

# The social construction of quality in Brazilian Classical Music market

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October, 2017

## 1 Introduction

In order for the final product of an orchestra, the concert, come into existence e reach its destination, the public, a number of actors engage in multiple cooperation processes and mobilize multiple resources building a production network system, or what Howard Becker would call an “Art World”. To Becker (2008, p. 1), “the existence of art worlds, as well as the way their existence affects both the production and consumption of art works, suggests a sociological approach to the arts”.

On the other hand, if we pay attention to the common market dynamics, what we can perceive more easily is a highly competitive environment. The mentioned phenomenon is approached by Lazega (2009) from a different perspective: in the competitive world, actors constantly see themselves in situations where they seek market’s stability making it viable. This does not happen simply because of the law of supply and demand but from producers positioning in a quality scale that differentiates their products. For this to be possible, full competition is not viable since there is some interdependence between producers. This vision is anchored on the relational prespective which conceives markets as social structures and enterprises, states, etc. as network structures (WHITE, 2008; WHITE, 2002; LAZEGA; HIGGINS, 2014).

The main goal of this work is to uncover the classical music market. This market still remains out of the common sense interest of economists, sociologists and other market scholars, maybe by chance, maybe by its high complexity and specificity. Before presenting our research questions and our goals, it is necessary to do an immersion in the specific literature in order to make a theoretical review as deep as possible. Afterwards, we will try to extract from the observation of the literature (considering what is already postulate and, above all, the identified gaps) the direction of our investigation.

Therefore, we will begin our work presenting the results of our biliographic research. It was made in two of the main abstract bases in sociology and economics<sup>1</sup>. We found that the

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<sup>1</sup> Sociological Abstracts and Econlit.

scientific research on music market in the last 30 years is almost nonexistent. Afterwards, we will investigate what is already settled on cultural goods seeking to understand the challenges put by our research object. In the third chapter, we will present the theoretical framework adopted for the analysis, Social Network Analysis. In the fourth chapter, we will present the research design explaining what kind of data we intend to collect, the adopted procedures, the analysis and the expected results. Finally, we present a preliminary investigation with one of the orchestras in Belo Horizonte as well as the final discussion of this project.

## 2 Results of the Bibliographic Investigation

This research project aims to look into the market of classical music in the Southeast region of Brazil. The research is guided by two main questions: 1) Understanding that the orchestras' market does not operate as an usual market, how does it work?; who are the actors involved and which are the actions that each one develops within the system? 2) Which are the conditions and social factors of the production of orchestral music quality standards, i.e., how this quality standard to which everyone is committed to is produced and sustained?

To develop our study, it is necessary to transcend the limits with which the economic theory encountered when addressing cultural products. In all its history, economic theory has anchored his main discoveries in two assumptions. The first leads to the idea of *homo economicus*, i.e., the rational actor who makes decisions aiming to boost profits and reduce losses. To do that, he has access to complete information and he is capable of processing them entirely. This assumption gives the economy the capacity of elaborating elegant models to explain people's choices and preferences but cannot incorporate a central part of social life: culture. Economic sociology has developed itself mainly addressing the gaps left by this assumption seeking to give account for how social norms, values, status systems and prestige influence economic action. Put another way, a sociological perspective makes possible to see relational factors that help to answer classical questions of economy while it brings the studies closer to reality even if it does not have such elegant models or such consistent logic (HIRSCH; MICHAELS; FRIEDMAN, 1987). Economic sociology is worried with contextual elements of economic trades, i.e., to analyze how interactions between actors bring out a market and how these interactions regulate and control the markets.

The second assumption is the general characterization of market products. The products are understood by four objective criteria, namely, their physical properties (which in this case are directly related to the quality of the concerned product), the date and the place where they are available and what determines their delivery within a certain universe, i.e., without uncertainties. The quality of a product, in this view, can be decomposed into a series of objective elements, i.e., clearly measurable and ordered. Moreover, in classical economic theory every good is considered a "private good" and therefore "unique and rival" in its consumption. To give an example, "a cup of coffee, a sandwich, a shirt, a pair of shoes, a chair, etc., are exclusive property because you can prevent me to get them (...); on the other hand, each of these goods

is for exclusive consumption because in the moment that I enjoy it, no one else can enjoy it” (TOLILA, 2007, p. 29). However, the cultural products, generally, are not unique; You can, for example, admire a beautiful historic building on the street without having to pay for it. Nor they are rival in consumption; the pleasure of attending a concert is not diminished by the presence of other people in the audience.

The cultural industry is also defined by its supply logic turned to production instead of consumption, unlike ordinary goods markets. To Tolila (2007, p. 32), “this supply logic characterizes well, among others, the action of public policies in terms of investment, help, and the sustenance of cultural activities, from patrimony to live performance, and in terms of incentives to cultural practices”. In fact, States and public collectivities have shown growing interest in cultural industry, which can be verified through public policies, specialized administrations, resources allocation driven specifically to this industry and the emergence of a whole network of institutions and professionals in cultural industry, most of them financed by public resources (TOLILA, 2007).

The symbolic value of cultural goods constitutes, for us, a central element in the comprehension of our study object, although, counteracting again the classic economic theory, it is not objective in its nature but relational and individual, i.e., it only exists when it is recognized by the individual in the moment of its consumption. For the symbolic value of a determined good to be recognized, there must be adequate cognitive structures to the comprehension and fruition of the good, in other words, mental schemes acquired by previous artistic education (BOURDIEU; DARBEL, 2003).

The musical performances have still a peculiarity related to the nature of their existence in which lies much of the methodological difficulties that surround them. Tolila (2007) explains:

What is music? The written score? No. The musicians of the orchestra? No. The conductor? Neither. In fact, it is almost impossible to define music as a “thing” (a table, a chair, a house, etc.) for it only exists *de facto* in the moment that it is heard, i.e., in a relation with the listener<sup>2</sup>. (TOLILA, 2007, p. 109)

Thus, the music (as well as dance and theater, for instance) assumes a special mode of existence that involves the participation of all elements or actors mentioned, i.e., the score, the musicians, the conductor, etc., in the construction of its materiality which only exists (and therefore is only possible to be consumed) in the very moment of its hearing.

(KARPIK, 2009) treats the same object under the perspective of “économie de singularités”. To this author, singular goods and services “are unknown by neoclassical economic theory. They do not exist”<sup>3</sup> (KARPIK, 2009, p. 163). The singularities are flagged by the presence of *good* in their characterization as a differential in a comparison between qualities, i.e., the *good* wine, the *good* music, the *good* orchestra, etc.

<sup>2</sup> To the author, “in fact, in the social world, the real mode of existence of most phenomena is also that of the relation between human beings” (TOLILA, 2007, p. 110). Curiously, in this premise is based all the neostructural paradigm in sociology also known as “relational perspective” or “social networks theory”.

<sup>3</sup> (...) ils sont donc méconnus par la théorie économique néo-classique. Ils n'existent pas.

The singularities are goods and services *structured, uncertain and incommensurable*. Those three characteristics *combined* characterize all the singularities as unique, multiple and their material support prescind of industrial production, once their symbolic power is maintained and, consequently, their capacity of receiving an indetermined number of particular interpretations<sup>4</sup>. (KARPIK, 2009, p. 164)

According to the network theory, the definition of “good” emerge from the relations within a netdom (WHITE, 2008). We, therefore aim to investigate and explain the emergence of the quality standard with which the actors are committed to. This investigation puts a double problem. In the one hand we deal with interorganizational networks where the orchestras build relations (ties) with suppliers and other actors in a production system, and with intraorganizational networks where we can understand the social processes of status emergence and collective learning among musicians; on the other, we deal with multilevel structures where both orchestras and musicians build relations and trade.

First, we will map the production network of orchestral music in three state capitals of Southeast region of Brazil, namely, Belo Horizonte (Minas Gerais State), São Paulo (São Paulo State) and Rio de Janeiro (Rio de Janeiro state). We will track back the firms that negotiate and cooperate with these symphony orchestras and also the cooperation between them in terms of exchanging resources and sharing guest artists (conductors and soloists).

In Belo Horizonte, today, there are two major orchestras, namely, Minas Gerais Symphony Orchestra and Minas Gerais Philharmonic Orchestra. Both are professional orchestras but musicians of the former are public workers and musicians of the later have contracts that can be revoked any time. Their salary, therefore, is much higher. It is common sense among the audience in Minas Gerais capital, Belo Horizonte, that the Philharmonic Orchestra has a better performing quality than the other one. We could ask in a very objective way, why is that?

The main orchestra in Brazil is São Paulo State Symphony Orchestra (OSESF) conducted by Mrs. Marin Alsop. This group was the first one in Brazil to go through a change in its administrative model going from an orchestra of public workers to hired musicians. Their musicians have the biggest salary and the orchestra has the highest budget in Brazil. They are also known as the “best” brazilian orchestra in terms of artistic quality and the one with the best international exposure. Besides OSESF there are other two professional symphony orchestras in São Paulo, namely, São Paulo University Orchestra (OSUSP) and São Paulo City Orchestra.

Rio de Janeiro has three professional symphony orchestras: Brazilian Symphony Orchestra (OSB), Petrobrás Symphony Orchestra (OPES) and City Theater Symphony Orchestra.

After mapping the orchestral music production network, we also aim to investigate how social roles (identities) emerge for each actor. To do that, we will perform a stochastic blockmodel in order to build blocks (clusters) of actors who are structurally equivalent, i.e., actors who have

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<sup>4</sup> Les singularités sont des biens et services *structurés, incertains et incommensurables*. Ces trois traits *combinés* caractérisent toutes les singularités qu’elles soient uniques, multiples ou que leurs supports matériels relèvent de la production industrielle, dès lors qu’est maintenu leur pouvoir symbolique et, par voie de conséquence, leur capacité à accueillir un nombre indéterminé d’interprétations particulières.

the same relational profile and, therefore, perform the same “roles” within the network. We also aim to explain the tie formation process. We will model the emergence of the network as a function of its endogenous configurations and of exogenous attributes such as annual budget, amount of guest artists, amount of non-brazilian musicians, type of contract, etc. To do that, we will use exponential random graph models or  $p^*$  models (LAZEGA; HIGGINS, 2014).

Finally, we can point three reasons why this research should be conducted at CSO:

- a. professor Lazega has developed methods to analyze network data in multilevel structures (LAZEGA; SNIJDERS, 2016);
- b. professor Lazega occupies the front line in the developments and advances regarding research in interorganization and intraorganizational networks today;
- c. such collaboration will fortify the research network between France and Brazil.

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