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VITAL JULIAN FREY ON THE MARKETING STRATEGY FOR DIGITAL CONCERT FORMATS

by Andreas Graf | Aug 28, 2022 | Classical music, Digital products, Interview, Marketing | 0 comments



Bachwochen Thun shines as a popular music festival in Switzerland with innovative concert formats and smart forms of cooperation. Epic Lab had the opportunity to talk to festival director Vital Julian Frey about the marketing strategy of the new concert format "Digital concert", a production for which we were responsible in the camera and editing department.

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Vital Julian Frey, how did the idea of the “Digital concert” at the Bachwochen Thun come about?

The background to this is that, as a relatively small organizer, we are obliged to enter into collaborations with partners for new projects, always with a view to creating a win-win situation for all involved. This is a central element of the profile change that I have made in recent years as artistic director of the Bachwochen Thun. So I got in touch with Barbara Balba Weber, who is responsible for the course “Music in Context” at the Bern University of the Arts (HKB), to advertise new project ideas for our music festival among her students, quasi as an experimental ground for music mediation. All students proposed a project as part of their training. We then chose two projects and turned them into reality. One is called “Hofkonzerte”, which will be a permanent part of the Bachwochen Thun festival from now on, the other one is the project “Phone concert”, which we did last year as a pilot project and digital live concert. This year we are now offering this in a further developed form and as a follow-up product under the name “Digital concert”.

While the “Phone concert” was a hybrid event (concert with live streaming added), the Digital concert is a pre-produced concert designed exclusively for distribution via the Internet. What were the motivations for this?

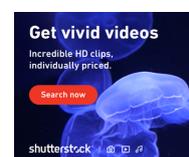
There are several advantages to this. On the one hand, we don't compete with the live event and risk the concert hall remaining empty because the majority of the audience consumes online. Another advantage is the decoupling of the concert production from the festival period in

time

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terms of time and place. This leads to an organizational relief for the Bachwochen Thun and to an easier coordination of all parties involved, both in the artistic and technical area. Another advantage is that we can now present a pre-film, which gives a glimpse behind the scenes of the creation of the digital concert.

What are the particular challenges of marketing a concert in digital format?

On the one hand, the choice of ticketing platform. Our digital concert is fee-based, but the price is significantly lower than a normal concert admission. We have decided to go to market via the "Kulturticket" portal and the Reservix system. However, we don't know whether we will succeed in selling enough tickets via this. As with all innovative pilot projects, we are taking the risk that our digital concert will not work on the market.

On the other hand, we are always faced with the question of whether the live concert experience is not better. And it's a legitimate question. I am also convinced that the digital experience cannot replace the real experience. In the real experience, there are more senses involved (e.g. the sense of smell, which contributes to the perception of the atmosphere in an old church steeped in history), a certain unrestrictedness of one's behavior, of movement around the concert. One is not necessarily freer to do certain things that the digital experience allows, but the real experience is and remains different. The advantage of the digital format is that it opens up the boundaries from where one can enjoy the concert. Issues of mobility and audience logistics are solved for the organizer. The box office can also be completely automated. And one has the

possibility to meet an important need of today's society, namely the self-determined time of consumption. During the two weeks in which the concert is available, I can watch and listen to it whenever is the ideal time for me.

What are the marketing implications of the time constraints of the offering?

The big challenge is to get to the people who are not part of our regular audience, but who are potentially interested in the Digital concert. One audience is "analog", the other, digital audience, is difficult to reach because we don't have a connection to them, and because – to put it casually – they are not (yet) interested in the Bachwochen Thun itself. Our ideal consumer for the digital concert is someone who is culturally open and at home in digital. How do we reach these people? This is one challenge. Another challenge is the short-term nature of the marketing campaign, which means we're not promoting the concert offer heavily until it's already up and running. We try to start a snowball effect via social media and have our advertising material ready in the quiver, but don't let it go until the offer has been released.

So the idea behind this is to preserve the topicality character and not exhaust the consumer's attention span too early?

Right. I don't think anyone will bite who responds to the concert offer with interest, but then realizes it won't be available for another two weeks. I assume that such a user will not watch it in the end. Not because he doesn't want to, but because he has already forgotten about it and is absorbed by enough other offers. That's why we want to set a marketing trigger that says: "Now you can".

In other words, an “instant gratification” strategy.

Yes. That doesn't mean that we can't already talk publicly about the concert. But the decisive factor for whether the concert will be watched is the last indication at which time the concert is already there and immediately available.

In addition to innovative concert formats, the Bachwochen Thun are also offering a new cooperation model for ensembles such as the Swiss Youth Choir for the first time. What is this all about?

For financial reasons, smaller and medium-sized ensembles are often dependent on selling a concert program several times, since the costs of rehearsing a work (e.g. with orchestra) make up the lion's share and cannot be covered by income from a single concert. With our cooperation model, we offer the Swiss Youth Choir to cover the entire cost of the rehearsal and (in the case of the Digital Concert) to share part of the revenue with the ensemble. In return, we do not pay a fixed concert fee. However, the choir has the advantage of being able to sell follow-up concerts to other organizers at a much more attractive price, since the costs of rehearsing the work are already covered.

Vital Julian Frey, thank you very much for the interview.

[More information:](#)

The Bachwochen Thun **Digital concert 2022** is available from **September 4-14, 2022** . Get your **tickets** at www.bachwochen.ch.

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