regardless of age, by way of improved mental and social abilities. For example, in early childhood, research has found a positive correlation between arts engagement and the development of cognitive skills such as critical and creative thinking (Luftig, 2000) and math and science aptitude (Asbury & Rich, 2008), as well as social skills such as empathy and cooperation (Catterall, 2002). Similarly, research has found that youth who are highly engaged with the arts are more likely to exhibit greater motivation, have higher levels of self-esteem (Catterall, Chapleau, & Iwanaga, 1999), excel in math, and perform better on SAT tests (Ruppert 2006) than youth who do not engage with the arts. As well, arts engagement benefits the elderly; studies have found that arts involvement improves older adults’ cognition (Noice et al., 1999), decreases feelings of depression and loneliness (Cohen et al., 2006), and reduces anxiety (Kim, 2013).

In addition to their positive impact on people’s health, the arts are believed to be important from a cultural and purely aesthetic standpoint. As argued by Bill Ivey, a former chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in his keynote address to the American Folklore Society Conference in 2009, “creative expression [that comes from the arts] is fundamental to all people, the aesthetic traditions [of the arts] are a prerequisite to social life, and [cultural] traditions [are only able to exist and] thrive on creative interpretation and effort” (Blandy, 2008, 163). That is, the arts make up such a rich part of cultural history because of the

dual influences of both the artist and the viewer. While the artist contributes the beauty and creativeness that comes from the art, it is the viewer who allows the art to live on by way of conversation and creative interpretation.

Based on the above research, it can be argued that attending performing arts events may help not only to develop skills that are important to a person's mental and emotional health, but also contribute to the preservation of a truly rich culture. Yet problematic is the fact that attendance to such events has declined significantly; between 2002 and 2012 attendance to performing arts events decreased by 21.3% (NEA, 2015). If this downward trend continues, it is possible that the performing arts will face extinction and hence people will no longer have access to this rich art form.

The purpose of this study is to assess motivations, abilities, and opportunities of both frequent and infrequent attendees to four classical performing arts events (ballet, classical music, opera, and non-musical plays) in order to identify which factors are most important to each group in driving attendance to these events. Ballet, classical music, opera, and non-musical plays were chosen as the focal events of this study as these four events have suffered the largest decline in attendance over the past three decades (NEA 2009, 2015). Wiggins' (2004) Motivation, Ability, and Opportunity (MAO) model of audience development was used as the lens by which to examine these factors as this model illustrates how a person's motivations, abilities, and opportunities can interact to create multiple types of barriers. In doing so, this model allows for a more comprehensive understanding of unique obstacles facing both groups. Then, based on the responses from 200 individuals (100 frequent attendees defined as those who have attended three or more of the above events within the past three years, and 100 infrequent attendees defined as those who had either never or only once attended one of the above events in the past three years),

Wiggins model is populated, highlighting the unique barriers faced by both groups. From here, marketing strategies for boosting audience attendance are offered.

Before presenting Wiggins' MAO model and the methodology for this study, a brief discussion of key demographic and cultural trends impacting performing arts attendance is presented. These trends hold implications for strategies aimed at enhancing attendance.

### **Arts Attendance: Demographics Trends**

A 2015 National Endowment for the Arts report provides demographic information regarding attendance to various performing arts events for the years between 2002 and 2012 (NEA, 2015). The report highlights the severity of the decline that all art forms have experienced during this time period, including the four classical performing art forms examined in this study: ballet, classical music, opera, and non-musical plays. Of these art forms, non-musical plays have seen the largest decline in attendance at 36%, followed by opera with a 34% decline, ballet with a 31% decline, and classical music with a 24% decline. One important point this report makes is that rather than attendees attending fewer performances than they used to (i.e., the average number of performances attended per attendee has remained largely unchanged between 2002 and 2012), the decline in audience numbers is simply the result of fewer people attending. That is, there is an increasingly smaller percentage of U.S. adults who are engaging with the performing arts.

In addition to basic attendance trends, the NEA report also focuses on demographics of the audiences of performing arts events. As indicated by the report, across the four classical performing arts examined in this study, many demographics are fairly consistent; the majority of attendees are white, hold a college degree, have an annual income above \$50,000, are female,

and are over the age of 44. Taken together, this report suggests that one possible solution to increasing attendance may be to develop programs that reach a more diverse audience.

### **Arts Attendance: Cultural Trends**

Several cultural trends affect the performing arts industry the largest of which is the evolution of technology. In 2012, the NEA surveyed people's use of electronic media in response to this growing trend finding that a much larger percentage of the population is experiencing performing arts through electronic media than through live performances (NEA, 2015). One exception pertains to musical and non-musical plays, which were reported to attract more participants through live events. One could view the role of technology in arts participation positively as it allows a larger population to experience the arts. However, technology's role is still very concerning for organizations that depend on ticket sales to remain afloat.

Perhaps even more grave than technology's influence on viewership of the arts is the domination of technological products which cater to consumers' exact needs and wants by offering a variety of entertainment options. In today's technological world, people have come to not only expect but demand instant gratification (Anderson & Rainei, 2012). And arguably through the development of smart phones, reality TV, and other forms of mass technology-based entertainment, individuals' standard of quality with regard to the entertainment they desire is markedly lower than in the past. This environment can be hostile to the very nature of the arts which is to challenge the mind and provide something that is not always expected or pleasing to the viewer (Scheff & Kotler, 1996).

Another cultural trend that has drastic effects on the performing arts industry is the continued decrease in arts education in the United States. An additional report compiled by the National Endowment for the Arts suggests that there is a direct correlation between arts

education and attendance to performing arts events (NEA, 2011). Specifically, this report found that regardless of whether arts education occurs in childhood or adulthood, the effect was the same: individuals with any form of education in the arts are significantly more likely to attend a performing arts event. The report also discusses the fact that, despite the lack of hard statistics, many public schools are claiming that they have had to cut art programs over the years. Many people fault the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (later replaced by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015), as well as the widespread adoption of Common Core standards for such cuts, yet again, there is no hard evidence to firmly validate this (Sabol, 2010, Wexler, 2014). Regardless of the source of the issue, the NEA reports that the percent of children who have received arts education during their childhood has decreased by 15% between the years of 1982 and 2008 (NEA, 2011). As a result of eliminating art programs in schools, children may lack a basic desire to learn and engage with the arts.

### **The Motivation, Ability and Opportunity Model of Audience Development**

As so many performing arts organizations are faced with the urgent task of increasing their audience sizes, audience development has become an area of great interest among researchers (e.g., Rentschler et al., 2002; Wiggins, 2004). Over the past several years, many models of audience development have been created, yet few appear to be as applicable as the Motivation, Ability, and Opportunity (MAO) Model (Wiggins 2004). The MAO model was originally developed by MacInnis and Jaworski (1989) to assess the cognitive process underlying the development of attitudes towards advertised brands. In brief, MacInnis and Jaworski argue that a lack of motivation (e.g., desire), ability (e.g., proficiency), or opportunity (e.g., time), or some combination thereof, can present barriers to consumers with respect to their ability to process fully an advertiser's message. This can be detrimental to an advertised brand as weak

attitudes are argued to be less enduring, accessible, and predictive of behavior than strong attitudes (Fazio 1986). However, by influencing a consumer's motivation, ability and/or opportunity to attend to an advertisers' message, greater depth of processing may occur leading to more stable and accessible brand attitudes which in turn, may lead to purchase behavior.

Bringing MacInnis and Jaworski's MAO model into the audience development realm, Wiggins (2004) reconceptualized their model taking into account tenets from 1) McCarthy and Jinnett's (2001) RAND model of audience development and, 2) Rothschild's (1999) MAO framework for influencing behaviors toward public health and social issues. Before discussing Wiggins's MAO model, a review of the RAND model and Rothschild's work is warranted.

***McCarthy and Jinnett's (2001) RAND Model of Audience Development.*** The RAND model purports that an individual's decision to participate in arts events follows a sequential four-stage process whereby each stage is influenced by key factors. The process begins with a background stage which represents the point at which an individual forms a general attitude toward the arts. Important factors at this stage include a person's socio-demographics, personality traits, socio-cultural ties, and prior experience with the arts. As argued by McCarthy and Jinnett (1999), these factors are exogenous to an individual's participation decision as they are already established however they are still important to consider as any subsequent experience a person has with the arts could modify them (e.g., altering a person's group affiliation). Next is Stage 1, where individuals are considered disinclined to participate in the arts yet are at the point where they are forming their predisposition to participate. Here, perceptual factors such as attitudes and beliefs about the arts influence an individual's decision to participate.

Consequently, strategies aimed at changing attitudes and beliefs toward the arts are believed to be important at this stage in terms of moving people from being disinclined to participate in the



arts to inclined. In Stage 2 individuals are characterized as inclined to participate. Here, practical factors such as information about arts events, access to events, and costs are key influencers in an individual's decision to actually participate in arts events. Lastly, Stage 3 is where individuals are considered to be current participants. Factors argued to be important at this stage are ones that will deepen people's level of participation with the arts, such as special educational events to increase one's knowledge of the arts, or social events to enhance one's sense of belonging to an art community.

As argued by Wiggins (2004), the RAND model represents a vast improvement over earlier models of audience participation in that it not only segments individuals into disinclined, inclined, and current participant categories, but also highlights factors, perceptual and practical, believed to be integral in moving individuals from being non-participants to current participants. That said, Wiggins (2004) notes that a key limitation of the RAND model is that it does not take into account that perceptual and practical factors may interact to jointly influence a person's decision to participate in the arts. For example, as Wiggins notes, "...practical factors may influence the formation of perceptions during Stage 1. Individuals who face practical barriers to attendance, such as unaffordable tickets or difficulty getting to a venue, may perceive the offerings as not targeted to them." (26). Wiggins further argues that the interaction of perceptual and practical factors is essential to their use, both in targeting specific segments and building audience participation. Wiggins contends that in order to gain a full understanding of how to effectively target and market to individuals with varying inclinations to participate in arts events, a model is needed that allows for such interactions. Here, Wiggins notes that the MAO model is particularly useful as it provides a theoretical umbrella for integrating a variety factors. Wiggins also maintains that this model is well suited to assess audience participation in particular as it has

been used in other contexts where certain *behavioral* outcomes (rather than information processing outcomes, as originally conceptualized by MacInnis and Jaworski, 1989) are desired.

***Rothschild's (1999) MAO Framework for Influencing Pro-Health/Social Behaviors.***

Rothschild's (1999) MAO model focuses on ways to influence people's motivations, abilities, and opportunities in such a way to achieve desired pro-health/social behaviors (e.g., quitting smoking). Like the RAND model which groups people into distinct art participant categories (i.e., disinclined, inclined, and current participants), Rothschild's model segments people into distinct behavioral groups: those who are unable, resistant, or prone to comply with various positive behaviors. Rothschild then further classifies these individuals into eight distinct categories based on their existence or lack of motivation, ability, and opportunity to comply with a recommended behavior. Based on these eight categories of individuals, Rothschild then proposes specific combinations of marketing, education, and legal strategies designed to influence the behaviors of individuals within each category. For example, a person who is resistant to comply with a recommended behavior yet exhibits sufficient opportunity and ability to comply but no motivation to comply would best be swayed by legal strategies. By developing behavioral strategies tailored to individuals of varying levels of motivation, ability, and opportunity to comply, Rothschild demonstrates the usefulness of the MAO model in influencing behavioral change.

***Wiggins' MAO Model of Audience Participation.*** Building on McCarthy and Jinnett's (2001) and Rothschild's (1999) work, Wiggins' (2004) MAO model of audience participation segments individuals into eight distinct categories based on their different combined levels of motivation, ability, and opportunity to participate in the arts. Figure 1 graphically depicts Wiggins' model. As shown in the model, each of the eight cells are given labels based on

McCarthy and Jinnett’s (2001) classification of audience participation (disinclined, inclined, and participant) as well as Rothschild’s (1999) categories of compliance (resistant, unable, and prone). For example, the “Patron Next Door” describes one who is “inclined to participate” (i.e., one who has motivation and ability to participate) but “unable to act” (i.e., one who does not have the opportunity to participate).

**Figure 1: Wiggins’ (2004) MAO Model of Audience Development**

Motivation to participate		Yes		No	
Opportunity to participate		Yes	No	Yes	No
Ability to Participate	Yes	<b>1. Patron of the Arts</b> prone to act <i>participating or inclined to participate</i>	<b>2. Patron next door</b> unable to act <i>inclined to participate</i>	<b>5. Football Fan</b> resistant to action <i>disinclined to participate</i>	<b>6. Weary traveler</b> Resistant to action <i>disinclined to participate</i>
	No	<b>3. Wannabe patron</b> unable to act <i>inclined to participate</i>	<b>4. Wannabe patron next door</b> unable to act <i>inclined to participate</i>	<b>7. Neglected neighbour</b> resistant to action <i>disinclined to participate</i>	<b>8. Stranger</b> resistant to action <i>disinclined to participate</i>

As argued by Wiggins, as a result of specific combinations of motivation, ability, and opportunity, individuals experience different barriers to participation. Key to the application of this model is understanding how Wiggins defines motivation, ability, and opportunity in the context of audience participation. Here, motivation is defined as “the desire to attend arts events,” ability as “the absence of individual barriers to attendance” (such as unaffordable ticket prices), and opportunity as “the absence of situational barriers to attendance” (such as difficulty traveling to the venue) (Wiggins 2004, 28).

An advantage of Wiggins’ model is that it allows arts organizations to segment both participating and non-participating individuals based on the previously mentioned factors,

highlighting how these factors interact to affect participation. Once populated, organizations are able to determine which factors play the largest role in attendance and then design strategies in an attempt to attract the largest possible audience.

### **The Current Study**

The aim of this study is to populate Wiggins' (2004) MAO model. In doing so, a comprehensive open-ended pretest was administered to a large sample of frequent and infrequent attendees of the four classic arts events examined in this study to uncover not only 1) key motivation, ability, and opportunity factors impacting their propensity to attend such events, but also 2) general lifestyle factors which may act as additional barriers to attendance, and 3) marketing communication tools deemed important by each group for alerting them about performing arts events. Based on the pretest results, closed-ended survey items were then developed for the main study. Below is more detailed description of the pretest and main study.

### **Methods**

*Pretest.* While the MAO model has been used to examine audience attendance to various events (Wiggins 2004), no published surveys exist which specifically measure the motivations, abilities, and opportunities for attendance to classical arts events among frequent and infrequent attendees. Consequently, this study developed surveys exclusive to classical arts events and exclusive to frequent and infrequent attendees of the classical arts, the items of which were based on pretest responses. For the pretest, one survey assessed the views of 100 frequent attendees (25 frequent attendees of ballet, 25 of classical music, 25 of opera, and 25 of non-musical plays) while another assessed the views of 100 infrequent attendees (again with 25 representing infrequent attendees of ballet, 25 of classical music, 25 of opera, and 25 of non-musical plays), totaling 200 participants (54% female, 46% male). For the pretest, as well as the main study, a

frequent attendee was defined as anyone who had attended a professional classical performing arts event *three or more* times within the last three years. Infrequent attendees were defined as anyone who had either *never* attended a professional classical performing arts event or had attended only *one* event within the last three years.

Appendix A and B outline the questions asked of frequent and infrequent attendees (respectively) for the pretest and the main study. Importantly, for the pretest, the motivation, ability, and opportunity questions, as well as lifestyle and marketing communications questions, were open-ended. For clarity, the open-ended pretest questions were those in Appendix A and B that now have multiple response choices; the choices of which were developed from the open-ended responses (sans the demographic questions which used standard response categories). For example, in Appendix A, question two taps the number one motivating reason that frequent attendees' attend a professional arts performance (ballet, classical music, opera, or non-musical play). For the pretest, participants were asked simply to provide their top reason for attendance. Then, based on the most highly cited responses, closed ended (multiple choice) questions were formulated for use in the main study.

For the pretest it was deemed important to have open-ended questions so as not to pigeon-hole respondents into forced choice categories but instead to gather rich insights into respondents' answers. Then, based on respondents' unique answers, specific response choices were developed for use in the main study. The purpose of using specific choices for the main study was to streamline the analysis and reporting of results. It should be noted that the choice categories were derived by an inductive process of sorting and re-sorting by two independent judges until similarities in the responses began to emerge (Guba, 1978). Each judge also independently assigned choice labels to their sets of categories. Disagreements about

classification of responses, or choice labels, were resolved by discussion. Inter-judge reliability was greater than 85%, the amount considered satisfactory (Kassarjian, 1977).

**Main Study Participants.** Like the pretest, the sample for the main study consisted of 200 individuals, 100 frequent attendees (25 frequent attendees of ballet, 25 of classical music, 25 of opera, and 25 of non-musical plays), and 100 infrequent attendees (again with 25 representing infrequent attendees of ballet, 25 of classical music, 25 of opera, and 25 of non-musical plays). Of the 200 respondents, all lived in the United States for at least five years and all were over 25. More specifically, 51.5% of participants were over the age of 35, 47% were female, 58% were single, and 64% reported having no children or dependents. Ninety-eight percent of participants were U.S. citizens, 81% were Caucasian/White. Participants resided all across the country with the largest proportion coming from the South (37%). Of the participants who were currently employed (56% full time, 25% part time), there was a wide range of occupations (e.g., cashier to chemical engineer). Of frequent attendees, on average these individuals reported attending 6.3 events in three years (approximately 2 events per year); infrequent attendees reported attending only .34 events during this time period (66% of respondents had never attended an event in three years, while 34% attended just one event). Both groups of respondents reported an average annual household income of between \$25,000-\$49,000, with frequent attendees reporting a slightly higher average within this range ( $t_{(198)} = 3.71, p = .058$ ).

**Procedure.** Eight surveys, one for each condition (frequent ballet, classical music, opera, and non-musical plays, and infrequent ballet, classical music, opera, and non-musical plays), were created through Survey Monkey and uploaded to Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk). Each of these surveys required participants to answer a series of questions regarding their motivation, ability, and opportunity for attending the specified performing arts event. General

lifestyle, marketing communications, and demographic questions were also asked. Once results were submitted through both Survey Monkey and MTurk, each participant received \$1.00 through PayPal.

## Results

Before examining the populated MAO model as a whole, the results pertaining to frequent and infrequent attendees' responses to the motivation, ability, opportunity, lifestyle, and marketing communication factors are discussed. With respect to these factors it is important to note that a preliminary analysis of the data found no significant differences among these factors between the four frequent attendee conditions (frequent ballet, classical music, opera, non-musical plays) and the four infrequent attendee conditions (infrequent ballet, classical music, opera, non-musical plays). Hence, two comparison groups (frequent and infrequent attendees) were created by collapsing the four performing arts conditions. The following results reflect these two comparison groups.

**Motivation.** First examined was participants' motivation (yes or no) to attend arts events. A 2x2 chi-square analysis (attendee type, frequent vs. infrequent by motivation, yes vs. no) revealed that frequent attendees had significantly more motivation to attend a classical performing arts event than infrequent attendees ( $\chi^2_{(1)} = 18.939, p < .01$ ). In fact, frequent attendees were 4.682 times more likely to be motivated to attend a classical performing arts event than infrequent attendees.

For both frequent and infrequent attendees, additional questions examined specific motivational aspects to see which, if any, served as key influencers to respondents' decisions to participate in the arts. For frequent attendees, seven key motivation-related aspects (again determined from the pretest) were considered (i.e., pure enjoyment, to spend time with

family/friends, as a social event or special occasion, to become more cultured/knowledgeable, know someone in the performance, specific program or performer, relaxing). A descriptive analysis revealed that among all frequent attendees, the number one reported motivation to participate in an arts event was “pure enjoyment” for the art (64%), followed by “social event/special occasion” (13%), and then “spending time with friends and family” (9%).

For infrequent attendees, six factors representing key motivation-related reasons for *not* attending a classical performing arts event were assessed (these factors were again developed from the pretest and included: no interest, no one to go with, not understandable/relatable, quality of venue, the elite stigma associated with the arts, no knowledge of the event). Interestingly, the two most cited reasons by all infrequent attendees for not attending a classical performing arts event were “no one to go with” (26%) and “no knowledge of event” (22%). Lack of interest came in at a distant third (14%) which is notable as it suggests that other reasons, besides interest, may serve as key deterrents to this group of people. That is, different from what many arts organizations may believe, a lack of interest appears not to be the key demotivating factor deterring people from attending such events.

Supporting these results are the reports of infrequent attendees regarding the one thing that *would* motivate them (or increase their motivation) to attend a classical performing arts event (again response categories were determined by the pretest and included: someone to go with, know a performer, more understandable/relatable, more interesting, better information regarding event, specific performance/performer/story, to spend time with family/friends). Here, the most common reported answer was “someone to go with” (24%) and “specific program/performance/story” (18%). These responses mirror the implications drawn above that



attending an arts event with others and increased information about events may enhance infrequent attendees' likelihood of attending classical performing arts events.

The next most commonly reported response was “spend(ing) time with family/friends” (11%). For many, going to an event alone appears to be a significant deterrent. This is supported further by both frequent *and* infrequent participants' responses to a question regarding their preference for attending with someone. Of all participants, 85.5% reporting that they would prefer to attend with someone (86% for infrequent, 85% for frequent), compared to attending alone or having no preference.

Lastly, it is noteworthy that only 2% of all infrequent attendees reported not attending because of an elite stigma associated with the arts. While a common factor addressed throughout literature (e.g., Lopez-Sintas & Katz-Gerro, 2005), it does not appear that this issue resonates with this study's participants.

**Ability.** Referring back to the model, ability is defined as the ability to afford a ticket to such an event. It is noteworthy that pretest results revealed that for both frequent and infrequent attendees, \$60-\$80 represented what they believed to be an average price range for classical performing arts tickets. Hence, the general ability question reflected this price range. To assess overall differences in frequent and infrequent attendees with respect to this factor, a 2x2 chi-square analysis (attendee type, frequent vs. infrequent by ability, yes vs. no) was performed. Results revealed a significant difference with frequent attendees reporting significantly more ability to attend such events than infrequent attendees ( $X^2_{(1)} = 18.029, p < .01$ ). In fact, frequent attendees reported having 1.874 times more ability to attend a classical performing arts event than infrequent attendees.

This finding is supported by the responses to three additional questions. The first deals with the average price both frequent and infrequent participants have paid for a ticket to classical performing arts events. Here, price brackets from which participants selected were collapsed into two categories, \$0-\$60 (below what pretest respondents perceived to be average) and \$61 and above (pretest respondents' perceptions of more typical prices) . For this question, participants who reported never having attended a performing arts event (66 people) were not included in this analysis. The results of a 2x2 chi square analysis (attendee type, frequent vs. infrequent by price, \$0-\$60 vs. \$61 plus) revealed that there was a significant difference in the price participants have paid for a ticket to such an event ( $X^2_{(1)} = 4.36, p < .05$ ); with frequent attendees reporting paying more (on average) for tickets than infrequent attendees.

Similarly, using the full sample of participants, when asked about the maximum price participants would be willing to pay, results of a chi-square analysis revealed a significant difference between frequent and infrequent attendees ( $X^2_{(1)} = 20.554, p < .001$ ). Again, the price brackets for this question were collapsed into the same two previous brackets (\$0-\$60 and \$61 plus). Here, 69% of frequent attendees reported a willingness to pay a price above \$60, while 63% of infrequent attendees reported a willingness to pay no more than \$60. In looking at participants' willingness to pay, it should be noted that this question taps participants' ability as well as motivation. That is, the willingness to pay for any object is naturally going to be higher for someone who is more interested in the object than someone who is not.

A third question asked both frequent and infrequent attendees whether they would attend more performances if price were not an obstacle. A 2x2 chi-square analysis revealed a significant relationship ( $X^2_{(1)} = 13.550, p < .01$ ), with both groups of attendees reporting a greater likelihood of attendance, but with frequent attendees reporting a far greater likelihood than

infrequent attendees (92% vs. 72% respectively). It is interesting to highlight the finding that 72% of infrequent attendees reported a greater likelihood of attendance if price were not an obstacle. This is noteworthy because 66% of infrequent participants reported having *never* been to a classical performing arts event in the past three years, while 34% reported going only to *one* performance in the past three years. Yet if price were not an obstacle, again 72% of this population may now consider attending. One can certainly not make the leap in assumption that for infrequent attendees, price is the key factor to enhance their attendance but these findings do imply the relative importance of price to this group of participants.

Taken together, the results of the motivation and ability questions suggest an intertwined relationship between the two. Many infrequent attendees reported that they would attend classical performing arts events more often if price was not an obstacle, indicating a level of motivation. This is confirmed by the finding that lack of interest was not a highly cited reason for non-attendance among infrequent attendees. Moreover, the willingness to pay results suggest that many infrequent attendees may not attend because the monetary value they place on the arts is lower than the actual price of a ticket. If prices were lowered, the value infrequent attendees place on events might match more closely the actual price of the event, in turn enhancing their likelihood of attendance. Hence, it may be that the economics of performing arts events have become so inflated that individuals who once would have considered attending a classical performing arts event have become discouraged and as such have changed their opinions regarding such events.

**Opportunity.** The third factor addressed in the model is opportunity measured by participants' situational barriers to attend a classical performing arts event. A 2x2 chi-square analysis (attendee type, frequent vs. infrequent by opportunity, yes vs. no) revealed no

significant difference between frequent and infrequent attendees ( $\chi^2_{(1)} = .997, p = .323$ ); all participants across both conditions reported facing situational barriers. Interestingly, frequent attendees reported having slightly *less* opportunity to attend classical performing arts events (7%) than infrequent attendees (11%). That is, the frequent attendees in this study reported being faced with slightly *more* situational barriers which may act as obstacles to their attendance than infrequent attendees. This suggests an interplay between opportunity and motivation; the motivation of frequent attendees appears to outweigh situational barriers to their attendance. Going back to the data, results reveal that for both groups of participants, “time commitment” required to attend such events was the most cited obstacle (reported by 52% of frequent and infrequent attendees) followed by “transportation” to a performing arts venue (at 28%).

***Lifestyle.*** A further examination into frequent and infrequent participants’ daily lives reveals more similarities and differences between these two groups of attendees. For example, when all participants were asked about their preferred leisure time activities, as well as the reason for partaking in such activities, chi-square analyses revealed no significant differences ( $p$ 's > .10). With regard to participants’ preferred leisure time activities, the top three ways frequent *and* infrequent participants reported spending their leisure time included: “reading” (25% frequent, 32% infrequent), partaking in “technology-related entertainment,” such as watching TV, playing video games, listening to music (27% frequent, 21% infrequent), and “spending time with family/friends” (17% frequent, 15% infrequent). The most common reasons for partaking in these activities included “pure enjoyment” (37% frequent, 23% infrequent), “relaxation” (19% frequent, 25% infrequent), and “stimulation” (21% frequent, 16% infrequent).

In addition to daily activities, two questions were asked which shed light on how participants’ spend their discretionary income. The results of a chi-square analysis showed

significant differences among frequent and infrequent attendees with regard to what participants' would spend \$60-\$80 of discretionary income on (the \$60-\$80 range was chosen as this mirrors what pretest respondents reported was the average range they would expect to pay for performing arts tickets) ( $X^2_{(1)} = 43.662, p < .001$ ). The top three categories that frequent attendees reported that they would spend the money on were "tickets for live arts events" (27%), a "date or social night out (not including attending live performing arts or sports events)" (22%), or "consumer goods" (e.g., books, clothing; 16%). Infrequent participants reported that they would spend the money on "consumer goods" (28%), a "date or social night out" (17%), and "food" (9%).

With regard to the reasons for spending the specified amount of money in such ways, the responses of frequent and infrequent attendees again were also significantly different ( $X^2_{(1)} = 24.474, p < .001$ ). Frequent attendees reported spending the money for "enjoyment" (58%), while infrequent attendees reported spending the money equally for "enjoyment" (38%) or for "need" (36%).

Taken together, it can be argued that on a basic every-day level, the majority of participants are similar with regard to both the obstacles they face as well as the activities they enjoy doing. The differences only become apparent with respect to participants' discretionary income and how they choose to spend it. That is, frequent and infrequent attendees both commonly reported spending the money on social or date nights out and consumer goods, yet the *most* commonly reported response among *frequent* attendees was spending the money on performing arts events. This suggests that motivation is, in fact, related to discretionary income; when people begin spending money on things other than daily life's necessities, they take into account their personal interests. Since frequent attendees have more motivation to attend

classical performing arts events, they are likely to spend their discretionary on tickets to such events.

**Marketing Communications.** From a strategic standpoint, it is important for marketing departments of performing arts venues to know the most effective lines of communication to reach frequent and infrequent attendees. To this end, both frequent and infrequent attendees were asked about the most common method through which they hear about classical performing arts events and what their preferred method of communication would be. For both of these questions, there were significant differences. Frequent and infrequent attendees differed with respect to most common mode ( $\chi^2_{(1)} = 39.335, p < .001$ ) and preferred mode of communication ( $\chi^2_{(1)} = 18.531, p < .05$ ).

With respect to common mode, frequent attendees reported hearing about such events most commonly by "word of mouth" (31%), "print advertisements" (17%), or "online advertisements" (15%), while infrequent attendees reported hearing about such events through print ads (19%), "television commercials" (19%), or "word of mouth" (17%). With respect to word of mouth communications, it is understandable that infrequent attendees are reached far less than frequent attendees by this form of communication as it can be assumed that infrequent attendees are not in the same circles as individuals who frequently attend such events.

With regard to participants' preferred mode of communication, frequent attendees reported that their preference would be "word of mouth" (38%), "email" (20%), or "online advertisements" (10%). Infrequent attendees reported that their preference would also be "word of mouth" (21%) and "email" (20%), followed by "television commercials" (14%). It is interesting to note that even though infrequent attendees may not associate with many individuals who attend classical performing arts events, their number one preferred method of

communication is still word of mouth. This suggests that one way performing arts venues can reach infrequent attendees is by getting frequent and infrequent attendees together in social settings whereby these two groups can interact and then discuss performing arts events in conversation (i.e., word of mouth).

A comparison of the responses of these two questions provides insightful information for marketing departments. While 36% of *all* participants reported hearing about classical performing arts events through print ads, it was not one of the top three most preferred methods for either frequent or infrequent attendees. In contrast to that, email was not listed as one of the top three common modes of communication for hearing about events for frequent *or* infrequent attendees, yet was reported as being the preferred mode of communication for 40% of *all* participants. Hence, it might be worthwhile for marketing departments to reallocate their advertising dollars and spend less on print ads and more on email blasts – a much less expensive form of advertising. One additional insight to take from these results is the preference of word of mouth as a mode of communication, even among infrequent attendees. This preference poses an interesting challenge to marketing departments as it requires less traditional marketing efforts and more creative strategies that put infrequent attendees in contact with more frequent attendees. This creative work must take into account the particular differences between frequent and infrequent attendees from above results, as is discussed in more detail below.

### **Populating the MAO Model and General Discussion**

Figure 2 depicts where the frequent and infrequent participants examined in this study fall with respect to their motivation, ability, and opportunity to attend classical arts events. The model was populated based on participants' responses to the general "yes/no" questions regarding these three factors. As evident by the populated model, the two largest barriers to

attendance for both frequent and infrequent attendees are ability and opportunity. Yet given that ability is a relatively fixed factor from both the individual (one can not easily alter their income) and arts venue (most organizations are in no position to decrease the price of tickets) perspective, it appears that it may be in the best interest of performing arts organizations to focus on *opportunity* factors as the primary way to drive attendance.

**Figure 2: Populated MAO Model**

Motivation to participate		Yes				No			
		98		78		2		22	
Opportunity to participate		Yes		No		Yes		No	
		7	10	91	68	0	1	2	21
Ability to Participate	Yes	<b>1. Patron of the Arts</b> prone to act <i>participating or inclined to participate</i>		<b>2. Patron next door</b> unable to act <i>inclined to participate</i>		<b>5. Football Fan</b> resistant to action <i>disinclined to participate</i>		<b>6. Weary traveler</b> Resistant to action <i>disinclined to participate</i>	
	67 37	5	4	61	24	0	1	1	8
Ability to Participate	No	<b>3. Wannabe patron</b> unable to act <i>inclined to participate</i>		<b>4. Wannabe patron next door</b> unable to act <i>inclined to participate</i>		<b>7. Neglected neighbour</b> resistant to action <i>disinclined to participate</i>		<b>8. Stranger</b> resistant to action <i>disinclined to participate</i>	
	33 63	2	6	30	44	0	0	1	13

**Black** = frequent attendees

**Red** = infrequent attendees

Again, opportunity pertains to situational factors such as transportation or time commitment. One way arts organizations may boost attendance is to offer regional tours of arts performances, with events scheduled at various times throughout a day. Currently, the NEA supports this strategy under a program called “Art Works.” According to the NEA, traveling programs not only benefit underserved communities (be it due to geographic location, economic conditions, or other factors) by providing them with access to excellence in the arts, they also benefit the artists by building audiences and hence demand for their work. As well, these programs provide artist with an opportunity to enrich their work through contact with a variety of communities.



Another way to battle situational barriers is to offer all-inclusive type trips to arts events. Here, arts organizations could package an entire-day or multi-day trip around a specific performing arts event complete with transportation, meals, and if needed, accommodations. While some city-wide travel organizations offer such packages (e.g., New York City Vacation Packages [see [www.nyctrip.com](http://www.nyctrip.com)]), these organizations do not preclude independent arts venues from also doing so. And indeed, such packages may address not only transportation concerns, but also time commitment barriers in that packaged trips may be perceived as mini-vacations worth making time for.

Situational barriers may also be overcome by simulcasting live performances. As an example, the Kennedy Center offers a “Performing Arts for Everyone” program in which daily performances, held on the Kennedy Center’s Millennium Stage, are free to attend and are simulcasted live online for anyone to see. Since the creation of the stage in 1997, performances across a variety of art styles and genres (e.g., national and international classical music, jazz, dance, gospel, opera) have been extremely well attended (in person and online) and have brought together a new diverse group of art enthusiasts (see [kennedy-center.org/programs/millennium](http://kennedy-center.org/programs/millennium)). And while a limitation to this strategy is that it does not produce revenue, it nonetheless can overcome transportation and time barriers, allowing for enhanced participation in the arts.

While not deemed as significant of a barrier to arts events attendance as ability or opportunity, motivational factors, and in particular, having someone to attend a performance with, should also be addressed by arts organizations as this motivational aspect was reported by infrequent attendees as their number one reason for not participating in the arts. Moreover recall that all participants in this study (infrequent and frequent attendees) reported that they would prefer to attend events with somebody than alone.

One strategy aimed at addressing this concern is for performing arts organizations to hold singles mixers whereby individuals can attend alone with the intention of meeting other singles at a performance. Under this context, individuals who in the past have felt intimidated attending alone may now be more comfortable attending by themselves. Through events like this, performing arts organizations have a unique chance to show people that attending alone is not something to be afraid of and is something that many people actually do.

As well, arts organizations could offer events geared towards children. Through events such as a “Nutcracker Tea,” where there may be an English tea party either before or after a performance, parents are encouraged to bring their child (or children) and should feel more comfortable attending without another adult as the purpose of attending is to expose their child to something cultural.

It may also be useful for arts organizations to find creative ways to bring frequent and infrequent attendees together in social gatherings (at the arts venue) centered on something other than a particular arts performance (e.g., fashion shows or social events focused around current political or social issues). In doing so, infrequent attendees may meet individuals who frequently attend arts events at the venue increasing the likelihood of them regularly attending performances as they now may have a level of comfort in attendance (e.g., knowing other attendees). Moreover these types of social gatherings could serve as vehicles from which infrequent attendees could increase their awareness of performing arts events, both by signage at the venue and by word of mouth from frequent attendees. That is, as more infrequent attendees communicate with individuals who are up-to-date on the latest performances, word-of-mouth advertising is likely to ensue.

## **Conclusion**

To conclude, this study contributes to past research by populating the Motivation, Ability, and Opportunity Model (Wiggins 2004) and uses responses from survey data to provide further insights into each of these three factors. Specifically, by comparing frequent and infrequent attendees of the classical performing arts, it is apparent that opportunity seems to be the largest source of applicable change. From here, strategies are offered to enhance attendance. Specifically regional tours of arts performances, packaged arts events, and simulcasted performances may boost arts attendance. In addition, strategies are offered to address frequent and infrequent attendees concerns of wanting to attend arts events with someone, rather than alone. Through themed promotions (e.g., singles mixers and family nights) as well as social gatherings that bring frequent and infrequent attendees together, performing arts organizations may address this concern and hence see increased levels of attendance.

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## Appendix A: Frequent Attendee Survey Questions

Qualification instructions for participants stated, “You can participate in this study if: 1) you have lived in the United States for the past five years, 2) you are at least 25 years of age, and 3) you have attended a professional (ballet, classical music, opera, non-musical play) performance three or more times within the last three years (not including modern dance, jazz dance, or a child’s recital).”

Note: While the following depicts the questions asked of frequent attendees, these questions were not separated by category labels (e.g., “Motivation Questions”) on the main survey. Categories are depicted here for clarification purposes.

### Motivation Questions

1. Regardless of any external factors (e.g., price of tickets, time, transportation, babysitter if needed, etc.) do you have any desire or motivation to attend a professional (ballet, classical music, opera, non-musical play) performance?  
 yes  
 no
2. What is your number one reason for desiring to attend a professional (ballet, classical music, opera, non-musical play) performance (choose one)?  
 pure enjoyment  
 to spend time with family/friends  
 view it as a social event or special occasion  
 to become more cultured/knowledgeable  
 because I know someone in the performance  
 because of a specific program or performer  
 for relaxation

### Ability Questions

1. Regardless of your desire to attend a professional (ballet, classical music, opera, non-musical play) performance or any situational factors related to attendance (e.g., time, transportation), if the average price of a ticket to such an event was between \$60-\$80, could you afford to spend that amount of money on a ticket?  
 yes  
 no
2. What is the average price you have paid for a ticket to a professional (ballet, classical music, opera, non-musical play) performance?  
 less than \$20  
 \$20-\$40  
 \$41-\$60  
 \$61-80  
 \$81-\$100  
 \$101-120  
 \$121-140

\$141-160  
 over \$160

3. What is the maximum price you would pay for a ticket to a professional (ballet, classical music, opera, non-musical play) performance?
- less than \$20  
 \$20-\$40  
 \$41-\$60  
 \$61-80  
 \$81-\$100  
 \$101-120  
 \$121-140  
 \$141-160  
 over \$160
4. If price were not an obstacle, would you attend a professional (ballet, classical music, opera, non-musical play) performance more frequently?
- yes  
 no

#### Opportunity Questions

1. Regardless of your desire to attend a professional (ballet, classical music, opera, non-musical play) performance or the price of a ticket, do situational barriers (e.g., transportation to a performance, time to attend a performance) prevent you from attending such an event?
- yes  
 no
2. Assuming situational barriers prevent you from attending a professional (ballet, classical music, opera, non-musical play) performance, which of the following situational barriers *most* prevent you from attending? Please rank-order your choices with 1 being the biggest barrier, 2 being the second biggest barrier, etc. You can rank as many or as few as apply.
- transportation  
 time  
 babysitter  
 situational barriers do not prevent me from attending

#### General Attendance Questions

1. How many times have you attended a professional (ballet, classical music, opera, non-musical play) performance in the past three years?
- 3  
 4  
 5  
 6  
 7  
 8



- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12
- 13
- 14
- 15
- 16 or more

2. When you attend a professional (ballet, classical music, opera, non-musical play) performance, do you prefer to go with someone or go alone?
- I prefer to attend with other people
  - I prefer to go alone
  - I don't have a preference

### Lifestyle Questions

1. What activity do you enjoy doing most during your free time? Please select your *one most favored* activity.
- reading
  - technology related entertainment (e.g., watching TV/movies, listening to music, playing technology-related games)
  - spending time with family/friends (not including attending live performing arts or sports events)
  - pursuing a hobby (e.g., gardening, crafts)
  - attending live performing arts events (e.g., theater, ballet, museums)
  - attending live sporting events (e.g., baseball game)
  - engaging in artistic activities (e.g., painting, signing, playing an instrument)
  - engaging in outdoor activities (e.g., walking, hiking)
  - engaging in sporting activities (e.g., playing soccer, tennis)
2. With respect to your answer to the previous question (the activity you enjoy most during your free time), please specify *why* you enjoy doing this activity. Please select just one answer.
- it is relaxing
  - it is stimulating/exciting
  - for pure enjoyment
  - to be social
  - for an escape
  - for physical fitness
  - to express creativity
  - it is educational
3. Assuming you have \$60-\$80 to spend as a special indulgence, how would you spend the money? Please select just one.

I would spend the money on...

- consumer goods (e.g., books, clothes, computer, furniture)
- food
- tickets for an arts event (e.g., theater, museum)
- tickets for a sporting event (e.g., baseball game)
- travel
- personal pampering (e.g., massage)
- sporting activity (e.g., golf)
- date/social night out
- other (please specify)

4. With respect to your answer to the previous question (how you would spend \$60-\$80), please specify why you would spend the money on what you indicated. Please select just one answer.

- enjoyment
- to spend time with family/friends
- relaxation
- useful
- other (please specify)

#### Marketing Communications Questions

1. How do you most commonly hear about professional (ballet, classical music, opera, non-musical play) performances? Please select just one.

- print ad
- physical mail
- email
- online advertisement (e.g., Facebook post)
- TV
- radio
- street team
- friends/word-of-mouth
- other (please specify)

2. What is your preferred way to hear about a professional (ballet, classical music, opera, non-musical play) performances? Please select just one.

- print ad
- physical mail
- email
- online advertisement (e.g., Facebook post)
- TV
- radio
- street team
- friends/word-of-mouth
- other (please specify)

### Demographic Questions

1. Please select your age range.  
 25-29  
 30-34  
 35-40  
 41-44  
 45-49  
 50-54  
 55-59  
 60-64  
 65-69  
 70-74  
 75-79  
 80+
  
2. Which gender do you most identify with?  
 male  
 female  
 prefer not to answer
  
3. What city and state do you currently reside in?  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
4. What is your current marital status?  
 single  
 married  
 other
  
5. How many dependents do you have?  
 0  
 1  
 2  
 3  
 4  
 5+
  
6. What race or ethnicity do you most identify with?  
 Caucasian/white  
 African American/black  
 Asian or Pacific Islander  
 American Indian  
 Hispanic  
 Other (please specify)
  
7. What is your citizenship?  
 U.S. Citizen

Other

8. What is your current employment status?

full-time

part-time

unemployed

not in the labor force

9. If employed, what category does your current occupation fall within?

business management

education

engineering

health profession

banking or financial services

computer science or programming

administrative/clerical support

sales (non-retail)

retail

military or protective services

manufacturing

transportation

arts

government

law

accounting

information technology or data analyst

writer or editor

science

social work

manual labor

food service

self-employed

other (please specify)

10. What is the highest level of education you have achieved?

less than high school

some high school

high school

some college

college graduate

graduate school

11. What is your annual household income?

less than \$25,000

\$25,000-\$49,999

\$50,000-\$74,999

- \$75,000-\$100,000
- more than \$100,000

## Appendix B: Infrequent Attendee Survey Questions

Qualification instructions for participants stated, “You can participate in this study if: 1) you have lived in the United States for the past five years, 2) you are at least 25 years of age, and 3) you have *never* attended a professional (ballet, classical music, opera, non-musical play) performance, or you have attended a professional (ballet, classical music, opera, non-musical play) *only one time* within the last three years (not including modern dance, jazz dance, or a child’s recital).”

Note: Like Appendix A, while the following depicts the questions asked of infrequent attendees, these questions were not separated into categories on the main survey. Also, the Lifestyle, Marketing Communications, and Demographic questions on Appendix B are the same of those on Appendix A and hence are not repeated here.

### Motivation Questions

1. Regardless of any external factors (e.g., price of tickets, time, transportation, babysitter if needed, etc.) do you have any desire or motivation to attend a professional (ballet, classical music, opera, non-musical play) performance?
  - yes
  - no
  
2. What is your number one reason for *not* having a desire to attend a professional (ballet, classical music, opera, non-musical play) performance (choose one)?
  - no interest
  - no one to go with
  - not understandable/relatable
  - quality of venue
  - the elite stigma associated with the arts
  - no knowledge of event
  
3. What would be the *one thing* that would enhance your desire to attend a professional (ballet, classical music, opera, non-musical play) performance (choose one)?
  - someone to go with
  - know a performer
  - more understandable/relatable
  - more interesting
  - better information regarding the event
  - specific performance/performer/story
  - to spend time with family/friends

### Ability Questions

1. Regardless of your desire to attend a professional (ballet, classical music, opera, non-musical play) performance or any situational factors related to attendance (e.g., time,

transportation), if the average price of a ticket to such an event was between \$60-\$80, could you afford to spend that amount of money on a ticket?

yes

no

2. If you have attended a professional (ballet, classical music, opera, non-musical play) performance, what is the average price you have paid for a ticket?

less than \$20

\$20-\$40

\$41-\$60

\$61-80

\$81-\$100

\$101-120

\$121-140

\$141-160

over \$160

I have not attended

3. Assuming you were going to attend a professional (ballet, classical music, opera, non-musical play) performance, what is the maximum price you would pay for a ticket?

less than \$20

\$20-\$40

\$41-\$60

\$61-80

\$81-\$100

\$101-120

\$121-140

\$141-160

over \$160

4. If price were not an obstacle, would you attend a professional (ballet, classical music, opera, non-musical play) performance more frequently?

yes

no

### Opportunity Questions

1. Regardless of your desire to attend a professional (ballet, classical music, opera, non-musical play) performance or the price of a ticket, do situational barriers (e.g., transportation to a performance, time to attend a performance) prevent you from attending such an event?

yes

no

2. Assuming situational barriers prevent you from attending a professional (ballet, classical music, opera, non-musical play) performance, which of the following situational barriers

*most* prevent you from attending? Please rank-order your choices with 1 being the biggest barrier, 2 being the second biggest barrier, etc. You can rank as many or as few as apply.

transportation

time

babysitter

situational barriers do not prevent me from attending

#### General Attendance Questions

1. How many times in the past three years have you attended a professional (ballet, classical music, opera, non-musical play) performance?

0

1

2. If you were considering attending a professional (ballet, classical music, opera, non-musical play) performance, would you be more inclined to go if you had someone to go with?

yes

no

I wouldn't have a preference