

Optimization of Operational Strategies for Classical Piano Concerts in China

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ABSTRACT

In the context of cultural industry development and new media innovation, the classical piano concert serves as a core carrier for the dissemination of classical music. Its operational quality directly impacts the transmission of artistic value and the sustainable development of the market. Grounded in art management theory and the characteristics of classical piano art, this paper reviews the current status of the classical piano concert market in China, characterized by market expansion, enriched forms, broadened channels, and audience growth. However, several issues persist, including topic homogenization, insufficient audience cultivation, single promotional methods, inadequate cost and risk management, and weak resource integration and industry chain synergy. By analyzing outstanding domestic and international case studies and extracting successful experiences, this study proposes optimization strategies across five dimensions: precise topic selection and form innovation, improvement of the audience cultivation system, innovative promotion and brand shaping, establishment of sound cost and risk management mechanisms, and the strengthening of resource integration and industry chain synergy. These strategies aim to provide practical guidance for relevant stakeholders, promoting the efficient dissemination of classical piano art and the high-quality development of the market.

Keywords: Classical piano concert; Audience cultivation; Brand shaping

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background and Significance

Classical music is a treasure of human civilization that carries a profound historical and cultural heritage. Entering the new media era, the dissemination and development of classical music face

new opportunities and challenges^[1]. Classical piano concerts serve as a crucial platform for direct dialogue between classical music and its audience. Driven by the continuous upgrade in cultural consumption demand among Chinese residents, the classical music market has demonstrated a steady growth trajectory. The number of classical piano concerts is increasing annually, and the participating entities have diversified to include professional art academies, performance brokerage companies, and cultural tourism enterprises. However, despite this market prosperity, several operational challenges have surfaced. Some concerts lack innovation in topic selection, frequently repeating classic repertoires and failing to meet the diverse aesthetic needs of audiences. Moreover, the audience demographic is predominantly composed of middle-aged and elderly music enthusiasts or professional learners, while the participation rate among younger demographics remains low, indicating a trend toward audience solidification. Promotional efforts heavily rely on traditional offline channels with limited online strategies, and inadequate cost control and risk management mechanisms have led to operational dilemmas, such as poor box office performance and cost overruns.

The discipline of art management, an interdisciplinary field integrating art and management, focuses on the planning, organization, operation, and promotion of artistic activities to achieve a unity of artistic and market values. Furthermore, the application of digital technology in the cultural industry presents broad prospects and profound impacts, posing new requirements for art managers^[2]. Applying art management theories and methods to the operational practices of classical piano concerts can effectively address these existing issues and enhance operational quality and efficiency. From a theoretical perspective, this integration enriches the research outcomes of the art management discipline in specific artistic fields, broadens the interdisciplinary perspective of classical music research, and constructs a systematic operational framework that provides a reference for future academic studies. Practically, proposing feasible optimization strategies and development paths offers essential guidance for relevant stakeholders, helping them improve operational efficiency, enhance market competitiveness, and drive the sustainable development of China's classical music market.

1.2 Literature Review

Domestic research on classical piano concerts initially adopted a musicological perspective, primarily focusing on repertoire analysis, playing techniques, and artist studies^[3-5]. Scholars systematically analyzed the structure, harmony, and style of core repertoires, such as those by Bach and Beethoven^[3], and explored the artistic interpretations of classical composers^[4-5]. With the rise of the cultural industry and the discipline of art management, domestic scholars began to shift their attention to the operational aspects of concerts. However, these studies remain relatively fragmented, often exploring single operational stages. For instance, some researchers have analyzed market-oriented promotion strategies, advocating for online-offline integration to

expand young audiences^[6], while others have focused on cost budgeting and risk management^[7], or evaluated the creative promotion of specific classical music education cases^[8]. Consequently, domestic research has not yet formed a systematic theoretical framework for the full-process operation of classical piano concerts, and there is a lack of in-depth exploration regarding the new challenges emerging in the current market environment^[8].

In contrast, the foreign classical music market is highly mature, and the earlier development of art management has resulted in more systematic and in-depth research on concert operations. International scholars have conducted extensive quantitative analyses and economic modeling on market demand, ticket pricing, and star artist invitation strategies^[9]. Regarding audience analysis and consumption behavior, researchers have utilized qualitative studies to explore youth-oriented innovations and interdisciplinary concert formats to address audience attrition^[10]. Furthermore, foreign scholars emphasize targeted audience cultivation strategies based on distinct demographic characteristics and listening theories^[11-13]. They also deeply investigate brand management, focusing on brand positioning and extension in the global market^[14], as well as the effective integration of artists, venues, funding, and media resources in the digital age^[15].

While these international findings offer valuable insights, they cannot be entirely applied to China's operational practices due to significant differences in market environments, cultural backgrounds, and audience characteristics. Overall, domestic research lacks systematicity, whereas foreign research struggles to align perfectly with China's specific market realities. Therefore, this paper utilizes art management theory to comprehensively analyze the full-process operations of classical piano concerts, identifying existing problems and proposing localized optimization strategies based on successful domestic and international cases to bridge these research gaps.

2. Results

2.1 Core Concepts and Theoretical Basis

The operation of classical piano concerts is fundamentally grounded in several core theories within the discipline of art management. Classical piano concerts serve as a vital medium for popularizing classical music, requiring a delicate balance between profound artistic heritage and modern presentation techniques^[16]. Guided by audience-centric theory, the ultimate goal of dissemination activities is to meet the evolving demands of the audience, making demographic and aesthetic analyses crucial for operational planning and audience satisfaction. Furthermore, brand management theory emphasizes the necessity of establishing clear positioning and unique brand images to enhance market competitiveness and foster audience loyalty over time. Lastly, resource integration theory dictates that successful operations must efficiently coordinate diverse

elements—such as artists, venues, funding, and media—to optimize resource allocation and ensure high-quality executions.

2.2 Current Operational Status and Existing Problems

The classical piano concert market in China has demonstrated substantial growth in recent years. Between 2018 and 2023, performance volumes increased from under 2,000 to over 4,000, while the market scale expanded from less than 1 billion to over 2.5 billion RMB. Operational entities have diversified, performance forms have enriched to include ensembles and cross-border fusions, and promotional channels increasingly integrate online and offline platforms. Notably, the audience demographic is actively expanding; the proportion of young attendees under the age of 30 reached 35% in 2023, representing a 15% increase compared to 2018. Despite this prosperity, significant operational challenges persist. Planners often lack precise positioning, leading to severe topic homogenization that relies heavily on repetitive classic masterpieces, which inevitably induces aesthetic fatigue and diminishes box-office returns. Moreover, the audience cultivation system remains imperfect, failing to effectively convert young demographics due to inadequate musical popularization and suboptimal viewing experiences. Promotional strategies are predominantly traditional and single-channeled, reflecting a weak capacity for brand shaping and leaving audiences without memorable brand associations. Compounding these issues are flawed cost control and risk management mechanisms, characterized by frequent overspending on high-priced artists or unoptimized venues, alongside a lack of contingency plans for emergencies. Finally, insufficient resource integration and weak synergy across the industry chain cause severe disconnects between planning, promotion, and execution phases, significantly lowering overall operational efficiency.

2.3 Case Studies of Classical Piano Concert Operations

An analysis of successful operational models provides valuable empirical insights for addressing these challenges. Domestically, the "Lanzhou International Piano Art Week" exemplifies effective regional brand building and resource utilization. Over six editions, it has hosted 30 concerts and over 1,000 masterclasses by adopting a dual-track positioning that strategically balances high-end professional performances with mass-inclusive educational events^[17]. This case demonstrates the efficacy of diversifying topics to include Chinese national styles, employing viral online-offline promotional strategies with rare guest appearances, and efficiently integrating resources across government, enterprise, and association sectors. Internationally, the "International Piano Master Series Concerts" at the Golden Hall in Vienna represents a global benchmark for brand operation. Since its inception in 1980, it has maintained extreme artistic quality by strictly screening top-tier artists and selecting classic repertoires. Its sustained success is underpinned by robust global brand shaping, exceptional venue services that guarantee

premium viewing experiences, precise cultivation of high-end and professional audiences, and mature risk and cost management mechanisms supported by stable, long-term sponsorships. A notable recent example is the "Rising Stars" concert series, which has been successfully held for four consecutive years, demonstrating the venue's strong box-office appeal for Chinese artists^[18].

2.4 Optimization Strategies and Conclusion

To address existing operational deficiencies, this study proposes a multidimensional optimization framework based on art management principles. First, operators must achieve precise topic positioning by deeply analyzing market demands and incorporating innovative elements—such as Chinese national styles, modern technological fusions, and multimedia integrations—to differentiate their offerings and enrich the viewing experience^[19]. Second, perfecting the audience cultivation system is imperative. This involves strengthening classical music popularization through community events, targeting young audiences via interactive social media campaigns and accessible ticket pricing, and building a comprehensive membership system to foster long-term brand loyalty^[20-21]. Third, the promotional paradigm must shift toward a seamlessly integrated online-offline system that leverages digital platforms and live-streaming to build highly recognizable and competitive concert brands. Fourth, establishing scientific cost control and robust risk management mechanisms is critical; operators should optimize budgets, negotiate long-term partnerships, and formulate detailed contingency plans for potential disruptions. Finally, strengthening resource integration and industry chain synergy is essential to ensure seamless collaboration across planning, marketing, and execution stages. In conclusion, by implementing these targeted strategies, stakeholders can successfully resolve current operational bottlenecks, significantly enhancing the market competitiveness and facilitating the extensive dissemination of classical piano art in China.

3. Discussion

To address the existing operational bottlenecks in China's classical piano concert market, stakeholders must implement multidimensional optimization strategies grounded in art management principles. First, operators must achieve precise topic positioning and innovate performance forms to satisfy diverse aesthetic demands. By utilizing market research methods inherent in art management, operators can deeply analyze the demand characteristics of different audience groups to clarify topic positioning. This involves screening performance repertoires with market potential based on current trends, while explicitly tapping into the artistic value of Chinese national style piano works and excellent modern compositions to enhance the concert's uniqueness and core competitiveness^[19]. Furthermore, operators should break through the limitations of traditional performance formats to enrich the audience's viewing experience. Integrating multimedia technologies—such as lighting, imagery, and dance—can create

immersive concert environments, while cross-border performances, such as piano ensembles and fusions with traditional Chinese instruments, can significantly expand the expressive dimensions of classical piano art.

Equally critical is the perfection of the audience cultivation system to expand the demographic base, particularly among younger generations. Operators should collaborate with art academies, concert halls, and related institutions to strengthen classical music popularization through masterclasses, music lectures, and community events, thereby elevating the general audience's musical literacy^[20]. Recognizing that young audiences represent a vital potential growth point, operators must formulate targeted promotional strategies tailored to their preferences. This includes leveraging youth-oriented social media platforms like TikTok, Kuaishou, and Bilibili to disseminate innovative content—such as performance clips and behind-the-scenes stories—and offering student discounts through partnerships with university music clubs to lower the viewing threshold^[21]. Additionally, constructing a robust membership system that provides exclusive benefits and maintains active communication channels is essential for cultivating a stable and loyal audience base .

To further enhance market competitiveness, traditional promotional paradigms must evolve into a comprehensive online and offline integrated dissemination system . Offline efforts should target professional venues and high-end commercial districts while collaborating with mainstream media for in-depth reporting. Simultaneously, online strategies must utilize social media, online ticketing, and live-streaming platforms to maximize coverage and facilitate convenient access. These promotional efforts must be intrinsically linked to strong brand shaping. Operators should establish distinctive concert brands by clarifying brand core values, designing recognizable visual identities, and extending brand value through derivative products such as piano teaching materials, performance albums, and cultural merchandise.

Finally, sustainable operations necessitate the establishment of scientific cost and risk management mechanisms alongside enhanced resource integration. Scientific cost control requires formulating detailed budgets, optimizing cost structures to prevent overspending on high-priced artists, and strictly monitoring expenditures throughout the operational process^[7]. Concurrently, operators must build comprehensive risk management frameworks to systematically identify, evaluate, and develop contingency plans for potential disruptions, such as artist absences or equipment failures^[7]. Beyond risk mitigation, securing operational quality relies on the effective integration of core resources, including building stable databases of excellent artists, matching appropriate venues, and diversifying funding channels through sponsorships and government cultural subsidies . Ultimately, strengthening industry chain synergy by establishing efficient communication mechanisms across planning, promotion, ticketing, and execution phases will ensure seamless collaboration and elevate the overall

operational efficiency of the classical piano concert market .

4. Conclusion

Through a comprehensive analysis of the current operational status of classical piano concerts in China, this study identifies several prominent issues, including severe topic homogenization, an imperfect audience cultivation system, single promotional modes, inadequate cost and risk management mechanisms, and insufficient resource integration capabilities. By examining outstanding domestic and international operational cases, key successful experiences have been extracted, such as precise brand positioning, diversified performance forms, comprehensive promotional strategies, perfect audience cultivation systems, efficient resource integration, and mature cost and risk management. Based on these findings, this paper proposes operational optimization strategies from the perspective of art management. Specifically, stakeholders must accurately position topics and innovate performance forms to meet diverse aesthetic demands. Furthermore, it is essential to perfect the audience cultivation system to expand the demographic base and achieve sustainable market development, innovate promotional models to strengthen brand shaping and enhance market competitiveness, and establish sound cost and risk management mechanisms to improve overall operational efficiency. Strengthening resource integration will also enhance synergy across the industry chain. The implementation of these strategies will effectively address current operational bottlenecks, improve operational quality and efficiency, and promote the extensive dissemination and development of classical piano art. Looking forward, as the cultural industry flourishes and internet technologies continuously innovate, the classical piano concert market faces new opportunities and challenges. Future research should broaden its perspective by integrating emerging trends such as the digital economy and cultural-tourism integration, thereby exploring the digital operational models and cultural-tourism integrated developmental paths for classical piano concerts.

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Author contributions

Jingdan Lou: Writing—original draft, methodology, investigation, and formal analysis. **Xiao Li:** Formal analysis. **Ketao Lin:** Conceptualization, funding acquisition, methodology, project administration, supervision, writing – review & editing.

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