

Article

Business Innovation in Orchestra Organizations Supported by Digital Technologies: The Orchestra Mobile Case Study

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Abstract: In an attempt to deal with challenges such as increased competition, the global economic crisis, and the pandemic crisis, cultural organizations increasingly tend to adopt business theories and tools. The present paper addresses this issue in an industry that is not very frequently discussed, that of orchestra, using Orchestra Mobile as the case study. Based on literature review and interviews, and with reference to some of the latest, innovative approaches to management and strategy supported by digital technologies, the paper examines how this new entry in the industry (in 2010): (i) not attached to a concert hall (and, therefore, dependent on others) and with no state funding, survived against established organizations of global recognition, who were attached to prestigious concert halls, and enjoyed strong funding on the part of the state; (ii) with no external support, succeeded within the peak of the global economic crisis; (iii) decided long before the pandemic crisis to operate mostly at a distance, based on geographically dispersed members and collaborators; and, more importantly, (iv) challenged the rules of an industry that were formed in the 18th and 19th centuries and have not been (substantially) challenged ever since. The conclusions on the complex relationship of “sustainability-innovation-digital technologies” could be of benefit to a wide range of cultural organizations and entrepreneurs.

Keywords: cultural and creative industries; music industry; orchestra organizations; business innovation; strategic innovation; crisis; digital entrepreneurship; Orchestra Mobile; Sonia Theodoridou; Thodoris Orfanidis



Citation: Poullos, I.; Kamperou, E. Business Innovation in Orchestra Organizations Supported by Digital Technologies: The Orchestra Mobile Case Study. *Sustainability* **2022**, *14*, 3715. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14073715>

Academic Editors: Adamantia Pateli and Naoum Mylonas

Received: 31 January 2022

Accepted: 11 March 2022

Published: 22 March 2022

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1. Introduction

Organizations operating in the cultural and creative industries, especially within the last few decades, face the following key challenges: (i) an increased competition, which creates the need to differentiate one from another; (ii) the global economic crisis, which forces them to cut down on expenses in an attempt to become financially sustainable; and (iii) the pandemic crisis, which poses the problems of how the personnel can collaborate, and produce and distribute their products and services remotely. In an attempt to overcome these challenges, the organizations increasingly tend to adopt theories and tools from the business field [1,2].

The orchestra industry, i.e., a type of cultural and creative industry that has distinctive characteristics mainly because of its historical route, is not very frequently discussed in general, let alone in connection to innovative business theories and tools.

The present paper attempts to address this gap using Orchestra Mobile (henceforth cited as OM) as the case study. OM, established in 2010, promotes music of increased relevance to Greece to the broader society within Greece, as well as to the international community operating in the context of cultural diplomacy, tourism, and sustainable development.

The present paper explores how this new entry in the industry dealt with a series of challenges:

(i) Not attached to a concert hall (and, therefore, continually dependent on others) and with no state funding, survived in an industry dominated by well-established players such as the Vienna Royal Orchestra and the Berliner Philharmoniker, who are of global recognition, are attached to prestigious concert halls, and enjoy strong funding and support on the part of the state;

(ii) With no external support, succeeded within the peak of the global economic crisis (commenced in late 2008);

(iii) Decided in 2010, i.e., long before the pandemic crisis, to operate mostly at a distance, based on geographically dispersed members and collaborators; and, in the first place,

(iv) How difficult it was for OM to challenge the rules of an industry that were formed in the 18th and 19th centuries and have not been (substantially) challenged ever since.

In order to address the aforementioned questions, the first part of the paper focuses on the established players of the industry. After an outline of the industry's historical route, their ownership status, management structure, current challenges, and strategic responses are presented and then analyzed. The international developments are examined with specific references to the Greek reality given OM's relevance to the Greek context. The material for this part comes from studies of academics but also from accounts of orchestra artistic directors and conductors, so that a more holistic overview of the current situation is provided. The material is enhanced by interviews given to the authors by orchestra conductor Christos Kolovos, and musician and orchestra member Dimitris Kottaridis (Greek professionals were selected to be interviewed given OM's relevance to the Greek context).

The second part of the paper is dedicated to OM. After a brief outline of its establishment, mission, objectives and activity, its management structure and its strategy are analyzed in connection to some of the latest developments in the field, all supported by digital technologies: (i) the so-called 'hybrid cooperative' management model; (ii) the 'strategic innovation' theory; and (iii) the 'strategic agility' theory. The material for this part is mainly based on OM's artistic director and conductor Thodoris Orfanidis' interviews given to the media and an interview given to the authors.

It is concluded that OM:

- Instead of getting into a head-to-head competition against the established players of the industry, OM crafted an innovative strategic model, which substantially challenged the rules of the industry and, therefore, the dominant players found it most difficult to imitate (linked to 'strategic innovation' theory, to OM's key challenges i and iv, and to cultural organizations' key challenge i: see above);
- Moved beyond the formal and rigid management structures of the industry towards flexible and dynamic networks of geographically dispersed members and collaborators—which helped towards saving resources and adjusting to the requirements of each project (linked to the 'hybrid cooperative' management model, to OM's key challenges iii and iv, and to cultural organizations' key challenge iii); and
- Developed a mixed strategic model of both strong leadership, on the one hand, and sensitivity to changes of environment and resource fluidity on the other, which helped towards making bold decisions while at the same time (fore)seeing opportunities, initiating projects, and developing partnerships (linked to 'strategic agility' theory, to OM's key challenge ii, and to cultural organizations' key challenge ii).

As stated above, the research aims at addressing a gap in the existing literature in terms of the application of innovative business theories and tools in the orchestra industry. At the same time, certain elements could be of interest to the whole range of the cultural and creative industries, such as the model of an organization operating at a distance back in 2010. Furthermore, a wide range of cultural entrepreneurs could benefit from the research conclusions, particularly on the complex relationship of "sustainability-innovation-digital

technologies” such as: instead of struggling to incorporate the most updated and advanced digital technologies (which would require considerable financial and human resources and knowledge), it is better to place emphasis on innovating the management structure and the strategy, supported and served by (even simple and inexpensive) digital technologies.

2. Orchestra Organizations: Presentation

The orchestra industry has been dominated for decades, and in some cases even for centuries, by organizations such as the Vienna Royal Orchestra, the Berliner Philharmoniker, the Concertgebouw Orchestra Royal, the Los Angeles Philharmonic Association, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the San Francisco Symphony, the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, and the Prague Symphony Orchestra.

2.1. Historical Development

The term *orchestra* refers to a large instrumental ensemble, combining instruments from different families, grouped in sections. The term is named after the ‘orchestra’ of the ancient Greek theatre, i.e., the circular area between the stage of the Greek theatre and the audience where the chorus appeared—it was also where the instrumentalists performed.

The shifts in the evolution of the orchestra over the course of time are as follows [3]: In the mid-17th century, the Baroque orchestra emerged, which was mainly based on the strings. The *conductor* led the ensemble while playing the harpsichord. The space between the stage and the audience was called the orchestra and at the same time this term was used to describe the musicians who played the instruments—as in the ancient Greek theatre. In the mid-18th century, the orchestra developed, and the strings were complemented by the woodwinds. Towards the end of the 18th century and during the 19th century, other instruments were introduced (mostly by Beethoven, Wagner, and Schonberg), essentially shaping its form, as we know it today. It is important to note that the symphony orchestra enjoyed the state’s unobstructed funding and full support; also, it initially addressed only the upper social classes, while later on the middle class as well, which resulted in the creation of concert halls with a larger capacity, the increase in the size of musical ensembles, and the enhancement of the performance of instruments due to technological interventions. The final result was performances supreme in terms of quality, yet very demanding in terms of production.

Rooted in the aforementioned historical route, the established orchestra organizations aim at promoting high culture and maintaining the masterpieces of classical music. Within this framework, orchestra organizations perform high quality productions under the direction of esteemed conductors and in collaboration with important vocal soloists and musicians. Furthermore, these orchestra organizations are usually attached to their concert halls, which serve as a constant point of reference for their concerts and also have remarkable historical significance, yet are very expensive to maintain, such as the Vienna State Opera. The maintenance of these concert halls requires increased human and monetary resources on the part of the orchestra organizations. Orchestra organizations very rarely perform out of their own concert halls, not only because of their symbolic and historical attachment to them, but also because of the expenses required for the moving of the orchestra [3–5].

2.2. Management

Rooted in the historical route, these established orchestra organizations are in their majority non-profit organizations, supported by the state [3,4].

Orchestra organizations have a formal organizational chart, characterized by hierarchy and departmentization (see Figure 1).

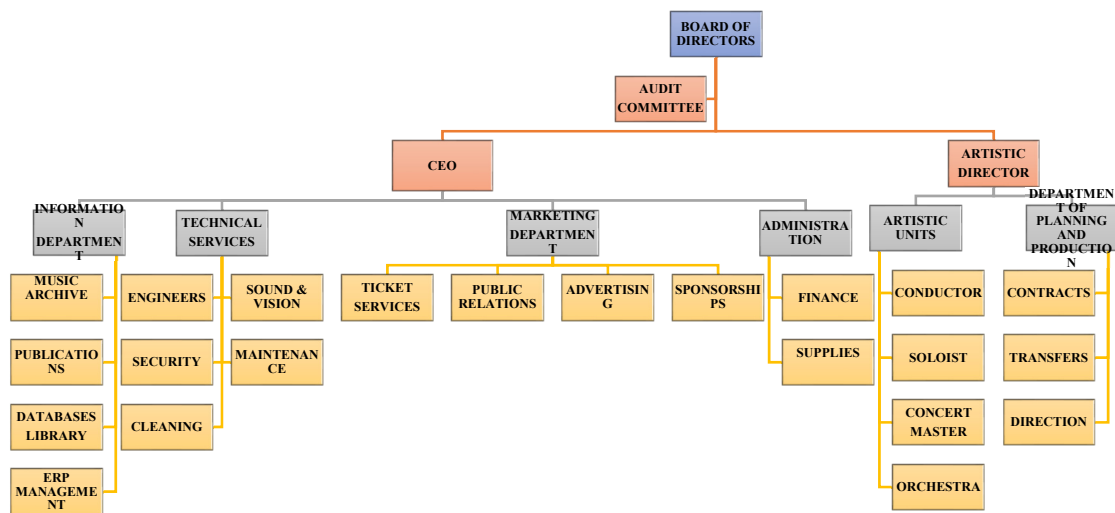


Figure 1. Organizational chart of established orchestra organizations: a schematic representation (Kamperou 2015, 33).

Their management and artistic operations are distinct activities, so that it is ensured that artists are unrestrictedly committed to their work in order to achieve the expected supreme level of quality [3,5–7]. In terms of management, on the one hand, orchestra organizations are run by a board of directors, which usually occupies a supervisory and regulatory role, without intervening in the day-to-day management and operation of the organizations. The board of directors consists of its chairperson and its members, who are not necessarily classical music specialists, but are well-connected, enhancing the organization’s prestige, developing collaborations and partnerships, and attracting sponsors. As for the day-to-day management of the organization, the person in charge is the CEO. Regarding their artistic operations, on the other hand, orchestra organizations are run by their artistic director.

The quality of the orchestra’s performance, also rooted in their historical route, depends on the relationship between the conductor and the musicians. The conductor–musicians relationship is governed by a strict hierarchy: the conductor makes the decisions, and the musicians implement them. Besides their music education, the conductor is required to have knowledge of the composers’ social and cultural background, and also to be aware of the contemporary music scene and cultural context, in order to better communicate these to the audience of their era. The conductor stands out as a role model for the musicians, is persuasive, and imparts their commitment; they are a guide and, as such, should have strong leadership skills, as well as a deep knowledge of psychology. The musicians’ duty is constant practice, the fruit of which is exemplified in the discipline and efficiency of their stage performance. On this basis, the stronger and more harmonious the relationship, the higher the quality of concert performances [5,8–10] (pers. com. Christos Kolovos; pers. com. Dimitris Kottaridis).

To ensure the stability of the conductor–musicians relationship, orchestra organizations tend to take a series of prerequisites: (i) The conductor has a permanent position in the orchestra organization (sometimes guest conductors are hired, while the musicians remain the same). (ii) The musicians have a steady working relationship—a long-term contract—with the orchestra organization, and their salary is determined on the basis of their former work experience and their position in the orchestra (there are, also, cases in which the musicians even participate, as shareholders, in the ownership of orchestras: [11,12]). (iii) The orchestra organization has a fixed concert hall as its headquarters (see above), in order to physically accommodate, and shape, the conductor–musicians relationship.

2.3. Current Challenges and Strategies

In the last few decades, orchestra organizations face a series of challenges, the most important of which could be the following (see also the SWOT analysis of Figure 2):

<p style="text-align: center;">Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • organizations: strong brands • prestigious concert halls • supreme quality of concerts 	<p style="text-align: center;">Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expensive productions for the organization • expensive ticket for the audience
<p style="text-align: center;">Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • globalization: addressing a global audience (no language barrier involved) • digital technology developments: upgrading marketing tools; organizing concerts in digital space 	<p style="text-align: center;">Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shrinking of the audience (compared to e.g. pop and rock concerts) • economic crisis: cuts in government funding • coronavirus crisis: hindering concerts in physical space

Figure 2. The current situation of orchestra organizations: mapping (SWOT analysis).

There has been a dramatic decrease in the interest of the broader audience and especially the younger people in attending classical music concerts compared, for example, with pop and rock concerts. This could be attributed to a number of reasons: the music industry as a whole has changed dramatically, moving towards more globalized, commercial, standardized, mass products at the expense of quality and creativity [13–15]; and contemporary value systems, mass media, and social media tend to heavily promote pop and rock concerts at the expense of other types of music, including classical music. This phenomenon is magnified by the widely accepted notion that classical music is a high culture genre that seems to be more attached to traditions of the past rather than adapting to the contemporary interests [16]. In this context, the Vienna Royal Orchestra promotes itself on this website through a text entitled “Vienna Royal Orchestra: Tradition at its purest form” as follows [17]:

“The unique charm of Vienna as a historical city with imperial background [. . .] is definitely one of a kind. We at the Vienna Royal Orchestra strongly believe in our vision of bringing the magical history back to life [. . .]. With the rhythm of tradition and the beat of classic music from Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Ludwig van Beethoven and Johann Strauss [. . .]. To maintain all the values and pay tribute with the highest of respect to the Viennese history [. . .]”.

As a result, those attending classical music concerts on a frequent basis are being increasingly limited to the lovers of classical music. In Greece (i.e., of particular relevance to OM’s activity), for example, as noted by conductor Vassilis Christopoulos [18], a part of the audience, even younger people, would express an interest for listening to classical music and would be eventually moved by it; yet, they would feel discouraged from attending a concert because they would consider themselves to be lacking the sufficient background and specialized knowledge for such a task. This attitude could be put down to the lacking promotion of the classical music by the formal educational system, and also to the widespread notion that classical music is outside the Greek music tradition—which

is, however, untrue because some important classical music composers come from Greece, such as Nikos Skalkotas and Yannis Konstantinidis [18].

Another challenge is associated to the global economic crisis, which struck in 2008, yet its impact is still evident in many countries across the world. As a result of the economic crisis, government funding to all cultural and creative industries in general and to the orchestra industry in particular was severely reduced [19,20]. In Greece, in particular, there was a 28.5% decrease in the Ministry of Culture budget between 2009 and 2010, and a further 28% reduction between 2010 and 2011 [21]. Given the state's constant priority over time to the classical heritage monuments and museums, the other cultural and creative industries were severely affected [22]. Orchestra industry, in particular, suffered from severe delays in the payment of the orchestras' personnel and musicians, and the retired personnel and musicians were not replaced. As a consequence, the planning and execution of concerts was significantly hindered, an environment of instability was created across the industry, which also discouraged private sponsors, and an increased number of especially younger musicians were forced out of the industry [23,24] (pers. com. Christos Kolovos; pers. com. Dimitris Kottaridis). To give a more specific example from Greece, the Megaron Music Hall in Athens has received state funding of less than 50% of its planned budget throughout the period of the economic crisis, as its president Nikos Piblis noted [25].

A most recent challenge is linked to the global coronavirus crisis of the last two years, which had a two-fold impact: it further enhanced the economic crisis, and also hindered the conduct of concerts (in physical spaces). Conductor Anastasios Symeonidis [26], taking into account the international situation but with specific reference to the Greek context, noted:

“The economic crisis was the first strike [. . .]. The coronavirus crisis, I could argue, came in order to destroy whatever was left intact. The reality is that, given the lack of money, music production is infeasible. Besides that, coronavirus crisis also hindered the presence of the audience. Apart from the public [orchestra] organizations, which are funded by the government, the private initiative is still awaiting”.

Orchestra organizations respond to the aforementioned challenges in the following ways:

In an attempt to attract new audiences and especially younger people, orchestra organizations tend to update their marketing techniques, making use of digital technologies. This involves a series of activities: communicating with their audience and promoting their products and services through blogs, YouTube, Flickr, and social media (Facebook, Twitter, and Myspace); distributing their products through a variety of channels such as streaming, streaming on demand, downloading, ripping, remixes, mashups, and playlists; developing partnerships with sponsors and advertising companies which are active on the digital platforms; and updating and enhancing their brands through digital platforms [27,28].

In this direction, some orchestra organizations also decide to popularize classical music by performing pop and rock repertoire, re-arranging songs for strings, winds, and percussion, and even incorporating electric guitar, bass, and drums, collaborating with pop and rock singers and bands, and also performing out of their concert halls and in more popular areas, usually pop and rock concert halls. Examples of such collaborations are that of The San Francisco Symphony with rock band Metallica (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yRCLe6_kBRc, accessed on 5 January 2022), the Berliner Philharmoniker with rock band Scorpions (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AaOq06ZARq0&list=PLSCuorH3Nv-hNXZX2LSll13KrU8ssc57y&index=1>, accessed on 5 January 2022), and the Melbourne Orchestra with rock band Kiss (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HumFaLoNnVA>, accessed on 5 January 2022).

In an attempt to deal with the economic crisis, orchestra organizations tend to reduce expenses especially through outsourcing to external collaborators (individuals or companies), operations which are not considered core capabilities of the orchestra organizations, and in which the orchestra organizations have limited specialization, such as public relations and marketing and IT operations, both involving digital technologies. Outsourcing,

on the one hand, allows orchestra organizations to concentrate on their core capabilities and core tasks associated with music production. As a result of outsourcing, on the other hand, orchestra organizations in the short term tend to have difficulties in collaborating with the external collaborators and in the long term lose their (already limited) knowledge of these operations and are made increasingly dependent upon their external collaborators [29–31].

Within the period of the coronavirus crisis of the last two years, some orchestra organizations decide to give performances through digital platforms. This is achieved in two main ways: (i) orchestras performing in person, in their concert hall, with their performance being distributed through live streaming, available in real time and often in the following days as well. Examples of this are the Digital Concert Hall created by the Berliner Philharmoniker, and the '24-h Bach-Streaming' of the Bach Fest (<https://www.bachfestleipzig.de/en/bach-marathon?fbclid=IwAR33b94EonHDIEZNMtGhAkf44-QoTQs4b464uscYj0hx3qpzWUfGOVVjY>, accessed on 7 January 2022); (ii) orchestra members performing individually from their homes, through digital platforms. Characteristic examples of this include the concert on Georges Bizet's *L'Arlésienne* given by 26 out of the 104 members of L'Orchestre National de Lyon (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iVvtXGDX_CU&t=177s, accessed on 7 January 2022) and, from Greece, the MusicAeterna Digital Platform created by conductor Theodoros Kourentzis (<https://musicaeterna.org/>, accessed on 7 January 2022; and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v_n05Fczz4s&t=3s, accessed on 7 January 2022).

Out of the aforementioned responses, the updating of marketing techniques and outsourcing seem to define broader developments in the industry, while popularizing classical music is selected instead by only a few orchestra organizations. Regarding the conduct and offering of concerts through digital platforms, it is rather too early to reach any reliable conclusions on whether this will continue after the end of the pandemic crisis; conductor Christos Kolovos and musician and orchestra member Dimitris Kottaridis (pers. com), commenting on the international reality yet with reference to the Greek context, are of the opinion that that the live experience of a concert is irreplaceable and, therefore, orchestra organizations will return to physical concerts, while digital concerts will occur in rather exceptional circumstances and mostly as supplementary to the physical ones.

3. Orchestra Organizations: Analysis of Management and Strategy

Orchestra industry followed a distinctive historical route, which is very different to other cultural and creative industries. Orchestra industry rules were shaped especially in the 18th and the 19th centuries: constant support on the part of the state, formation of a large audience (which included not only the upper but also the middle class), construction of large and prestigious concert halls, emphasis on the quality of the concerts, and increasing demands of concert production. On the basis of this historical route, Jones, Lorenzen, and Sapsed [1], in their study of the types of change in the cultural and creative industries, focusing on the dimensions of semiotic codes (i.e., the codes by which the artists give meaning to their work and shape how audiences interpret it, highlighting the primacy of the creative product's symbolism) and material base (i.e., the materials and also the technologies and the socio-technical systems that enable the production and consumption of creative products), argue that orchestra industry has followed the "Preserve" type of change, i.e., indicating slow change in both semiotic codes and in material base.

Rooted in this historical route, the established orchestra organizations developed their management structure and strategy on the basis of the following characteristics:

In terms of management, orchestra organizations are usually not-for-profit organizations supported by, as well as dependent upon, state funding, their organizational structures are based on strict hierarchy and departmentalization (with separate management and artistic operations), they maintain strong relationships (long-term contracts) with conductors and musicians, and they are attached to concert halls.

Their strategy (business model) could be described, in terms of WHO (customer)—WHAT (value proposition) and HOW (way of offering value proposition to the customer) [32], as follows:

- WHO: a rather specialized audience, mostly the lovers of classical music and orchestras.
- WHAT: live music concerts of classical music, of supreme quality.
- HOW: orchestra organizations achieve the supreme quality of concerts thanks to the long-term collaborations with specific conductors and musicians, the attachment to prestigious (and often of remarkable historical significance) concert halls, and the highest commitment to concert production. Concert performances are characterized by a formal atmosphere, without the active participation of the audience. Concert production as well the maintenance of the concert halls are very expensive procedures; as a result, concerts are offered at a high cost, which the lovers of classical music and orchestras are willing to pay.

Over the last few decades, there have been remarkable changes in the industry associated to the shrinking of the audience and also to the formation of an economic environment (of crisis) that discourages expensive productions. Despite their attempts to respond, the established orchestra organizations, being still anchored to the rules of the 18th and the 19th centuries, find it rather difficult to adjust.

Their management structure and strategy remain largely the same as the situation in the 18th and 19th centuries. Outsourcing, for example, does not substantially affect the core management structure of the orchestra organizations. Similarly, the updating of marketing techniques through digital technologies, the popularization of the content, and even the conduct of concerts through digital platforms, do not substantially affect their strategic model (orchestra organizations continue to address a rather specialized audience by organizing supreme-quality yet expensive productions).

Therefore, despite the successes of individual responses on the part of some orchestra organizations, the situation of the industry as a whole has not been sufficiently improved. Despite incorporating digital marketing tools, large new audiences and particularly younger people are still not attracted. Despite outsourcing, the costs of concert productions are still high. The result is that a large number of orchestra organizations face sustainability issues: many dramatically reduced their activities, while others eventually closed down, such as the San Jose Symphony Orchestra in California after 125 years of operation [33]. In Greece, the Megaron Music Hall in Athens reduced its activities, while the 'Music Ensembles of the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation' (*Mousika Synola ERT*) and the 'Orchestra of Colours' (*Orchistra ton Chromaton*) closed down [23,24].

This was the situation of the industry and its established players in 2010 when OM appeared (and this is, to a large extent, the situation even to the present).

4. Orchestra Mobile: Presentation

OM is a professional for-profit organization, having the structure of being a 'Limited Liability Company' (*GmbH/Gesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung*), which is based in Berlin, and was established in 2010. Legally, its administration powers rest with its two administrators, Thodoris Orfanidis and Sonia Theodoridou. These people are also responsible for the management and the day-to-day administration and operation of the organization.

OM is a mobile orchestra organization that does not have a fixed location and is not attached to a concert hall [34,35] (pers. com Thodoris Orfanidis). Its members are geographically dispersed and collaborate remotely through digital technologies. OM has the ability to move to different cities, adjusting to a wide range of concerts, transforming itself from a quartet to a 50-member orchestra. Its members come from different countries such as Greece, Israel, and Chile, each bearing diverse music and cultural traditions, experiences, and knowledge. This diversity is reflected in the diverse sounds and execution of the orchestra: e.g., in the combination of the discipline that characterizes the German orchestras with the temperament of the Mediterranean orchestras.

OM's vision is to promote music of particular relevance to Greece to the broader society within Greece, as well as to the international community operating in the context

of cultural diplomacy, tourism, and sustainable development. OM's objectives are to: (a) provide high-quality music services; and at the same time (b) make profit.

OM organizes concerts of classical music and especially of Greek music with lyrics (*entechni*). More specifically, OM conducts the following activities:

- Classical music concerts, with an emphasis on renowned Greek composers such as Nikos Skalkotas and Yannis Konstantinidis;
- Concerts of Greek music with lyrics (*entechni*), with an emphasis on renowned Greek composers such as Mikis Theodorakis, Stavros Kougioumtzis, and Vassilis Tsitsanis;
- Concerts as tributes to important historical events of relevance to Greece, such as the Armenian Genocide and the Jewish Holocaust;
- Production of CDs, for example the poems of Constantine P. Cavafy, a Greek poet born in Alexandria of Egypt, and traditional songs from Cyprus;
- Activities for social and philanthropic causes of Greek interest, such as: the concert dedicated to the voluntary, non-profit child welfare organization based in Athens, 'The Smile of the Child' (*To Hamogelo tou Paidiou*); the concert given at the child prison of Avlonas, Greece; and the protest held in the British Museum for the repatriation of the Parthenon Marbles to Greece.

OM's activity has been affected by the pandemic crisis. Its most recent concert was given in the context of the 19th Religious Festival on Patmos, Greece in August 2021 (<https://www.elculture.gr/blog/article/o-theodoros-orfanidis-gia-to-19o-festival-th-riskeftikis-mousikis-patmou-kai-tis-mousikes-ekdiloseis-sto-spilαιο-tis-apokalypsis/>, accessed on 8 January 2022).

5. Orchestra Mobile: Analysis of Management—'Hybrid Cooperative' Model

It can be argued that OM is an example of the so-called 'hybrid cooperative organization'.

5.1. The 'Hybrid Cooperative' Management Model

In an attempt to cut down infrastructure and personnel expenses, organizations are increasingly moving beyond traditional, formal, and rigid management structures towards alternative management structures that focus on informal relationships such as inter-connectivity, supported by digital technologies. These are flexible and dynamic network of diverse individuals (i.e., personnel, external collaborators, and customers), geographically dispersed, who are connected to each other and cooperate thanks to digital technologies. Digital technologies, thus, become a quintessential part of the establishment and operation of such organizations, allowing for a whole series of tasks, such as: sharing the organizations' vision and objectives throughout the organization; allocating tasks for implementation; disseminating knowledge and experience within the company, and developing knowledge and capabilities; building the brand; and producing and distributing products and services. This type of organization has no formal levels of hierarchy. The payment for the personnel and the collaborators is subject to the delivery of the tasks and performance. The management model that incorporates the aforementioned characteristics, though lacking an 'established' term in literature yet, could be best described as a 'hybrid cooperative' one [36–38] or a 'virtual' one [39,40].

This model is adopted mostly by organizations of mixed ownership, i.e., of private legal status yet belonging to, or controlled or funded by public organizations [36,41].

5.2. Application of the 'Hybrid Cooperative' Management Model to Orchestra Mobile

OM adopts this model although it does not fall into the category of a mixed type of organization, controlled or funded by public organizations; OM is a private profit-driven company, which nevertheless also serves a social purpose in terms of its vision and objectives (i.e., providing high quality services to the broader society).

The model is applied to OM as follows:

Unlike classical music orchestras, OM does not have a formal organizational chart, characterized by hierarchy and departmentization (see Figure 3).

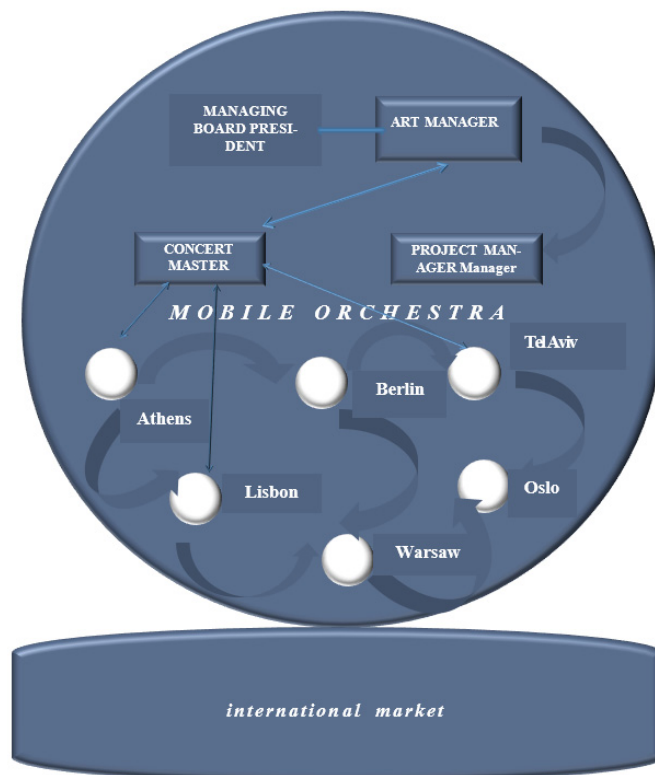


Figure 3. The organizational chart of Orchestra Mobile: a schematic representation (Kamperou 2015, 64).

In OM, company management and orchestra management are jointly led by Thodoris Orfanidis and Sonia Theodoridou, who are on the same hierarchical level, complementing each other: Sonia Theodoridou serves as the president of the managing board and the key singer (soprano), and Thodoris Orfanidis as the artistic director and the conductor.

There are no departments (and, by extension, no heads of departments) of marketing, communication and public relations, or finances, etc.

Thodoris Orfanidis and Sonia Theodoridou are supported by: (i) a project manager, who advises and helps with a series of issues related to the company and the orchestra, such as project planning and communication; and (ii) a concertmaster, i.e., the key musician of the orchestra who serves as the link between the conductor and the orchestra members. The concertmaster, in communication with and under the supervision of the conductor, makes decisions on technical issues, is responsible for defining the way of execution of the musical pieces, coordinates the geographically dispersed musicians, allocates the music tasks to them, and conducts the rehearsals, etc.

Hiring orchestra members is subject to the requirements of each concert, including aspects such as its content and place; for example, if a concert is to be given in Israel, a number of Israeli musicians will be hired, in an attempt to cut down on resources (because they are based in Israel and no travel costs are involved), but also because these musicians would be better connected to local cultural organizations and administration authorities, and would also be better aware of the cultural and musical trends and interests of the local audience. In some cases, even the project manager and the conductor may change, depending on the needs of each concert. The payment for the musicians, as well as the

project manager and the conductor (if external collaborators) is subject to the delivery of the tasks and performance at each concert.

The so-called ‘hybrid cooperative’ model supported by digital technologies is reflected in the whole process of organizing a concert as follows: Thodoris Orfanidis and Sonia Theodoridou decide on the content and the place of the concert, in line with the company’s vision and objectives, become in contact and cooperate with local authorities and organizations, and finalize the content and the concert hall. For the needs of the concert, they usually use their standard project manager and their conductor (Thodoris Orfanidis), or in some cases hire external collaborators, and then select the musicians. For the selection of the musicians, the conductor makes use of their own contacts, or searches for new ones by viewing past performances, available on YouTube or other channels, and also by viewing musicians’ profiles and pieces of work, available on specialized web platforms; they contact them directly or through their managers (if relevant) and, in some cases, they even ask for a digitally sent demo and conduct an interview with them. Then, the project manager arranges with them the practical details, such as logistics and salaries, and the concertmaster, in communication with the conductor, distributes the orchestra part digitally to each of them. Each of the musicians practices their part individually at home and, if required, communicates with the concertmaster (or the conductor) on specific technical music issues. The rehearsals, in which all musicians participate, are conducted by the conductor in the concert hall several days before the concert.

6. Orchestra Mobile: Analysis of Strategy A—‘Strategic Innovation’

It can be argued that OM is an example of a strategic innovation (or ‘Blue Ocean Strategy’) against its competitors.

6.1. The ‘Strategic Innovation’ Theory

‘Strategic Innovation’ is the discovery of a fundamentally different strategy (or business model) in an existing industry in order to adjust to the broader changes in the industry environment [42,43] (in the same context see also ‘Blue Ocean Strategy’ by Kim and Mauborgne [44,45]). Strategic innovation occurs when a company identifies gaps (not covered sufficiently by other competitors) in an industry positioning map, pursues them, and grows them into big markets.

A strategic innovation has the following characteristics:

- (a) A strategic innovation identifies: a new WHO (customer)—emerging customer segments or existing customer segments that are not served sufficiently by other competitors; or a new WHAT (value proposition)—emerging or existing customer needs not covered sufficiently by other competitors; or a new HOW (way of offering value proposition to the customer)—ways of promoting, producing, delivering, or distributing existing or new products and services to existing or new customer segments; or a combination thereof. It is important to note that a strategic innovation is not necessarily the discovery of new products and services, but often the redefinition of existing products or services or the way these products or services are offered to the customers.
- (b) A strategic innovation is much more than the discovery of a radical new strategy on the part of a specific company; strategic innovation affects the existing industry as a whole, thus enlarging the existing economic pie—either by attracting new customers or by encouraging existing customers to consume more.
- (c) A strategic innovation challenges long-established assumptions and rules in the industry, making it extremely difficult to be imitated or replicated by its competitors.

6.2. Application of the Strategic Innovation Theory to the Orchestra Mobile

Unlike classical music orchestras, OM (see Figure 4):

	TRADITIONAL STRATEGY of established orchestra organizations	STRATEGIC INNOVATION of Orchestra Mobile
WHO (customer):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a specialized audience, mostly the lovers of classical music and orchestras • a global audience (no language barrier) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a broader audience, especially younger people • a geographically and culturally more defined audience (language barrier)
WHAT (value proposition):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • live music concerts of classical music • supreme quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • live music concerts, often of music with lyrics • high, yet not supreme, quality
HOW (way of offering value proposition to the customer):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • long-term collaborations with renowned conductors and musicians; cooperating mostly in person • in prestigious concert halls (of theirs) • a formal atmosphere of concerts led by the conductor • expensive productions • at a high cost for the audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • short-term collaborations with performers and musicians, even mass popular ones; cooperating mostly remotely • in concert halls (of others) and in alternative (e.g. open) spaces • rather informal atmosphere of concerts with the active involvement of the audience • relatively not expensive productions • at a relatively low cost for the audience

Figure 4. The strategies of the established orchestra organizations and Orchestra Mobile: a comparative representation.

(a) In terms of WHO (customer), OM addresses a broader audience, i.e., people who are not the typical lovers of classical music and orchestras, and especially young people. Moving further, at its concerts of music with lyrics, given the language barrier, OM targets an audience more defined—in geographical and cultural terms—, i.e., those who speak the language in question and are interested in the culture in question.

In terms of WHAT (value proposition), OM organizes live music concerts, in many cases not entailing classical music; of high, yet not supreme, quality.

In terms of HOW (way of offering value proposition to the customer), OM collaborates with a wide range of performers and musicians, even with mass popular ones (not of classical music), public and private organizations, and local administrations and communities. OM is not attached to a specific concert hall (as the classical orchestras are), one that is prestigious and extremely expensive to maintain, but organizes concerts at concert halls as well as alternative places such as open spaces. OM concerts are characterized by a rather informal atmosphere, based on the active participation of the audience. OM concerts are offered at a much lower cost (compared to those of the classical orchestras). Regarding the preparation of the concerts, OM management team as well as the orchestra members are cooperating mostly from a distance thanks to the use of digital technologies (see above), saving a considerable number of resources. This remote cooperation, however, hinders the creation of a close relationship between the conductor and the orchestra members and also among the orchestra members, resulting in performances whose quality is high, but still does not match the supreme level of the traditional classical orchestras (see above); this quality level is nevertheless sufficient to cover the needs of the broader audience.

(b) OM enlarges the existing economic pie of the orchestra industry by attracting new customers, namely young people.

(c) OM challenges a series of long-established stereotypes in the orchestra industry such as: a concert addressing a non-specialized audience, conducted at an open space, and at an affordable price. As a result, the traditional classical orchestras cannot imitate OM because such an option would mean posing strong conflicts to, and even destroying, their existing strategy (business model).

The application of the Strategic Innovation theory in OM is illustrated in its concert-tribute to the work ‘Axion Esti’ of the Greek composer Mikis Theodorakis (pers. com. Thodoris Orfanidis). In an attempt to attract a broader audience and especially young people who are not lovers of classical or other high-quality music, OM decided to collaborate with the very popular pop singer-icon Sakis Rouvas. OM also decided to hold the concert, upon the approval of the local Municipality, at the central public square of the Nea Smirni area (a suburb of Athens). The choice of Nea Smirni served a symbolic purpose: this is the area in which Mikis Theodorakis composed the work in question. The choice of a square (rather than, for instance, the high-profile ‘Estia’ Music Hall, also located in the Nea Smirni area) served as a means to attract young people: young people are very familiar with the square with its cafés and bars in their everyday social life. The choice of a square, thanks to its increased carrying capacity, allowed for accommodating for a very large audience. The choice of the pop singer Sakis Rouvas caused a lot of discussion and a strong controversy among artistic communities and social media followers, because his ‘pop icon’ profile was considered ‘inappropriate’ for the quality of the work of Mikis Theodorakis, only adding to the dissemination and popularity of the concert and the enhancement of the OM’s brand. The end result was a highly successful concert that attracted more than 20,000 people, followed by a summer tour throughout Greece and abroad.

7. Orchestra Mobile: Analysis of Strategy B—‘Strategic Agility’

It can be argued that OM is an example of strategic agility at times of crisis.

7.1. The ‘Strategic Agility’ Theory

Crises, such as the economic and the coronavirus crises, are characterized by an unpredictable nature, an unexpected advent, and a high level of uncertainty and risk [46,47]. Therefore, at times of crises, a critical imperative for companies is ‘strategic agility’—the capacity to adapt quickly in the face of fast-changing and unpredictable environmental conditions [48–51] (on the application of the Strategic Agility theory to cultural organizations, see Poullos and Touloupa [52]). In this context, the goal of a company’s strategy is to gain a temporary competitive advantage, to be replaced by other temporary competitive advantages over time. To this end, a company attempts to achieve alertness and innovation that will enable it to incorporate new information and translate it into effective action, thus linking strategy formulation and execution—resulting in changing temporary competitive advantages over time.

On this basis, the main capabilities of a strategically agile company are:

- (a) Strong leadership, which gives the ability to make bold decisions, and provides cohesive and collective commitment throughout the organization for the execution of these decisions (offering discipline-accountability).
- (b) Sensitivity to changes of environment and resource fluidity, which gives the ability to reconfigure systems and redeploy resources rapidly, as well as a flexible organizational structure and culture (offering freedom-flexibility).

Therefore, the model of strategic agility is a fluid one, based on a combination of two phenomenally contradictory characteristics: discipline-accountability and freedom-flexibility. These characteristics should not be limited at the senior management level, but should be evident at every level of the organization.

7.2. Application of the Strategic Agility Theory to Orchestra Mobile

OM, established within the global economic crisis (in 2010), has the following characteristics:

- **Legal status:** Its legal status as a professional for-profit organization allows OM to have the exclusive responsibility over its finances, aiming at maximizing its profits, and also to operate independently from state funding and associated interventions, restrictions, and bureaucracy (offering freedom-flexibility).
- **Leadership:** OM is characterized by strong, joint leadership of the management of the company and the management of the orchestra (offering discipline-accountability). OM maintains consistent leadership since its establishment, ensuring continuity that adds to the overall effectiveness of the company (offering discipline-accountability). Furthermore, Thodoris Orfanidis and Sonia Theodoridou have strong values and a well-defined vision (providing high-quality cultural products and services to the broader society and at the same time making profit), which they share and articulate to their personnel and collaborators; and they focus on the implementation of this vision and link execution to discipline, with the personnel held accountable for the realization of the vision and the delivery of the associated objectives (offering discipline-accountability).
- **Personality of leaders:** Thodoris Orfanidis and Sonia Theodoridou are strong personalities (offering discipline-accountability). Their personalities constitute a combination as well as a balance between a more artistic profile, represented by Sonia Theodoridou, and a more entrepreneurial profile, represented by Thodoris Orfanidis (offering freedom-flexibility); they share this combined artistic and entrepreneurial spirit with their personnel (offering freedom-flexibility). Moreover, Sonia Theodoridou is a recognized artist both on a national and international level, constituting a strong brand (offering discipline-accountability).
- **Organizational structure:** OM has a simple and flexible organizational structure, with limited hierarchy and bureaucracy, with a focus on artistic inspiration and commitment, and with a capacity to adjust to a wide range of projects, transforming itself from a quartet to a 50-member orchestra (offering freedom-flexibility). OM has a fast decision-making process, conducted from a distance and supported by digital technologies; a small management team; an ease with which the personnel and external collaborators can communicate with the managers; a decision-making process established through regular informal meetings and processes rather than through pre-arranged formal management boards; and a focus on specific, limited key performance indicators and objectives (offering freedom-flexibility). The flexible organizational structure brings a series of benefits to OM, including finding it easier to share a clear view of the values, vision, and objectives throughout the organization (see above); being fast in making decisions and risks; reducing dramatically its operational costs; and initiating promising projects, whilst simultaneously finding it easier to admit mistakes, thus not delaying the abortion of unsuccessful projects.

At the same time, in OM, the relationships among the personnel are clearly defined and well-specified, and there is individual responsibility of the team members and continual evaluation of individual contributions (offering discipline-accountability).

- **Company culture:** OM fosters a culture of encouragement and trust within the company (offering freedom-flexibility) through a series of factors: creating strong bonds among the leaders, the personnel, and the collaborators; exploiting the cross-cultural knowledge and experience of the orchestra members coming from diverse countries within and outside Europe; linking individual motivation and commitment of the personnel to the overall progress of the company; and nurturing a supportive mentality that is open to new ideas, experimentation, and risks, with a tolerance for mistakes. This culture ensures a broad consensus in the decision-making process and also helps the easy reallocation of financial resources among projects, as needed (offering freedom-flexibility).
- **Increased awareness of local environments and their sensitivities, and accumulation of real-time, unfiltered data concerning audiences and non-audiences and the current music and cultural trends in local societies and markets (offering freedom-flexibility),**

which is achieved through the open, entrepreneurial spirit of its leaders and through its network of external orchestra members and collaborators. The accumulation of these data helps OM (fore)see opportunities for organizing concerts and developing further collaborations, as these opportunities arise.

- Collaborations and partnerships: OM's collaborations and partnerships with a wide range of orchestra members (musicians), cultural organizations, and administration authorities (see above) allow it to conduct concerts in diverse spaces, thus compensating for its own absence of a fixed concert hall, and also to reduce in-situ resources, risks, and expenses (offering freedom-flexibility).
- Strong branding (offering discipline-accountability), achieved through various means, such as the recognition of the artist Sonia Theodoridou, the collaboration with popular performers such as Sakis Rouvas, the organization of high-quality concerts, and the participation in social philanthropic events (see above).

The application of the Strategic Agility theory in OM is reflected in its tribute to Constantine P. Cavafy, i.e., probably the most recognized Greek poet internationally, who lived and worked in the city of Alexandria of Egypt (pers. com. Thodoris Orfanidis). With the aim of promoting his work in diverse audiences within and outside Greece, OM recorded an album of original music to which his poems were set, composed by Athanasios Simoglou and entitled 'Shades of Love' [53]. OM decided to promote the album through a series of concerts, accompanied by the reading of the poems, in different countries, in collaboration with local organizations and artists, and in adaptation to the local contexts. Specifically, in Greece, the poems of Cavafy were read by best-selling author Victoria Hislop and actor Tassos Nousias, who both became popular to the Greek audience through their involvement in the very popular TV series "The Island" directed by Yorgos Nanouris (<https://www.kathimerini.gr/culture/481750/i-s-theodoridouy-tragoyda-kavafi-sto-pallas/>, accessed on 10 January 2022). In Romania, the event was held in the context of the international festival 'Life is Beautiful' organized by the National Theatre (Operetta) Ion Dacian and the poems of Cavafy were read by local actress Daniela Moldovan. There was also the presentation of the books 'Cavafy poems' and 'Romanians on Cavafy: Studies and Essays', written in Romanian.

8. Conclusions

Orchestra industry is a distinctive creative and cultural industry mainly because of its historical route. Orchestra industry rules were set in the 18th and the 19th centuries, adopted by the established players of the industry. Over the last few decades, some dramatic changes in the industry environment occurred, such as the shrinking of the audience, the economic crisis, and the coronavirus crisis. The established players, being still anchored to the rules of the 18th and the 19th centuries, found it rather difficult to adjust.

In 2010, a new entry appeared in the industry: OM.

OM, instead of getting into a head-to-head competition against the established players, decided to strategically innovate. OM crafted a strategic model targeting a different customer group (i.e., the broader audience, especially younger people); the established players would find it most difficult to imitate this strategic model because such an attempt would bring strong conflicts in their existing strategic model and structure—therefore, OM managed to render the competition irrelevant. On this basis, OM could be seen as an example that attempted to substantially challenge the orchestra industry rules.

Moreover, OM moved beyond the formal and rigid management structures of the industry (such as formal organizational charts based on hierarchy) towards innovative flexible and dynamic networks of geographically dispersed members and collaborators cooperating through digital technologies, joined company management and orchestra management, and hired orchestra members for each concert—which helped towards saving resources, and at the same time towards adjusting to the requirements of each project. To this end, it would be tempting to argue that OM could possibly claim a position in the

history, not only of the orchestra industry but also of cultural and creative industries in general, as an example of remote management and operation since its establishment in 2010, i.e., long before the appearance of the pandemic crisis. Regarding the orchestra industry in particular, it would be interesting to see whether the model and associate practices suggested by OM will be of relevance after the end of the coronavirus crisis.

Furthermore, OM developed a mixed strategic model of both strong leadership, on the one hand, and sensitivity to changes of industry environment through the use of digital technologies and resource fluidity, on the other, which helped the organization make bold decisions and focus on the execution of these decisions, while at the same time being in continual touch with local environments, (fore)seeing opportunities, and finding it easy to initiate projects and develop partnerships. This strategic model helped OM to survive through the economic crisis. Given that this model is not attached to a specific type of crisis (e.g., economic) but is applicable to any type of crisis, one could argue for its relevance to the ongoing crises (such as coronavirus crisis, the Russian–Ukraine war, and the associated regional refugee crisis and global economic crisis) as well as the future crises that will—unavoidably—occur.

On a more practical level, all organizations and entrepreneurs operating in cultural and creative industries (and all companies in general) face the complex relationship of “sustainability-innovation-digital technologies”. On this, the question would rather not be “in order to be sustainable, whether to innovate or not, and whether to incorporate digital technologies or not” but should instead be “in order to be sustainable, which type of innovation to select and which role digital technologies to play in this”. The organizations operating in the cultural and creative industries tend to focus more on technological, marketing, and service innovation (on a recent account of the diverse types of innovation, see Tajpour, Hosseini, and Salamzadeh [54]), all based on incorporating the most updated and advanced digital technologies (see Christensen [55]). Yet, as the analysis of the established orchestras showed, these types of innovation do not necessarily bring sustainable solutions to the changes in the industry environment and to the competition. Moreover, incorporating the most updated and advanced digital technologies requires a lot of financial and human resources and knowledge, in which cultural organizations are often lacking, especially at times of crises; while the solution of outsourcing results in orchestra organizations becoming increasingly dependent upon external companies. As the example of OM can demonstrate, cultural organizations would be better giving emphasis to innovating their management structures and their strategy, supported and served by (even simple and inexpensive) digital technologies.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, I.P.; methodology, I.P.; software, I.P. and E.K.; validation, I.P. and E.K.; formal analysis, I.P.; investigation, I.P. and E.K.; resources, I.P. and E.K.; data curation, E.K.; writing—original draft preparation, I.P.; writing—review and editing, I.P.; visualization, I.P. and E.K.; supervision, I.P.; project administration, I.P.; funding acquisition, I.P. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Acknowledgments: We would like to thank conductor Christos Kolovos and musician and orchestra member Dimitris Kottaridis for sharing with us their expertise in the management and operation of established orchestra organizations, and conductor Phaedra Giannellou for her constructive comments on a draft of the paper. Thanks are also owed to George Gantzias, Efharis Mascha, Christos Pilafas, and Constantine Poulivos. Corinna Fanara contributed to the editing of the manuscript. We would also like to thank the editors, the guest editors, and also the reviewers of the paper who contributed to the enhancement of its quality. The paper is dedicated to Lina and to Polyvios.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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