

## HISTORICAL DUALITIES IN THE CRYSTALLIZATION OF MUSIC MANAGEMENT HISTORY

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**SUMMARY.** The topic of the oscillation between elite and community, education and entertainment, tradition and innovation has always been regarded as a point of tension in constructing managerial strategies in artistic contexts. Our analysis pursues the historical evolution of music administration, from the ancient rudimentary forms to the aristocratic patronage and the emergence of the entrepreneur-artist, in order to highlight the ways in which managerial practices have maintained a close relationship with the social, economic, and cultural dynamics of the various historical periods. We have undertaken to offer a theoretical framework in order to understand the phenomenon of the dichotomy between “high niche art” and “commercial mass art”, as well as to find arguments validated by history for the construction of contemporary management strategies. The study relies on historical analyses completed by the documentary interpretation of a range of important artistic events and phenomena from various periods. It is a diachronic type of research, which we have structured according to successive stages, in order to capture the manner in which this “managerial duality” has developed and to understand its impact on the organization of the artistic phenomenon throughout history.

**Keywords:** artistic management history, elite versus mass, managerial duality

Even if music management has not been defined using these specific words since the beginning of its existence, it has existed in various forms, within the organizational and administrative actions connected to artistic events (the preparation of performances, the coordination of artists, etc.). The interest in what we nowadays call management is old and universal.

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The historical roots and the general character of this discipline did not emerge with the show business – they have coagulated in time, with the evolution of mankind, around everything that involved “the reaching of goals by means of certain resources”, wherefrom we can infer a first macro-definition of the term.

In the first historical ages, the general management appeared as a universal necessity to administer life resources. It evolved empirically and was closely connected to the dynamics of societies. We find possible scientific roots of the term in Aristotle (4th century BC), who talked about *oikonomia*, translated as “household administration” (“**oikos**” = house, household: “**nomos**” = rule, law, administration); that is, the management of food, goods, plots, and the organization of relationships among family members. The coverage of these responsibilities extended towards everything that made the life of communities more efficient and maintained it in balance. Aristotle believed that the application of these regulations might lead to well-managed households, which in their turn would lead to a well-managed city, laying the foundations of an optimal, functional, and productive social organization.<sup>2</sup>

In the field of arts involved in community life, a first historical moment of the antiquity can be associated to the festivals, concerts, and other festivities specific to the period, which required a minimal form of coordination in order to reach their purpose, that is, the existence of the event as such. All the more so since the artistic acts of the time were not individual, but always collective, closely linked to the life of the community, and the concept of “artist” and the role that they fulfilled for society was not very different from that of the craftsmen.<sup>3</sup> In the age that preceded the golden age of Ancient Greece, the artists did not have a superior, creative status, as we understand it today from the practical nature of art, they were rather performers of a quasi-technical, communication task; art was part of the praising rituals of Gods and leaders and its place was secured due to its function of accompaniment at ceremonies.

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<sup>2</sup> Dierksmeier, Claus, Pirson, Michael, “Oikonomia versus chrematistike: learning from Aristotle about the future orientation of business management”, in *Journal of Business Ethics*, 2009 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40295009>

Fauser, Annegret, Everist, Mark, “Music theatre and cultural transfer – Paris, 1830-1914”, Ed. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2009, pp.127-156.

<sup>3</sup> Shiner, Larry, *The invention of art – a cultural history*, Ed. University of Chicago Press, 2001, pp. 17-74.

Even back then a dichotomy of the role of art within communities was visible. In the ancient Eastern civilizations, music was connected almost exclusively to sacred life, rituals, and religion (Mesopotamia, Egypt) and was controlled by priests and royalty. Later, in Ancient Greece, the role of art was integrated in education, and it was granted a better organized and much more important role, that of contributing to the formation of the ideal citizen.

We see thus that the birth of duality in the perception of art's role also has old roots and represents an argument for the two directions in which it oscillated throughout history, until modern times: sacred and lay. Nowadays we find it in a double stance – its purpose is to be either “the niche art, meant for professionals” or “the commercial art, meant for the larger audiences”, either “the art as personal experience” or “the art as a community act with an educational role”, etc.

This double ancient root comes to support the oscillation of music between “elitism” and “popular”, between “education” and “entertainment”, very important aspects that create the reference framework for the contemporary artistic management. This evolution leads us to the conclusion that music management strategies rely absolutely on the context. From the “elitist” tradition we understand that there is an audience that seeks a refined and superior artistic product, and from the “popular” tradition that the audience prefers entertainment and social experiences by means of the arts, as it has always been. This oscillation explains why there are tensions between “consumption art” and “high art”, while also offering the bases for the music managers to take a value stand, to choose whom they address and to adapt to the respective target groups.

Returning to the historical coordinates of the “artistic management”, the moment when the two fields – art and management – intertwine is doubtlessly in Ancient Greece in the 5th century BC, when Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes, “top” creators of ancient Athens benefitted, at that time, from complex forms of “events organization” and “patronage” provided by rich citizens (*choregoi* = patrons of performances), in order that they may participate in the official festivals organized annually by the state (see the Dionysia, organized in the honour of God Dionysus). In this context, the “artistic management”, which appeared for the first time in this association (management and art), was divided between the state (organizer), sponsors, and artists (who were not independent but integrated in this financial and logistic system). Aristotle recounts in *Poetics* about the process of instructing and organizing artists which the *choregos* (the patron) paid for, so that the

music ensemble would be very well prepared for the performance.<sup>4</sup> This well-off citizen of Athens, the *choregos*, provided the financial resources and dealt with the organization of the performances, applying the exact principles of contemporary management: planning, coordination, control. He fulfilled, thus, a role equivalent to the contemporary managers' role, he financed and selected the artists, supervised the preparation of the event, and was responsible for public performance. Like the modern managers, the *choregos* had to find the balance between artistic exigency and community impact.

After the collapse of the ancient European cultures, the dissolution of the Roman Empire and of the civic structures, the festivals organized by *choregoi* no longer existed, so that the role of art was not institutionalized. The most important role for the administration of the artistic phenomenon in the following period belonged to the church. Also, the feudal courts became cultural centers, while the organization was transferred to aristocratic patronage.

From a social-historical point of view, in the Middle Ages (11th – 12th centuries) the traders' and craftsmen's guilds (carpenters, ironsmiths) appeared, but also the artists' guilds, which functioned according to clear structures with strict rules, which required the continuous coordination of the organization by a central authority. The general management was regulated by periods in which the workers spent time doing apprenticeship sessions, then went on to the stages of journeyman and master, prices were set for products, competition was evaluated, and the quality of the resulting materials was monitored. Everything was governed by order and discipline, which was a major paradigm shift in the administration of communities' life.

This is the first time when we find incipient forms of "bureaucratic management" (recorded in documents), within the medieval churches, where there were hierarchies (pope – bishop – priests – believers) and rules elaborated in official documents.

Painting, sculpture, and music were used in churches to encourage faith (on stained glass, frescos, in the Gregorian chant), and the medieval theatre had the role to provide religious education. In the same period, in the 9th and 10th centuries, wandering entertainers are mentioned (singers, acrobats, instrument players), known in the music industry as minstrels. These artists had a wandering life and were not connected to churches or courts. Being in a situation in which they had to sell their art and to attract the audience, that is; to manage their own career, they can be considered the oldest form of "freelancers." In the same period, the troubadours (in southern

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<sup>4</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics*, Ed. Universul Enciclopedic, ed. republ., București, 2011.

France), the *trouvères* (in northern France), and the *Minnesänger* (in Germany), semi-professional artists – most often stemming from noblemen or knights – also performed according to the principle of wandering life. A possible source of this category of artists was the noble family, which had only one heir, while the other children who received a high education had to find another meaning in life, which could be materialized in the realm of art.

So, the duality of art in the Middle Ages was represented on the one hand by institutionalized art, by the Church and the feudal courts, and on the other by independent-wandering art, where the semi-professional artists self-managed their artistic career. This differentiation can be compared to the modern structures, where we have the music represented by “institutions” (opera, philharmonic, etc.) – a heritage of the aristocracy or by the independent musician (“freelancer”) – the follower of the troubadours and the minstrels.

Apart from them, there were lay street performances where wandering dancers, musicians, and jugglers laid the foundations of modern theatres, several centuries later. In this regard we would like to talk as well about the phenomenon that spread all over Europe – *commedia dell’arte*, the first example of itinerant industry organized according to a commercial structure, in which the troupes developed their activity according to a financial system with contracts, incomes, paying audience.

Against the background of the political and social transformations, the transition to Renaissance art took place by moving the venues of arts events from the churches towards individuals and lay patronages. Among the factors that influenced this moment of transition was the discovery of the ancient Greek manuscripts that promoted the reconstruction of the “superior man” through culture. Also, the invention of the printing press by Gutenberg facilitated the dissemination of sheet music and practically changed the artistic organization in its entirety.

The Renaissance (15th to 16th centuries) brings to attention the first large commercial centers (Venice, Florence), where the tradesmen developed complex financial networks. This is where the first accountancy books connected to art appeared (de Medici family – Florence, 15th century) accompanied by proof of the complexity of finances in the artistic context.<sup>5</sup> Renaissance art was linked to “the patronage of the noblemen’s court” and to the grand patrons: Medici in Florence, Sforza in Milano, Gonzaga in Mantua, d’Este in Ferrara. They supported painters, musicians, dancers – all of whom were

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<sup>5</sup> Hickson Sally, “Patronage of the Arts”, In *Oxford Bibliographies*  
<https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/display/document/obo-9780195399301/obo-9780195399301-0358.xml> accessed on 28 august, 2025

integrated in hierarchical structures (cappella, court, festival) – artists whom they regarded as a very good strategic method of increasing their own prestige. The “court administrators”, the correspondents of today’s managers, dealt with the financial administration of the artistic events, the organization and planning of performances. In general, these positions were, at that time, granted to the leader of the cappella, known as *maestro di cappella/Kapellmeister*, whose task was to recruit artists, to organize rehearsals, to write commissioned music, to administer the artistic budget of the court.

We can notice how the mediaeval duality in the reception of the cultural act suffered other transformations in this stage, when it opened institutionally towards academies and universities and determined independent art to evolve from a semi-professional status (held by the old minstrels) towards the status of professional artists supported by patrons.

Then began the Baroque age (17th to 18th centuries), when Louis XIV founded the **Académie Royale de Musique (1669)** and **Académie Royale de Danse (1660)**, two institutions meant to **systematize instruction in the arts. Thus, the art of Renaissance was enhanced onto a superior level, being seen as a form of “spiritual enlightenment and cultivation of virtues.”** In this context music became an obligatory subject of study in the education of the noblemen. Académie Royale de Musique (1669), offered by royal privilege to Pierre Perrin and transferred to **Jean-Baptiste Lully** (1672), became the institution responsible with the official opera and music of France, evolving later into what we nowadays known as the Paris Opera.<sup>6</sup> The moment was important from a historical point of view because music and dance became compulsory subjects in the education of the elites, so that the role of the “artistic management” transformed to take on a new cultural function.<sup>7</sup>

After Louis XIV officially named Lully, and subsequently Le Brun, Racine, Molière as “artistic manages,” assigning them organizational tasks, the secondary responsibilities of the management of the time were also highlighted. The first forms of huge budgeting appeared: complex planning of productions, decors, costumes, transport, instruments, large artist teams, resources that required a rigorous administration and demanded the existence of a very substantial management team.

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<sup>6</sup> Fauser, Annegret, Everist, Mark, “Music theater and cultural transfer – Paris, 1830-1914”, Ed. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2009, pp. 127-156.

<sup>7</sup> Hood, Christopher, *The art of state – culture, rhetoric and public management*, Ed. Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 28.

At the same time, according to the French model, the Habsburgs of Vienna (Leopold I, Carol VI, Maria Theresa, Joseph II), supported the access and the evolution of music in the imperial chapel and the theatres of the court. The main occupation of the artistic administration of the court was to find composers (for instance: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven), who would be integrated in permanent orchestras and choirs. In this manner, the official performances that took place at the Court and the religious holidays benefited from all the cultural support necessary for an intense, high-quality artistic life.

In Germany, the political fragmentation led to the appearance of a competing royal court, which had its own orchestra and artistic resource. For instance, in Leipzig, we encounter Bach as cantor at Thomaskirche (financed by the city council) or in Weimar, Köthen, where Bach und Telemann were employed as musical directors. Here as well, the composer employed at the court had tasks connected to the organization of rehearsals and provision of music education for noblemen. They were also entrusted with the music of the liturgies in churches (particularly oratorios), which were large scale events involving considerable financial and logistic resources.

Whereas in the Middle Ages the artists wandered on the roads and in the Renaissance, they depended on patrons, they were now employed in performance seasons and productions. The “trading” of the opera in Italy marked the beginning of the “**musical businesses**”<sup>8</sup>: agents, contracts with singers, decorators, orchestra, all within the structure of business plans. This is when the “music entertainment market” also emerged by means of the public theatres and the agents who managed the artists’ careers, thus laying the bases for the “music industry.”<sup>9</sup>

In this context, a moment of maximal importance for music history is the dislocation of the opera from the aristocratic environment. The opera appeared in Florence in 1600 by means of the Florentine Camerata – a group of intellectuals who wanted to revive the Greek tragedy – the opera became the most spectacular, most complex, and most expensive music genre of the time. Unlike in France, where the operas were strictly royal, in Italy appeared the “public theatres” - Venice 1637 (*Teatro San Cassiano*) – where anyone could buy a ticket and attend, without being a member of the court.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Carter, Tim, Butt, John, *The Cambridge history of seventeenth century music*, Ed. Cambridge University Press, 2005, pp. 55-87.

<sup>9</sup> Steinberg, Michael, *Listening to reason – culture, subjectivity and nineteenth century music*, Ed. Princeton University Press, 2004, pp. 163-186.

<sup>10</sup> Glixon, Beth, Glixon, Jonathan, *Inventing the business of opera: the impresario and his world in seventeenth century Venice*, Ed. Oxford University Press, 2005.

After the onset of this unprecedented commercial stage, which marked the birth of the European music industry, the artistic management went on to its business-like administration stage, which had an administrative, logistic, and financial side. In London, Handel founded, with the help of the royal patronage, the Royal Academy of Music (1719), an institution entrusted with the production of the Italian operas in England. We must mention that Handel was a very inspired manager, because, in a time when opera productions were very expensive (due to fees, decors, large orchestras), he managed to balance the financial status of the institution whose manager he was, attracting financiers and making a profit from selling tickets. Beyond his expertise, he devised an ingenious strategy in periods of bankruptcy (1728-1734), when the taste of the English people for the opera decreased and he readapted immediately, staging oratorios (such as *Messiah*) – cheap productions, without decors and costumes, who had the potential to attract a numerous audience.<sup>11</sup>

In the time between the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, several musical figures acted as managers, organizers or agents. We mention:

- Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643), who was one of the first composers to work with the Venetian theatres, where he dealt with rehearsals, contact to agents, opera casting.

- Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741), who got involved in the organization of the concerts in Venice (*Ospedale della Pietà*), trying even to lay the foundations of an opera company.

- Georg Philipp Telemann (1681-1767), who invented in Hamburg the model of the musical market and concerts based on subscriptions, an important step for the innovation, dissemination, and establishment of consistency in musical productions.

- Joseph Haydn (1732-1809), in the classical period, worked to organize public concert seasons in collaboration with the agent Johann Peter Salomon.

- Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Chopin, Liszt, Wagner, Verdi, Brahms – as part of the “stage of the entrepreneur artist”, when the new standard of the musical careers was the self-management.

At this point in history, the artists started to support themselves with the help of tours, self-advertisement, and subscriptions.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Kimbell, David, *Handel on the stage*, Ed. Cambridge University Press, 2016.

<sup>12</sup> Attali, Jacques, “The political economy of music”, In *Theory and History of Literature*, vol. 16, Ed. University of Minnesota Press, 1985, pp. 23-45.



We notice that, in regard to the dichotomy of artistic management in the 19th century, we have all the directions outlined in the previous periods:

- institutional (state operas, permanent orchestras) vs. independence (artists who support themselves),
- elitism (salon concerts and academies – which limited access and addressed implicitly an informed audience) versus community (where music becomes a performance for the masses - Liszt's festivals, Wagner in Bayreuth, Verdi's operas).

The 20th century is marked by several important commercial stages: the appearance of the phonograph and the role played by record companies, concert agencies and agents in the structuring of a musical market. By extending the phenomenon of "mass music", and also by the emergence of the radio and the television, the foundations of music marketing were laid, which was for a long while an integral part of the science of artistic management.

After the 1950s, the grand record companies and the concert agencies stood out due to a very well-organized administration and a significant impact on the consumption markets (rock and roll, pop music, etc.). This new type of very powerful and very efficient management encouraged the emergence of tensions between the "high/academic art" and the "consumption music", a dialogue that we are still experiencing nowadays.

In the past years, the digital age has led to the appearance of new jobs, especially in the realm of music management. We are talking about "social-media strategist", "digital creator", "community manager", whose responsibilities are to democratize the access to virtual platforms, where many artists become self-managers.

## **Conclusions**

Despite the fact that we may be tempted to consider the elite-community duality as an effect of the actual technologies in music, it is a phenomenon that crosses history from ancient times to our days. The presented material highlights an important aspect for managerial philosophy, namely the fact that artistic organization has always been connected to social structuring and to the administration of the resources for an artistic product. History shows us that the music manager has always had to be flexible in order to adapt to at least three aspects: the audience, the purpose of art, and the available resources.

Understanding the historical roots helps us elucidate an important concern of contemporary artistic managers: Should they side with the elites, or the masses? Should they encourage educational value or shape their artistic products as dictated by the cultural market? Is tradition a value that must be maintained or is it necessary to adapt it to the global reality?

It has been proved that all ages had their own new, innovative moments that went hand in hand with tradition. Many times, tradition has been “remodeled” to answer the global market, turning into an element of differentiation.

History shows that music has always been positioned in an oscillating point between popular and elitist forms. Thus, the existence of both paradigms is confirmed in all the stages of music evolution, also due to the influence that they had on the position of the manager and the coherence of the strategies that they devised throughout their development.

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