

**EFFECTIVE MARKETING BY CLASSICAL MUSIC PROMOTERS**

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**9 CASE STUDIES IN HIGH LEVEL AUDIENCE GROWTH**

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## CONTENTS

PART I - INTRODUCTION AND HOT TIPS .....	2
PART II - CASES.....	8
THE BENCHMARKING MODEL .....	9
1. Traditional Building of Subscription Series – Östgöta Wind Symphonics.....	10
CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT .....	
2. Traditional CRM – Concerto Copenhagen .....	
3. Web-based CRM – The Royal Danish Theatre .....	
4. Systematic Large Scale CRM – Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra I.....	
5. Group CRM – Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra II.....	
6. Supply and Demand – Die Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen II .....	
EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP ATTITUDES AND PERSPECTIVES .....	
Introduction .....	
7. Entrepreneurship – Die Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen I.....	
8. Crisis Leadership – Vanemuine Theatre .....	
Leadership Character Traits .....	
Arts Marketing and Leadership Attitudes.....	
PART III - CONCLUDING WORDS.....	
Reflections on the Hot Tips.....	
APPENDICES .....	
AWARD WINNING ADVERTISEMENT CAMPAIGN .....	
9. Advertisement Campaigns – Tonhalle Düsseldorf and Düsseldorfer Symphoniker .....	
RESOURCES .....	
Recommended Literature.....	
Associations and Networks .....	
Training .....	
The Team Behind this Report .....	
Acknowledgements .....	

## **PART I - INTRODUCTION AND HOT TIPS**

## INTRODUCTION

### Purpose and target readers of this report

The starting point of this report was (1) to identify classical music concert promoters which had recently experienced very strong growth in audience numbers and (2) to describe the central factors behind this growth. The aim is to identify and spread knowledge on success factors behind effective marketing campaigns in our branch. The hope is that more promoters of fine arts events will be able to increase audience numbers and ticket income with less input of working hours and money.

The primary target readership of the report is board members, executive management as well as marketing managers and personnel of organisations active within the fine arts. Although the report is mainly concerned with classical music and opera the findings are probably easy to adapt to other genres of high class music and the fine arts such as jazz, ballet, modern dance, theatre, circus and museums.

### The cases

I identified more than 25 organizations of interest in different parts of Europe. I took a deeper look into 12 organizations. With the focus on readability I divided the material into 9 case studies on 7 organizations (2 of the organizations are attributed 2 case studies each). 6 of these case studies describe instances of high level audience growth:

- Swedish Östgöta Wind Symphonics started a new subscription series from scratch and reached 1.820 subscribers in 6 seasons
- British Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra<sup>1</sup> reached, among others, 14.000 new attenders and increased its ticket income by over 1.000.000€ in 3 seasons<sup>2</sup>
- German Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie established a sold out concert series with 1.200 subscribers in Bremen in the mid 90's
- Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie established a second concert series in Bremen in 2004 starting out with 1.200 subscriptions and reaching 250 on the waiting list in 2005
- Estonian Vanemuine Theatre (a multi art venue) tripled audience numbers from 67.000 to 162.000 and increased ticket income 2,5 times from 450.000€ to 1.150.000€ in two seasons

In addition

- Danish Concerto Copenhagen increased its audience numbers from an average of 200 to 550 attenders per concert in two seasons

It is only a matter of definition if the CoCo case is simply good or if it is high level audience growth. The study on CoCo is, however, incorporated into the report because of the very obvious connection between their marketing approach and the results.

Two cases are not included because of their high level audience growth but because of their otherwise interesting approaches:

- The Royal Danish Theatre is in the spring of 2006 launching probably the most comprehensive web based CRM-system in our branch
- German Tonhalle Düsseldorf has developed eye catching advertisement campaigns that successfully address new segments without compromising the integrity of their artistic image

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<sup>1</sup> Divided into 2 different case studies in order to increase clarity for the reader.

<sup>2</sup> For clarity the RLPO case is divided into two cases.

## Perspectives and limitations of the research

The starting point of this research was to identify quantitative growth and I took care to ensure that this growth was substantial and that the knowledge was of use to other promoters of fine arts events. For instance, the report doesn't contain cases where a new concert hall or mass concerts were explanatory factors behind the audience growth. Some cases were left out because the number of changes in techniques was so big that it wasn't possible to isolate the most probable explanatory factors. In other cases, the growth was slow and steady over a very long period – in these cases I found that Östgöta Wind Symphonics covers the story more than well. I also left out cases where artistic planning was the key factor behind the audience success. The reason is that I wanted to isolate marketing as an independent profession from programming. My stand is that successful audience development should support the artistic integrity of our fine arts organisations – not the other way around.

Although the starting point of the research is quantitative (numeral increase in audience numbers and/ or ticket income) the majority of the facts in this report are qualitative: after having qualified the cases quantitatively I studied marketing materials and annual reports as well as interviewed the key personalities behind the campaigns. All research is – as we know – to some extent subjective. This is also true of numbers which can be used to support doubtful hypothesis. The question of subjectivity is even stronger in qualitative researches such as this. I therefore find it important to shed some light on the personality behind this research.

Since the mid 80's I have been involved in audience building as artist manager (agent), producer of freelance events and producer of 10 international, independently funded festivals in Austria, Czech Republic, Estonia and Finland. These have mainly been administrated through my company StillArt, founded in 1992. In the late 90's I was the producer at established festivals (Helsinki Festival and Musica nova Helsinki). In the 90's I led a freelance orchestra and at the beginning of the millennium I was General Manager of the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra as well as Head of Planning at Helsingborg Concert House and Symphony Orchestra. This means my perspective when writing this report is rather the General Manager's than the Marketing Manager's – I have been responsible for and involved in marketing the events and often carried out parts of it, but I have never held the formal position as Marketing Manager or Press Officer. Furthermore my academic degree is in philosophy and in addition I have studied the cello, orchestral conducting, history and political science. I am now studying organisational consultancy. This means my training is rather humanistic than administrative not to mention my lack of specific studies in marketing.

My lack of the inside perspective naturally has both positive and negative aspects. I don't possess the technical vocabulary and I had to study a lot of theory from scratch. On the other hand, I am not burdened with the traps of the professionals but can take a perspective "from the outside of the box". I must admit that I feel some pride in the fact that arts marketing professionals have commented that my conclusions in many cases provide a fresh and unorthodox perspective.

## Main findings and how to read this report

If you are in a hurry right now you might want to read the Hot Tips at the beginning of the report and the Concluding Words at the end. Here you will find the condensed message of this report: where to focus in order to quickly increase audience numbers.

It is probably also possible to pick and choose useful tricks and techniques from individual cases that are similar to your own organisation's structure and developmental stage. Then you might want to skim the first paragraph of each case study to quickly identify the most useful organisations.

The report has, however, been structured according to three main discoveries. (1) Useful tricks and techniques are described in the individual case studies. The first chapter on Östgöta Wind Symphonics is the benchmarking model for how to effectively build a subscription series – from scratch or from an already established level. The Östgöta case will therefore be attributed the first

main chapter and is probably worth reading for everyone. (2) I have found that a common denominator for all organisations that have gone through high level and apparently stable audience growth is that they view their audiences as consisting of valuable and mature individuals instead of an indefinable mass of difficult consumers that need to be forced to the concert hall. I have therefore devoted the following chapter to different aspects of CRM – customer relationship management, or the art of relating to your audience in a way that they will not only return but become a valuable part of your organisation. (3) In all cases I found strong leadership that was able to change the organisation's perspectives, goals and routines. I therefore devoted the third main chapter to different aspects of leadership. The theme of leadership is unfortunately burdened with unnecessary mythology and misconceptions. To deepen the understanding of this central factor in audience development I recollect two cases where leadership was clearly the main factor in the audience success. I continue by describing how research defines leadership and how to develop this character trait. And I finish by defining some marketing leadership traps that are important to avoid in our branch.

### **Key insights**

It has been extremely stimulating to work on this research – and stimulating for a vast number of reasons.

First of all I found that in the cases of high level audience growth neither money nor the size of the marketing department were actually the central explanatory parameters. On the contrary, in most cases the organisations were in deep financial and administrative crisis, meaning that they had extremely small resources at hand when starting the change process. Instead, these organisations started to develop the humanistic values and human resources that were and had always been available to the organisation: leadership, creativity, entrepreneurship, authenticity, enthusiasm, values, goals, relationships, networks, contacts... So first of all I find it stimulating to be able to dispel the myth that increased audience numbers is dependent on external resources such as money and more marketing staff.

I found that values were often important in these cases. In some (such as the young orchestras Concerto Copenhagen and Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie) the value foundation was very obvious, strong and founded in the artistic content. In older organisations the artistic values are dustier and derive from traditions that are sometimes centuries old – not from values that make the people in the organisations tick today. In these organisations someone started to cultivate personal values, when it came to structural matters or marketing. These people had the courage to allow themselves to become vulnerable and didn't fear criticism and failures but were able to drive a change process founded on a solid base.

As a humanist I find it very comforting that all the organisations that went through high level audience growth focused on some aspects of CRM. This as a contrast to investing heavily into diffuse and expensive marketing such as advertisement campaigns with the aim to convert anyone and everyone into attending the event. The reason I find this comforting is that we obviously do not need to participate in the accelerating race of increased commercialisation and technocratisation of our societies, but that we in promoting our activities can instead focus on satisfying one of our most basic human needs: to authentically relate to and interact with our fellow human beings.

According to an article I read recently, CRM and loyalty programmes are a strong trend among commercial marketing professionals and one of the most attended courses in Business Schools. The idea is to develop customer loyalty and frequency and the reason is that this marketing tool has proved to be by far the most resource effective. It is therefore very exciting to discover that in classical music we have actually cultivated loyalty programmes for centuries: the creation of subscription series is the administrative and financial foundation for icons such as Musikverein and the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, as well as for tens of thousands of arts institutions around the globe. Contrary to what most people say in our branch today, I believe subscriptions and other loyalty

programmes will strongly grow in importance and find new expressions and adaptations over the decades to come. I trust this report will be part of this re-awakening.

As stated above, I wanted to focus on high level audience growth that was independent of artistic planning. It is stimulating to be able to write that, in almost all cases included, the success of the marketing department has been able to support the artistic integrity of the institution. Contrary to what is often feared and accused, truly successful marketing of the arts isn't connected with commercialisation and artistic prostitution but supports the independence and integrity of the artistic endeavour.

Following from this, marketing can be a very strong starting point for a positive spiral of growth in the artistic organisation. Successful marketing campaigns will not only fill the halls and bring money. Much more importantly, successful marketing is a vehicle that independently of the current artistic status of the organisation

- sets free creativity in the organisation
- triggers value discussions within the organisations
- ensures the artistic integrity of the organisation
- deepens the relationship with active and passive audience segments
- strengthens the social, political and financial backing for the organisation
- creates administrative stability and possibilities for long term strategic planning
- diminishes long term stress and related personal and social illness
- makes it possible for the arts to take a more active and constructive role in society

With this in mind it is obvious that marketing can be a key strategic tool to a positive development of our fine arts institutions and our society. I hope this report will be helpful in gaining a stronger trust in our power to influence our future.

In Helsingborg, Easter 2006

Magnus Still  
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The Hot Tips on the next page build on the discoveries in the research underlying this report.

They will be developed further in the chapter Concluding Words and you will find them exemplified throughout the report.

## **HOT TIPS**

1. UNCOVER VALUES
2. DEVELOP AUDIENCE RELATIONSHIPS
3. DEVELOP YOUR DATABASE
4. SEGMENT AUDIENCES & COMMUNICATION
5. CALCULATE YOUR AUDIENCE NEED AND POTENTIAL
6. CULTIVATE YOUR NETWORKS
7. MEASURE YOUR EFFORTS
8. SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCES
9. DEEPEN YOUR PERSONAL LEADERSHIP
10. SLOW DOWN



## **PART II - CASES**

## THE BENCHMARKING MODEL

## 1. TRADITIONAL BUILDING OF SUBSCRIPTION SERIES - ÖSTGÖTA WIND SYMPHONICS

### 1.1. The core

In the season of 1993/94 the Östgöta Wind Symphonics introduced their first subscription series. Six seasons later they had 1.820 subscribers. This is their story as told by Claes Rydberg, General Manager 1991-1999.

	93/94	94/95	95/96	96/97	97/98	98/99	Total capacity, approximately
Large subscription	350	600	800	1.050	1.000	1.000	1.100
Small subscription					450	600	1.100
Motala subscription	250*	250*	250*	250*	250*	250*	
<b>TOTAL</b>	600	850	1.050	1.300	1.700	1.850	

\* Approximate and very stable numbers throughout the period.

In the 1998/99 season, the 1.600 Linköping subscriptions revenue was 650.000SEK (ca 72.000€ with exchange rate 1€ = 9SEK). This gives an average subscription price of 406SEK (45€) for 4-6 concerts/ subscription series.

### 1.2. The story

#### Background

*Organisation.* Östgöta Wind Symphonics' (Östgöta Blåsarsymfoniker) history is very typical for Swedish regional ensembles. Its origins are in the military, it was turned into a locally based, state funded, predominantly civil, professional wind orchestra in the 1970's. From the mid 1980's on, the Swedish state diminished its support and the region (Östergötlands läns landsting) reluctantly had to make a decision whether to take responsibility for the organisation or not. At the same time, the organisation wasn't just an orchestra any more. It also was given responsibilities such as "to give all inhabitants of the region regardless of economic, geographical, occupational or social thresholds access to the regional music life". Thus Östgöta Wind Symphonics became a sub-organisation to Östgötamusiken which had 10 different sub-strategies to achieve the general goal quoted above.

In 1991 the organisation consisted of 34 persons: 25 musicians and 9 administrators. They also hired a substantial number of freelance musicians.

The musicians formed the Östgöta Wind Symphonics as well as several smaller ensembles in different genres. They gave public indoor and outdoor concerts but the majority of the activities consisted of closed concerts in schools, homes for elderly people etc. Östgötamusiken also engaged freelance musicians and ensembles for both public and closed concerts in different genres of art music.

The showcase was, however, the public concerts of Östgöta Wind Symphonics in the concert hall Linköping Konsert&Kongress. The 6 annual concerts normally had 100-150 attenders in an 1100+ seat modern hall.

*Claes Rydberg* joined the organisation as General Manager in 1991. His background was both in classical music and administration. He has studied double bass as well as political sciences (among the subjects, marketing). He has been double bass player in Trondheim Symphony Orchestra as well as a head master of music schools.

When interviewing Claes Rydberg in 2005, I get the impression of a systematic, calm and goal oriented man with an easy overview and an eye for the essential. I also easily find trust in him and feel easy and comfortable in his company. If these strong characteristics of a leader were present already in

1991, they must have been a significant factor in the success of the Östgöta Wind Symphonic's creation of a large subscription base.

### Starting point

When Claes Rydberg joined as General Manager of the Östgöta Wind Symphonics, the stage was certainly not set for success – more likely for the opposite: the state cut its subsidies, the region wasn't willing to take over the costs, the morale of the personnel wasn't very high and the board of the organisation didn't have very strong trust in the staff.

With the cuts in state funds, the first significant task for the new General Manager was to fire 9 people in 1992. This was mainly done among administrative personnel. The organisation was left with 19 musicians and 4 administrators. In the reorganisation, there were also somewhat more resources left for hiring freelance musicians and when the ensemble performed as Östgöta Wind Symphonics there were 25-40 musicians on stage.

### Strategic decisions

With Claes Rydberg as the driving force, Östgötamusiken took the following main decisions:

1. To strengthen the political and public trust in the orchestra they
  - A. heavily increased the amount of annual working hours for the musicians. According to Claes Rydberg, this decision was implemented despite heavy protests from the target personnel.
  - B. artistically concentrated efforts to two areas of activities
    - a. so called internal concert (schools, hospitals)
    - b. the public concerts of Östgöta Wind Symphonics (giving up the public chamber ensemble concerts)
  - C. emphasized artistic quality and status by
    - a. performing in tuxedo during public concerts
    - b. emphasizing the international chief conductor Arie van Beek
    - c. (almost) only play original wind orchestra music with Östgöta Wind Symphonics
    - d. rather identify Östgöta Wind Symphonics with the chamber music and symphonic tradition than with the wind orchestra or brass band tradition
2. To support the first goal, they decided to create a Subscription Series as the showcase concerts in Linköping Konsert&Kongress as well as in the neighbouring city Motala's Concert hall.

### Strategic decision about the Subscription Series

There were several reasons why launching a Subscription Series could have been regarded as troublesome

- there were no established traditions for subscriptions in the city / region
- did the orchestra perform with high enough quality?
- did the organisation have the knowledge of how to create such a project?
- they tested subscriptions on a small scale in 1992-93 and not even with the famous Swedish conductor Sixten Ehrling did they attract any considerable numbers of attenders
- etc

To meet these challenges, Claes Rydberg and the organisation set out with the following strategy for the Subscription Series

- focus heavily on the creation of the Subscription Series (as opposed to other concerts)
- perform (almost) exclusively with original music written for wind orchestra
- the programme committee was to give the marketing department one selling point (e.g.: soloist, composer, composition – “Conductors don't sell in Sweden”) for each concert which was emphasized in all promotions

- dress code at the concert was “symphonic tuxedo” in order to create a noble atmosphere
- focus on the concert as an audience experience much larger than only the performance of the music (i.e. starting with the advertisement and ticket sales and ending at the wardrobe and the “coffee table discussions” the days after)
- create and repeat a framework for the concert that represented stability and quality
  - marketing, pre-concert and intermission activities, welcoming words from the General Manager, uniform dressing, lights in the hall
  - this gave space for free artistic planning
- the focus was to fill the hall with concert attenders, not primarily to raise money
- heavy marketing emphasis (in relation to the tradition of the orchestra)
  - emphasis on work input as opposed to financial input
  - use every means they could invent because they didn’t know what gave results

### Practical preparations for Season 1

#### Structure of the Subscription Series

- The Subscription Series consisted of 6 concerts per season in Linköping Konsert&Kongress
- Since Östgötamusiken has responsibility for the whole region and not only for the capital Linköping, the Linköping concerts were divided into two parallel series only differing in pricing to compensate for travel costs: Linköping Subscriptions and Region Subscriptions (Länsabonnemang)
- In addition, the whole Subscription Series was repeated in neighbouring city Motala. Since these subscriptions were promoted by a local organiser and didn’t grow in size, the focus of the story will be on the Linköping subscriptions.

#### Advertising

- They changed the professional advertising bureau who designed their posters and season programme
- They made an agreement with the local newspaper
  - heavy campaign in the spring of 1993 promoting the 1993/94 subscriptions
  - 7-8 multi colour 1/3 page newspaper ads Tuesdays and Saturdays (May-June, most intensely in May)
  - paid 50.000SEK (appr 5.500€) for ads worth 100.000SEK

#### Communication

- There was a database created of the current and prospective attenders. The names in the database were automatically members of the Club “Friends of the orchestra”. Every subscriber was automatically part of both the database and the Friends.
- The orchestra took care of the sales to subscribers themselves instead of using the box office of the concert hall, partly in order to keep control - partly to be able to create direct communication between attender and orchestra

#### Incentives

- The ticket costs were already very low and subscription prices still heavily discounted. This was debated, but since the focus was to get as many subscribers as possible and the organisation was anyway heavily subsidized, this was the conclusion.
- A bonus system for tickets was created
  - 1.000 points for a subscription concert, 6.000 points for the whole subscription series, 5.00 points for other concerts
  - 6000 points = t-shirt, towel and the like (all with consistent design to create a kit), 9.000 additional points = cd, 12.000 points (maximum) = free subscription next year
  - The bonuses couldn’t be transferred from season to season

## Results in Season 1

As already stated, concerts in Linköping Konsert&Kongress used to have 100-150 attenders. The orchestra had tried out a Subscription Series already in 1992-93 – without any considerable result. When launching the 1993-94 planned Subscription Series Östgöta Wind Symphonics reached 350 subscribers in Linköping Konsert&Kongress and 250 in Motala.

This means they approximately doubled the number of concert attenders in Linköping which was a promising beginning but in relation to the 1.100 available seats in the hall – not very impressive. I suspect there were a lot of questions in the air around Christmas time 1993 considering recent cutback in personnel, heavier work duty for musicians, a big effort in both time and money to get the subscription series started and “only” 350 subscribing attenders in the 1.100 seat hall. Claes Rydberg also confirms that all this was heavy work.

## Development during Season 1

### Concept of the concert

- For the attender, the concert doesn't start with the up beat of the conductor, but long before
- The musicians rehearsed stage performance
- The administration organised a Welcome! beginning on entering the house e.g.:
  - A Youth Orchestra played entrance music (bringing parents to the concert and into the database!)
  - When Jorma Panula conducted, Finnish chocolate manufacturer gave tasters or with a German programme Sauerkraut was served
- Even the early promotion of the Subscription Series was part of the concert concept: “We are serious, playing serious music and we want to share this with you!”

### Communication

- Letter from the General Manager before each concert
- Short greeting from the General Manager before each concert
- The first greeting of the year included a proposal to immediately make friends with the neighbour (since they were anyway going to meet 6 times during the season)
- Communication and soft provocation to make contact with fellow attenders was apparently also strong factor in the Concert Concept

## Preparing for Season 2

Fear: diminishing numbers of subscriptions

Decision:

- at least same amount of promotion
- same lay out

(I believe this is a point where most subscription planners make serious mistakes. Instead of continuing a promising trend and without in depth analysis of and decisions on new strategies, most organisers either diminish promotion to save money or start experimenting wildly. In the case of Östgöta Wind Symphonics, simply compare the Linköping and Motala Series. Also, experiments are good – but take care that you create quantitative follow up so that you can measure the impact of the different techniques!)

## Result in Season 2:

Linköping: 600 subscribers

Motala: 250 subscribers

These numbers already mark a clear success of Östgöta Wind Symphonics.

They decide to continue with the same efforts and with the same resources.

### Result in Season 3:

Linköping: 800 subscribers

Motala: 250 subscribers

I don't think anybody can doubt the professionalism of Östgöta Wind Symphonics marketing at this stage. And what we see aren't actually any great technical tricks or immense financial investments. What I see is mainly strong determination and normal imagination coupled with very strong systematic work and discipline and a will not to stop even with good results but to go for great results. Please continue reading!

### Preparations for Season 4:

The subscribers were turned into sales people of the orchestra's Linköping subscriptions through the following incentives:

- 2 new subscribers gave 50% discount on their own subscription
- 4 new subscribers gave 100% discount on their own subscription

(A very typical situation was that e.g. the 5 persons divided the discount between them so that everybody paid 80% of the price – no reason for the orchestra to complain about this solution.)

Claes Rydberg sees this as a very effective way of recruiting new subscribers. This totally goes in line with most marketing theory (grounded in systematic observations): the most effective marketing is bringing back the customer by delivery of a good experience, the second best is the recommendation by a trusted person – much more cost and time effective than money put into advertisements or research.

It might be argued that the orchestra "gave away" tickets and that this can only be done in highly subsidized organisations. I would argue as follows: If you have an organisation relying heavily on private money (including ticket income) and you have 800 subscribers in a hall that with 1.100 you anyhow lose ticket income for 300 tickets x 6 concerts. In addition, the general trend is that 80-90% renew their subscriptions. If you fill those 300 empty seats with free subscriptions in season 4, you will have a 100% subscription income on 880-990 (80-90% renewals) subscriptions the following season. Not counting the image surplus from the message "Sold out!" and sales potential that is created by a possible Subscription waiting list.

### Results in Season 4:

Linköping: 1.050 subscribers (out of 1.100 seats) – practically sold out

Motala: 250 subscribers – no change over several seasons

To create a sold out Subscription Series in a hall taking 1.100 concert goers in a middle sized Nordic town in 4 seasons are by most measures a true success story. And please note once more – Östgöta Wind Symphonics and Claes Rydberg didn't use any unknown marketing techniques or any excessive amounts of money. Also, the situation wasn't extremely favourable: the genre is (to me) marginal, the brand (the reputation of the orchestra) was weak, the standard of the performance didn't exceed normal, the city wasn't exceptionally big, there wasn't a tradition for subscriptions... And interestingly enough: equivalent, quite normal and well established techniques have been used in very different cities and countries with excellent results!

### Development during Season 4

With almost sold out houses, there was of course a demand for single tickets created. To meet this demand, the orchestra created a "Last minute tickets" –system selling seats of subscribers that hadn't arrived a couple of minutes before the entering of the conductor.

There are different philosophies for pricing with Last minute tickets: Some organisers only give them to young people. Some organisers (mostly opera houses in capitals) deliberately reserve some tickets for tourists and start selling them e.g. 2 hours before the performance. Östgöta Wind Symphonics gave away these tickets. Others charge a reduced price equivalent to a standard money bill (e.g. 5€).

I want to emphasize that it is unnecessary to be afraid of filled halls. Many organisers and politicians want to stop successful subscription campaigns far too early because of the fear of using too much money or getting bad feed back. It is good for your organisations reputation if your event is sold out! And when this happens you do whatever you can do to help the people without a ticket to find a seat! And of course you also inform these people that you would very much like them to sign up on the waiting list for subscribers, accompanied with a short explanation of how very important loyal concert attenders are to the stability and development of your ensemble.

### Preparation for Season 5

The sold out houses of course raised the question of how to continue. It is always a risk to start a new series with no subscriptions sold in advance. For Östgöta Wind Symphonics, the friends club had become a very important marketing and communications vehicle and a short check with them assured the management to open up a new subscription series.

#### General strategy

- repeat of the Large series, but
- new packaging: “soft and smooth beginning of the weekend”
  - 4 concerts per season
  - Friday night
  - Earlier in the evening (19:00 instead of 19:30)
  - Soft lights
  - New (mobile) restaurant with “Bistro winds” playing
  - Ending by 21:00

In addition the orchestra introduced a bonus concert for all orchestra friends (regardless of Series)

- In August to sell last subscriptions
- Without intermission
- Popular music
- Presentations
- The concert was repeated twice in the same day

### Results in Season 5

Linköping Large: 1000 subscriptions

Linköping Small: 450 subscriptions

Motala: 250 subscriptions

### Results in Season 6

Linköping Large: 1000 subscriptions

Linköping Small: 600 subscriptions

Motala: 250 subscriptions

### Plans for the future

Claes Rydberg left Östgötamusiken in the middle of the sixth season for a position as Cultural Director of Jönköping City and Managing Director for Jönköping’s Concert Hall. It is obvious that with this trend, also the small Linköping Subscription Series would have been filled within a couple of



seasons. So what were the main plans that Claes Rydberg would have continued with if he had stayed?

Claes Rydberg tells that he already had discussions with Nybrokajen 11, a concert hall in Stockholm that is currently run by Rikskonserten and today has a very vast number of concerts each season. Linköping isn't very far from Stockholm and to repeat the Linköping Subscription Series in Stockholm wouldn't have been a logistic problem. The name of the series would have been Östgöta Subscriptions and the target audience people from the region that had moved to the capital.

After the reduction of the personnel in 1993 the orchestra took the strategic decision to focus on internal and symphonic concerts and to discard chamber music concerts. With stronger artistic staff and with the support from the large group of friends, Claes Rydberg now planned to start a chamber music subscription series.

### Claes Rydberg looking back

When I ask Claes Rydberg how it was to create this success, the immediate response is "Tough!"

As stated in the beginning, he arrived to an organisation in crisis. The first task was to fire personnel. And in this situation create an atmosphere of looking forward and cooperating. There were problems within the personnel and, in addition, there wasn't any strong trust from the political board.

The budget for creating the Subscription Series was, according to Claes Rydberg, very strict and the only actual extravagancy was the €5.500 (in 1993 money) invested in the newspaper advertisements.

### Achievements

Commenting on achievements, Claes Rydberg's first response is the recognition the orchestra had established. This was proven in 1996 as the state cut subsidies again. This time, the trust from the board of regional politicians had been established and the region – as one of the first ones in Sweden – filled the gap in the budget. Creating a loyal and supportive audience – i.e. 1.820 subscriptions – was an important aspect of this recognition.

Claes Rydberg also emphasizes the budget part of the subscriptions. In the 6<sup>th</sup> season (1998/99), the annual income from the subscriptions was 650.000SEK (72.000€ with today's exchange rate). Since Östgötamusiken was a separate entity owned by the region, they were allowed to accumulate the money. When Claes Rydberg left, Östgötamusiken had 5.000.000SEK (550.000€) in reserves. With these reserves, long-term planning with projects demanding risk was made much easier than when only trusting the political annual budget: cd:s, tours, engaging artists and the Subscription Series in Stockholm.

### **1.3. Summary of success points**

In the interview with Claes Rydberg, he emphasizes the following elements of the campaigns:

- the programme committee's only commitment towards the marketing was to create 1 selling point for each concert
- free brainstorming for all available marketing ideas
- heavy newspaper campaigns ("Newspaper ads are the only ones that bring customers")
- incentives to the subscribers
  - discounts as compared to single tickets
  - bonus systems
  - discounts for bringing in new subscribers
- the concert concept from the attendee's view is much broader than the performance in itself
- establishing communication with and within the audience
  - subscribers (part of Friends of the orchestra = database)
  - selling the subscriptions from the orchestra

- letter home before each concert
  - greeting from the stage
- focusing on some few developmental points in the organisation from which subscriptions was one
- making the Small Subscription Series had a distinct profile contrasting the Large

In addition, I am impressed with

- the crisis situation from which the project started
- no great innovations in marketing ideas, but
  - right decisions with right timing
  - staying with winning concepts
- no larger investments in marketing
- no new administrative personnel (except from Claes Rydberg himself)
- leadership qualities, including
  - focus
  - overview
  - perspective
  - consistency
  - urge to go from good to great achievements

What I see is an organisation and a leader that really did focus on establishing an audience, and had the knowledge, trust and discipline to concentrate on well established, simple, general truths of marketing.

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