Visualization in the Performance of Classical Music: A New Challenge

By Wil Greckel

Indiana University Southeast

A major problem we face as professional musicians and educators, who are dedicated to the welfare and survival of the great tradition of classical music, is the apparent decline of audiences for classical music concerts. One of the most pessimistic statements about audience decline was made by the manager of the Los Angeles Philharmonic in 1987, when he said, "The symphony orchestra is dead." Although many others in the field do not agree with the radical finality of that statement, Catherine French, chief executive officer of the American Symphony Orchestra League, describes the general situation as "a gloomy picture." She adds, "In 1989-90, of the 40 largest orchestras, 27 of them ran deficits. And nine of the 27 had deficits in excess of a million dollars" (Finkel, 1991, p. 24). The most recent information from the offices of the American Symphony Orchestra League, covering 1990-91 and 1991-92, is that while the numbers may very slightly, this general situation has not changed and could get worse. In an interview on National Public Radio on January 3, 1992, the retiring conductor of the Philadelphia Orchestra, Maestro Muti, expressed his concern about the survival of symphony orchestras in this country, saying, "If Americans do not cherish their orchestras, they will lose them."

In addition to the general concern about declining audiences is the more specific concern about the apparent decline of the "25 and under" generation in our concert halls. Loren Kitt, principal clarinetist with the National Symphony, states, "You look out and see a lot of gray hair, and you wonder where the future audiences are going to come from" (Finkel, 1991, p. 36).

The Causes of Audience Decline

There are numerous reasons for the declining interest in classical music within our rock-and-television generation—social, cultural, economic, musical, and public relations factors are parts of the picture. Here, the focus will be upon a single factor considered by the author to be a significant problem: the visual communication factor.

We are living in the age of the visual image. People in general, and especially the younger generation, are habituated to the visual experience. They live with it, they like it, they expect it; yet they do not find it in the typical classical music concert.

The Television Generation

Television is not the only cause, nor is it the only symptom of this universal predilection for visual communication, but it is certainly the most predominant of the mass media in today's society. People expect to *see* the news, *see* the weather report, *see* the personal interview, and, whether music purists

Wil Greckel is Professor of Music and Director of the Music Department at Indiana University Southeast, New Albany. He teaches music history, conducting, and orchestration and conducts the IUS Orchestra. In September, 1992, Greckel conducted two performances of Kurt Weill's "Threepenny Opera Suite" with dancers. The 18-piece orchestra and the dancers shared equally in this "visualized" performance of the work, which was received enthusiastically by the audiences.

like it or not, people now expect to *see* music. Of course, the radio and other audio media are still very important, but when people attend a musical *event*, there is either a conscious or an unconscious expectation that there will be something to see as well as to hear. This expectation is becoming more and more ingrained, especially among the youth, and with the immense popularity of video-rock, with its elaborate visual interpretation or dramatization of every song. Therefore, many would agree that this expectation of a visual accompaniment to music will have to be dealt with in the world of classical music to a greater degree than it has in the past if we are to attract larger audiences to our concert halls now and in the future.

The Success of Television

The matter of providing visual interest to classical music performances *on television* has already been handled with surprising success. Even though a concerto or symphony has no inherent visual character, television provides visual interest in many ways: back-stage interviews with the conductor, the composer, the guest soloist; the use of pictorial materials about the composer's life; a variety of camera angles during the performance, such as "close-ups" or "zoom-in" views of various sections of the orchestra, or specific solo players, of the conductor, of the soloist—even of the audience. (Of course, both opera and ballet already have visual factors inherent in their nature and conception.) Such visualization in the performance of classical music on television has been generally successful; it is in the concert hall that we fail today's visually oriented audiences of today.

The Visual Sterility of Classical Music Concerts

Those who have never attended a live performance of a major rock group have missed an experience important to their understanding of the musical psyche of today. They will also not totally understand why young

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people are so often put off by the atmosphere and the decorum of the typical symphony orchestra concert. A few brief comparisons follow.

The Stage

Unfortunately, many concert and recital halls have the stark, severe, and sterile decor of dissecting laboratories in medical schools; thank heavens for the architectural exuberance and splendor which celebrated life and music in earlier centuries! Even in an attractive baroque or classical hall, the stage setting for most classical music concerts is starkly utilitarian and harshly lit. Contrast this with the visual impact of the rock-concert stage with its dazzling colored light shows, sweeping laser beams, tons of electronic sound equipment, and impressive array of synthesizers and electronic keyboards, a mountain of sparkling drums lit from within and without, and a small army of sound and light technicians dashing busily about. Add to this such "special effects" as filmed or photographed images projected on large screens, dancers, choreographed and costumed back-up vocal groups and so on, and you have quite a spectacle.

Stage Decorum and Communication

At the typical orchestral or choral concert, the musicians walk quietly and seriously on stage. They are also formally and soberly dressed. The conductor walks out, bows to all. He speaks to no one; no one speaks to him. In fact, no one on stage speaks overtly to anyone! Communication about the music, and about everything that has to do with the concert is accomplished via the printed medium: *The Program Notes!* These generally have small print and large technical words, yet must be read in very dim light—if one arrives early enough—or in darkness, once the performance begins. On the whole, the concert is a very traditional, formal ritual, with visual stimuli kept to a minimum in or-

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der not to "distract" from the music. Contrast this with the leaping, dancing entrances of the rock stars in their striking, colorful, or shockingly bizarre costumes. And the rock-pop performers actually *speak* to their audiences. The audience roars and screams its approval and excitement during and after every number! Laser lights flash, singers and players twist, jump, gyrate, and writhe with the intensity of their emotions. The powerfully amplified music is a physical force, energizing a rollicking, tumultuous audience, which in itself provides its own major visual "event."

If we are to win more of the present generation into the concert halls of classical music, we must be willing to use means of communication that will break down the barriers of (what is to them) an alien musical style that is visually austere; we must stop recreating a concert ambience of nineteenth-century formality when we are already in the last decade of the twentieth century! One important way to accomplish this may well be through the increased attention to and use of visual elements in the performance of classical music.

Visualization in Music: Historical Precedents

Visualization, or the association of visual elements with musical performance, includes a wide range of possibilities, and a longer and more extensive history than one might think. Every new generation seems to have the misconception that it freshly invents almost everything it does, not being aware of what has gone before. Light shows were in vogue long before the rock generation! Walt Disney's ever-popular visualization of classical music, *Fantasia,* was made in 1940,[1] and Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers were, of course, doing elaborated visualizations of popular songs on film 50 years before Michael Jackson, Madonna, and video-rock.

Visual Connection: Roots in the Past

From what one can learn from studies of musical practices in ancient civilizations and remote societies which still retain many of the musical traditions of the distant past, music was seldom performed as an abstract form, isolated from ceremony, celebration, dance, or ritual. In short, music was mostly performed in settings which provided kinetic and visual associations. Music was generally a part of an "occasion," and often one in which the "audience" itself participated. Music was an essential part of classical Greek theater with its visual array, and, if pictorial references on Greek and Roman artifacts are accurate, music in the Classical world of antiquity was, more often than not, associated with dance.

Music played an important part in the ritual of the early Christian church, and therefore the performance of music in religious ceremony was, by the very nature of its setting and circumstance, almost always accompanied by a visual/kinetic experience. As the ceremonies and the architecture of the church grew more elaborate through the centuries, so did the visual spectacle. The colorful vestments of the clergy, the beautiful paintings, artistic objects, and utensils of worship at the altar, the processions, the visual splendor of the great cathedrals themselves, provided a profound and impressive visual accompaniment to the music. Add to this the performance of liturgical dramas or "miracle plays," the musical theater of the Medieval church, and it becomes apparent that there is a long and rich tradition of visual and dramatic associations in church music alone.

Throughout history, however, there was also the parallel development of music as purely an aural art—music as an art for the ears only, not for the eyes. It is interesting that with the advent of the Baroque era, both channels of development began to diverge more radically. For it is during this period of musical history that one sees the ultimate visualization of music in the emergence of opera and ballet as major art forms, and, at the opposite end, the full development of absolute, abstract, or "pure" instrumental music,

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without overt visual associations, except for the visual interest of watching the musicians perform. This "absolute music," and the "intellectualization" of music into abstract forms which had no intended association with dance, drama, ceremony, or pageant reached an unsurpassed peak of development in the great classical tradition of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven.

The popularity and importance of "program music" during the nineteenth century brought to the concert hall a kind of "implied" visualization, in the sense that the descriptive titles and intent of the music all suggested a visualization, albeit in the audience's "mind's eye" only.

It is interesting to note that the ultimate "disembodiment" or "devisualization" of music did not occur until the invention of the phonograph and the radio. These media obviously could not provide a visual experience for the music listener, and it wasn't until the advent of movies and television that the electronic mass media could restore the visual element to musical performances. The enormous popularity of movie musicals, and now of video-rock, certainly appears to indicate that radio and recorded music do not satisfy an innate psychological-sensory predilection for a visual connection with music.

Psychological-Sensory Roots: Synesthetic Perception

Synesthesia or synesthetic perception is the psychological term for a cross-sensory or a sensory-association experience. "Color hearing," or the ability to see colors when one hears music, is an example of this phenomenon, and although synesthesia is not limited to just the association of color with music, it is probably the most widely known type of synesthetic perception.

Those who experience color association with music do so in different ways. Some individuals associate certain colors with certain compositions (such as blue with *Tannhäuser,* or red with *Les Préludes*), or

they associate a color with a certain composer or musical style. For example, it was reported in an 1893 study by Theodore Flournoy (Peacock, 1985) that Gounod's music evoked the color of violet for one individual and blue for another. For another of Flournoy's subjects, Beethoven's music was black. P. E. Vernon in a 1930 study reports a person who found Wagner's music to be green and yellow, and Chopin's music luminous (Peacock, 1985).

Many musicians have color associations with different timbres; that is, they may "see" red when they hear brass, blue with woodwinds, and so on. Leonard Bernstein mentioned that he associated various colors with certain timbres. Color association with pitch is apparently quite common, but most often not associations with specific pitches, but rather with a range of pitches, as in dark colors with low pitches and bright colors with high pitches. Garner attempts to scientifically rationalize the association of specific pitches with specific colors:

> There is, therefore, ground for speculation that the eye may "think" in octaves, like the ear, and that it might be possible to "translate" an octave of sound precisely into an octave of light. This is particularly so because the eye divides the spectrum into 12 distinguishable colours.
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> Consequently, "God Save the Queen" should be capable of being translated into colour. The first line of this tune has the notes G-G-A-F#-G-A, and this would translate into a "colour tune" as blue-green, blue-green, blue-violet, green, blue-green, and blue violet (Garner, 1989, pp. 225-26).

Still another general category of "color hearing" involves the association of colors with tonalities. This is a synesthetic perception which has been fairly common among composers. André Grétry assigned colors to keys in his writings. Beethoven refers in one of his sketchbooks to B minor as the "black key", and Scriabin considered the key of F-sharp to be a gray-green color; both composers did agree, however, that D major was

Russian composers shared these color-tonality associations. "Surely," he said, "for everybody sunlight is C major, cold colors are minors, and F-sharp is decidedly strawberry red!" (Peacock, 1985, pp. 492-93).

Scriabin's Colored Lighting Score

Scriabin's synesthetic perception was actually quite systematized; he delineated, according to his own personal visual associations, a specific color for each of the twelve major keys. Therefore, when he decided to add lights to his Fifth Symphony, *Prometheus, The Poem of Fire,* (1910), he included a specific part in the score for an instrument he called the *Tastiera per luce,* which would project colored light according to the tonalities and sonorities in the music as it progressed.[2] In November of 1989, the Louisville Orchestra performed this work [with Dr. Kenneth Peacock of New York University (an authority on Scriabin's color hearing) "playing" the *Tastiera per luce* part] by coordinating the specified colored lighting effects from the lighting booth in the concert hall. Louisville junior and senior high school students attended this performance and reacted with great enthusiasm. Here was something they could identify with! It may not have been as visually spectacular as some of the rock concerts they had attended, but the "light show" in combination with the music spoke to them in their kind of visual and musical style. They felt "at home," and they liked it. After the performance, many students crowded around Dr. Peacock, excitedly expressing their enjoyment of and interest in the lighting effects.

Implications to Consider

There are numerous interesting studies which could be discussed, including Peacock's "Instruments to Perform Color-Music: Two Centuries of Technological Experimentation," (Peacock, 1988), all of which show a surprisingly long history of experimental technology in the association of visual effects with music. One can see, however, from this brief survey that there are scientific and psychological indications, as well as a long historical precedents, that account for the popular desire for visual associations

wise for musicians to recognize to a greater degree the strong predilection that many people have for a visual connection or reaction to the stimulus of sound. Perhaps we should not blame video-rock as a cause of the decline of interest in classical music among young people; instead, we might consider its popularity to be message that many listeners feel an innate need for a visual connection, a need which might be given more consideration in performances of "absolute" classical music in the future.

Applications of Visualization to Musical Performance

The arts are basically means of communication. If there is something that can be done in the performance or presentation of a work of art that may improve the communication of its essence and spirit to an audience, then it would seem reasonable and legitimate to use this means. It would seem logical to approach the whole issue of the use of visual effects in music performance with this as a basic rationale. On the other hand, the addition of superficial, "razzle-dazzle" visual effects just to draw an audience or create publicity for concerts would jeopardize artistic integrity and have negative consequences in the long run.

Mozelle Clark Sherman, Professor of Church Drama at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary,[3] maintains that people need a "sense of occasion" because we are acclimated to "a more visual sense of occasion than our grandmothers and grandfathers." She also maintains that television cannot give us this "sense of occasion." It can only be achieved through the physical closeness or immediacy of a "live" performance, and through a performance that is visually and kinetically[4] as well as musically dynamic. The basic premise, that communicating the message of church music to today's audience demands attention to the visualization of music through dramatization, dance, and visual effects, is a premise which might be successfully applied to secular concert music as well.

There may be a tendency to think of the use of visual effects as always demanding very complex, time-consuming, and expen-

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sive means. This need not be the case, however, since there are many ways of enhancing and increasing the success of a musical performance through the use of very simple visual devices.

For instance, is there a deeply rooted reason why all stage light for music recitals is always the same, regardless of what music is being performed, or who is performing? Stage lighting for all concerts could become an issue worthy of attention and open to imagination. Should Chopin nocturnes be performed in the same light as Scarlatti sonatas? Perhaps it is time for classical musicians to think about lighting beyond the usual questions of "Can we see the music?" or "Is the light in my eyes?" A few simple lighting effects are most often an expected part of even small-scale performances of popular music. Why should we not consider this more often in the world of classical music?

If a pianist really sees a deep, rose-red when he plays Liszt, then why not share this experience with the audience? Adding red-toned lighting for a few Liszt pieces is not difficult, and may give an ordinary piano recital a dramatic touch, or it may at least add something controversial for the audience to chat about. Subtle color changes and varied lighting levels may be appropriate for each piece in the program.

A recent performance of George Crumb's *Voice of the Whale for Three Masked Players* by the Kentucky Center Chamber Players in Louisville is an example of how effective simple lighting techniques can be. The composer suggests in the score the use of deep blue stage lighting and the wearing of black masks by the players. The players were dressed in black, the stage was darkened, and the only light used, other than the blue stage lights, were those on the music stands. These simple visual elements added immensely to the atmosphere and enjoyment of the piece and to the success of the performance.

Program Notes—Television Style

One of the formal traditions of the typical classical music recital which often makes new listeners and young listeners feel uncomfortable is the lack of communication between the performer(s) and the audience—what one might call "program-note paralysis." Not a word is spoken from the stage to the listeners, no matter how long the program may be.

This could be viewed as a rather archaic practice at a time when both old and young are so accustomed to the visual style of television, where they always see someone speaking directly and intimately to them. A personal introduction to each work by the performer(s) or by a program "host," rather than total reliance upon printed program notes, would be a relatively simple audio-visual effect which could certainly improve communication with the audience. This television style of direct communication to the listener would also create a more relaxed and informal concert atmosphere which young audiences especially enjoy. Since many musicians find it difficult to make such a presentation and perform too, they can request the help of their colleagues, especially music historians who would enjoy the challenge and the opportunity to "present" the program notes to the audience as "co-performers." As is the practice in television, the program "host" or presenter of the program notes might use projected photo-slides and various other visual aids, conduct brief interviews, engage in informal dialogues about the music with the performer, and perhaps engage the audience in some form of participation.

While this approach is not a "visualization"

of the music itself, the use of an announcer on stage to introduce the performer(s) and the music provides a much more visually dynamic program and concert experience for the audience than does the traditional use of program notes only. Since the youth of today may have little patience with formalities, the above approach could be an important way of increasing their enjoyment and attendance in our concert halls.

Use of "Supertitles"

Another relatively simple visual technique which has been successfully introduced in recent years, especially in opera performance, is the projection of the translation of the libretto above or near the stage. Since opera is drama set to music, much emotional involvement and enjoyment is lost when the performance is in a foreign language and the audience does not understand what is being said or sung. Supertitles can also be successfully used in the performance of any type of vocal work—oratorios, cantatas, art songs—whenever there is a language barrier. Why should audiences miss the subtleties of humor, irony, poignant emotion, and vivid imagery inherent in the texts?

Some conservatives object to the use of supertitles, but as long as the texts are good translations, well coordinated with the performance, and unobtrusively projected, they will be welcomed and enjoyed by the vast majority of audiences who find reading printed translations in the dark as difficult as trying to understand a poorly enunciated foreign language over a loud orchestra.

Visual Images: Techniques and Concepts

Visual images can be associated with music in numerous ways and by using a wide range of techniques. When planning visual effects for a concert, works of art related to the music might be displayed in the concert-hall lobby, photo-slides of art works might be projected on stage as part of the performance, and/or integrated with music performance in many other ways (Ox & Frank, 1984; Hero, 1975; Goldberg & Schrack, 1986); DeWitt, 1987). Another example is Gunther Schuller's *Seven Studies on Themes of Paul Klee,* involving a translation of Klee's

visual art into music. This work is often performed with the photo-slides of the artist's works projected onto screens on the backdrop of the stage for the audience, and the Gunther work provides another example of the very appropriate use of visual images in concert performances.

The Use of Image Projectors

The use of projectors has been mentioned, but further comment is needed in regard to this technique. There is a very wide scale of technical sophistication involved in the use of projectors, from the relatively simple—one or two ordinary slide projectors—to the very complex and sophisticated use of multiple projectors with high-speed, pre-set coordination schemes. There are also rear-screen projectors, moving picture projectors, systems involving videotaped images projected upon large-scale television screens. These are some of the many possibilities of which musicians should be aware when planning the use of visual accompaniments for concerts.

It is very important, during the planning and execution of visual effects, to consult and use experts. The help of colleagues in the departments of theater, dance, art, and audio-visual technology will be a key to success whenever elements in these areas are included in a performance.

Stage Design

We very much expect to see special stage designs, painted scenery, colorful backdrops, "props," and other such stage designs for plays, opera, musicals, and ballet—why not use these same effects to create an interesting visual setting when effective and appropriate for certain concerts? In Rome, in 1917, Diaghilev commissioned the Italian futurist painter Giocomo Balla to prepare special scenery and lighting effects for a performance of Stravinsky's *Fireworks.* Balla's decor consisted of various geometrical structures made of transparent materials that were lighted from within.

Also to be considered is the special arrangement of the performers on stage to create certain visual as well as acoustical effects. For example, players could be seated at a variety of levels and facing at different angles; dramatic effects could be produced

by the creative placement of soloists or special spacing of groups. Stage areas projecting into the audience would be interesting, as would stage areas which are moveable during performance.

Computer-Video Graphics

The field of computer-generated graphics is already well advanced. When such graphics are projected upon a large screen, they can produce an impressive visual experience for an audience. Computers can be programmed in coordination with digital sound synthesizers or with mixed "live" sounds, to produce instantaneous and continuous graphic changes in colors, shapes, and forms in response to the music. This electronic visualization of the music is often used in concerts of electronic music. Since audiences do not particularly enjoy "watching" a computer or audio-tape "perform," such visual effects are an especially important accompaniment for this type of music. Computer-generated graphics, however, could be used for any type of concert.

Visualizing Music Through Dance

Dance is probably the oldest means of visualizing music. Considering its long history as an art form, it should not be surprising that the association of dance with music in movies, television, and video-rock has certainly become a common expectation and an obvious success. The world of classical music might well take a cue from this. However, the focus here is not upon ballet or music created for dance, but rather upon the concept of adding dance as a visual accompaniment to the music.

It is very important to recognize the major difference between adding dance in order to visually enhance a concert performance, and creating a ballet or dance program with dance as the major focus. With the use of dance as a visual effect as a part of a concert, the music and the musicians are of equal or greater importance than the dancers with whom they share the stage. In ballet, the dancers take the stage and the spotlight while the musicians perform out of sight in the pit, thereby relegating both the music and the musicians to a secondary role.

When dance is used together with other visual effects in the performance of an oratorio or cantata, the chorus, soloists, orchestra, and the music itself remain the major focus. This approach towards the use of dance will obviously be necessary to preserve the integrity of the concert as essentially a musical experience. As a further example, if a chamber music group decided to add dancers to their performance of a Baroque dance suite, the musicians and the dancers should share the stage as partners in the performance. If the musicians leave the stage for the pit, the character of the performance would immediately be changed from that of a chamber music concert with dance to that of a ballet.

A recent performance by the New York City Ballet provides an excellent example of this partnership concept. Chopin piano works were performed, including waltzes and mazurkas. On stage was a grand piano, the pianist, and two dancers. This simple setting and collaboration was beautiful and gave the audience the fullest opportunity to enjoy and appreciate the equal and complementary balance of the music, the pianist, the choreography, and the dancers.

Dramatization, Pageantry, and Combinations of Visual Effects

Music that tells a story, for example, a biblical oratorio, or a programmatic orchestral work like Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*, would obviously lend themselves to dramatization. An oratorio like Mendelssohn's *Elijah,* for example, has numerous dramatic situations and possibilities, most of which are lost in the usual stiff and static concert performances it receives. An effectively dramatized performance can create a vivid, moving, and memorable experience for both the audience and the performers, and it can add fresh life to works that have been performed repeatedly over the last two centuries.

The use of colorful costumes, banners, processionals, and/or any variety and combination of visual effects has had a long and successful history, from the liturgical dramas of the Medieval church to the spectacular stage scenes of grand opera. With the electronic media available today, the "multi-media" concert event is a more practical possibility than ever before. When a large-scale work, such as an oratorio, is "staged," the

> "If the addition of visual elements to our performance communicates the spirit of the music more vividly and brings audiences back to the concert halls, then the increased use of visualization must be given important consideration."

use of a wide variety of visual elements can be very striking—dance, acting, pantomime, costumes, processionals, special lighting, scenery, projected visual images. At this point we arrive at the concept of Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk* ideal, the amalgamation of all artistic means to create one grand, unified, transcendent, aesthetic experience. While this notion may seem a bit too ideal or fanciful to achieve, it can be, nonetheless, a worthy goal.

Visualization: Examples from the Field

With what types of music can visual effects be used? A typical first reaction would be in terms of programmatic works only. This is logical, for the use of visual imagery for the performance of Liszt's *Les Préludes*, for example, would seem more appropriate than for a Haydn symphony. Yet, ballet performances in the past 50 years or so demonstrate that the visualization of abstract or absolute music is as successful and prevalent as with program music. Looking at the productions of Balanchine alone, one finds that he choreographed more musical works which were not originally intended for dance than those that were, and his repertoire includes absolute music by Bach, Mozart, Schoenberg and Webern. Stravinsky's music is also an interesting case in point. Stravinsky is known mostly for his great ballet scores, but the large number of his absolute works which were subsequently visualized as dance productions actually exceeds the number of works he specifically composed as ballet music (White, 1966). The obvious answer to the above question, then, is that there is really no type of musical work which should be arbitrarily excluded when one is considering the use of visual elements.

It is often very helpful to know what others have done in a certain area of endeavor, and to use this information as a starting point or a guide. It is with this in mind that the following examples are presented.

King David

Arthur Honegger's dramatic oratorio, *King David,* was originally conceived and performed as a dramatic work. After its initial performance as a staged pageant, it was performed as a concert piece. Some of the dramatic and visual elements were restored to the performance of this work by the Chorus and Orchestra of Indiana University Southeast with the use of dancers, special lighting effects, photo-slide projectors, and the use of a television newscaster as the narrator. Photo-slides were used during orchestral interludes to provide stage backgrounds for some dance numbers and for the battle scenes. Dancers were used for most choral sections and for some solo segments. The Witch of Endor was portrayed by a faculty member of the university Drama Department, appropriately costumed, made up, and lit, and the television newscaster added an air of authenticity to the narration. This work will lend itself to far more extravagant pageantry and visual embellishment then were used for this production, but the overall effect of even these modest means created a vivid experience and a sense of occasion not possible with a standard concert performance.

Birds of a Feather

For the performance of this contemporary cantata for soloists, chorus, and orchestra by Jean Berger, a professional mime was engaged to add visual interest and to silently dramatize the characters and actions described in the text of the work. Except for a spotlight for the mime, no other special visual effects were used. Mime is a very efficient way of adding visual interest to a performance, for it involves only one extra performer and very little extra work or rehearsal time. Because *Birds of a Feather* is a light, satirical, narrative work, the use of mime for this concert was very appropriate. There could be a question, however, as to how

successful mime would be with other types of music.

Elijah and St. John's Passion

As discussed earlier, the School of Church Music of the Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, is making special efforts to visualize the performance of church music in order to more vividly communicate the message of the music and to better reach the broadest spectrum of the public. With this in mind, they have commissioned and performed operas with biblical themes, and they have added dramatic and visual effects to performances of sacred works that are traditionally performed only as concert works. Two examples of the latter are their performances of Mendelssohn's *Elijah,* and J. S. Bach's *St. John's Passion.* In *Elijah,* special lighting, costumes, acting, dancing, and movement were used to dramatize the text and narrative elements of the work. Similar treatment was given to the performance of the *St. John's Passion*—here too the soloists acted out the parts they sang, the Evangelist was portrayed as a German Lutheran clergyman of Bach's time, segments of commentary were sung in present-day dress, the singer-actor portraying Christ was placed on a crucifix, and six projectors were used to project slides of Old Master paintings of the Crucifixion during choruses and orchestral interludes.

Many more examples of visual treatments could be presented here; but the examples above, together with those mentioned in earlier discussions, provide several precedents to consider, and also demonstrate a growing (but far from universal) awareness of the need to make use of visual elements for better communication with concert audiences.

Visualization: Extra Demands

Obviously, the addition of visual elements to a concert performance will demand more rehearsal time. Since the circumstances will vary greatly with every performing group and with every performance, there is no universal formula for calculating rehearsal needs. However, some general advice can be given:

(1) Work with and prepare each element of the production (soloists, dancers, orchestra, chorus, technical crew) *separately* until the final rehearsals;

(2) Avoid or do very little staging of the whole chorus;

(3) Use *trained* dancers for any dance scenes—the fewer, the more efficient;

(4) Use specialists in all areas, especially for lighting, electronic devices, choreography, set design;

(5) Know well in advance the physical limitations and assets of your performing site.

Directors should also be aware that it may be necessary to obtain special permission and/or pay special fees in order to do a *staged production* of a musical work rather than just a concert performance. There may also be special restrictions in regard to video-taping such a production, and restrictions as to how that video-tape may be used.

Implications for Music Education

Musicians tend to be insular. They are specialists, and the intense demands of their professional training have created curricula in many conservatories and university music departments which are almost entirely focused on music. Degree programs in music education in the United States require a much broader range of academics than do those concentrated on performance only; but in either case, there is little or no formal study or experience in cross-relationships between the arts, except in the area of opera and music theater. Adding a course or two in the integration of the other arts and various technologies with music performance to music degree programs would be ideal. Due to an already over-extended undergraduate curriculum, however, this is not likely to happen in the near future. Therefore, other means must be used to increase of awareness within the whole music profession of the advantages that visual elements can give to performances. This awareness can come through many channels—through various periodicals and journals in our field, through special workshops on the subject at the regional and national conventions of our many professional music organizations, and, finally, through its actual realization. When young musicians participate in performances where special visual elements have been added,

they will, in turn, think in these terms when planning the performances they will later direct in the schools, churches, and public concert halls.

Trained musicians are capable of enjoying the most complex music in an unadorned, abstract form, and they most often prefer this type of performance. However, if the decline of audiences in our concert halls is to be taken seriously, we cannot afford to go on assuming that the general public, and especially the youth of today, is always able and ready to enjoy classical music in such "pure" and abstract terms, and in an atmosphere of nineteenth-century formality. If the addition of visual elements to our performance communicates the spirit of the music more vividly and brings audiences back to the concert halls, then the increased use of visualization must be given important consideration.

Notes

1. *Fantasia*, produced by Walt Disney Studios in 1940, is a cartoon film with animations representing Dukas's *Sorcerer's Apprentice*, part of Beethoven's *Pastoral Symphony*, and excerpts from Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker Suite*. The music was conducted by Leopold Stokowski.

2. Modeste Altschule was the first conductor to give *Prometheus* a color accompaniment (executed on a "colour organ") when he introduced the work in America on March 20, 1915, with the Russian Symphony Orchestra of New York. *The International Encyclopedia of Music and Musicians*, O. Thompson, Editor.

3. School of Church Music, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky. Dr. Sherman's concern that the message of church music was not being communicated to today's television oriented society led her to establish a doctorate degree in Church Music Drama, the first degree of its kind. The program includes the study of liturgical drama, its history, production techniques; also the study of various techniques for creating visual effects, dramatization, movement, and dance for performance and church music.

4. Kinetic—pertaining to motion, action. In musical performance, this refers both to dance and to general stage action and movement. Dr. Sherman's premise is that a "kinesthetic" experience is produced by dance and other physical action on stage; that is, the audience experiences a physical energy, an immediacy and an intimacy which a static or undramatized performance or a televised performance cannot produce.

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