

# THE FIRST AND FOUNDING **MANIFESTO**

of the I781 Collective

*signed: 26th May 2021*

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It is time to bring about the change that we wish to see. The 1781 Collective is an organisation dedicated to the support and development of new ideas that create positive change within the classical music industry.<sup>1</sup>

**The 1781 Collective stands to represent and be a voice for:**

- All that don't belong within the traditional model;
- All deemed too radical to 'fit in';
- Anyone who has ever looked at the existing system and wanted *more*.

**The traditional classical music industry is bloated:** unable and unwilling to make changes that would benefit both performers and supporters, it has survived purely by virtue of being the only feasible option for young, idealistic musicians.

**The traditional industry is like any other that has outlived its purpose:** it emphasises objective perfection over subjective experience. It celebrates conservative non-actions over boundary-breaking actions. It bows down to the classist, financial, and academic elites. It represents only the tiniest portion of personalities, yet it reigns supreme over all musicians - enforcing the proliferation of banality over individuality.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Classical Music' is an unfortunately reductionist term used throughout this text to denote all music created over the past five hundred years or more, that does not fit into 'popular' categories.

**We wish to liberate classical music from its elitist owners:** those that hide behind the veil of academic elitism; the temples of classical music that celebrate financial elitism; the outdated classism that tells people *‘this music is not for you.’* This music is **collectively ours**, and we make it for **you**.

We ask you only *one* question:

## **WHY PLAY ALONG WITH THEIR SYSTEM, WHEN WE CAN JUST CREATE OUR OWN?**

**We do not fear the gatekeepers of our industry**, because we are not interested in entering their ivory tower. Whilst they fear and protect against whatever threatens their concept of ‘purity’, we busy ourselves welcoming in those that do not feel a place within the confines of the traditional classical music system.

**We have no interest in classifying** what is ‘right’ or ‘wrong.’ We believe in what **sounds** incredible and *feels* phenomenal; and we believe in the ability of listeners to make their own judgements.

**WRITE YOUR OWN STORY.** You are responsible for the narrative of your creative path; no one else. You are the author and editor, and you don’t need to rely on a system to publish and validate you.

**Let us not expend energy trying to right a sinking ship:** the traditional classical music industry serves who it serves; a tiny percentage of the world’s populace, who appreciate what it offers. We do not need to fight, to shout aimlessly at the ten-foot wall of established conservatism. Let us direct our energy into what we *know* to be true: that our music is incredible, and that we as the creators have everything we need to communicate this to the rest of the world.

Whilst the existing industry squabbles over the 1% of the world’s population who currently engage with our product, **we focus on the remaining 99%.** We have no need to burn this industry to the ground and rebuild from the ashes. Instead, we take fresh, untainted soil, to plant the seeds that will allow future generations of musicians to discover their true creative personalities.

**The 1781 Collective stands for *community*.** We refuse to be brought into the toxic competition culture that pervades the existing classical music industry. We believe that in an ecosystem where each creator is empowered to create their own individualistic art work, the notion of competition becomes farcical. We facilitate the creator to realise their unique creative offering - and we are all stronger through mutual success.

**We do not own anything or anyone**, nor do we ever wish to. To be a part of the Collective is to maintain your independence. To be a part of the Collective is to realise that by supporting our colleagues, we all stand to benefit. We are a network, a platform, a creative organisation. We exist to support our comrades in realising their creative potential.

**We have no need to justify our methods** except in their performance. We do not believe in ‘right’ and ‘wrong’: we create what is ours, and invite whatever response comes our way. Our job is not to cast value judgements on what ‘counts’ and what does not: we encourage the artist and listener to form their own opinions. We are creators, not *recreators*.

To be a part of the Collective is to represent the transition of OLD values into NEW values:

**OLD** → **NEW**

**Conservation** → **Acknowledgement**

*The museum mentality of the traditional classical music industry holds the performer hostage to tradition. We can acknowledge our musical lineage without having to bow down to the ‘peer pressure of dead men.’*

**Protection** → **Evolution**

*The fear of change hinders entrepreneurial evolution, stagnating a product that has prospered through centuries of rule-breaking behaviour. We aim to thrive, not merely survive.*

**Closed** → **Open**

*The traditional industry celebrates the elite, which by definition excludes those deemed unworthy. Our work must have no barriers to entry, no walls of traditionalism that impede those who wish to engage with us.*

**Perfection** → **Serendipity**

*The asinine quest for perfection across the discipline has led to anxiety-ridden musicians who present teflon-coated performances devoid of risk- and its accompanying rewards. Our audience knows and feels this: we embrace the mistake, and the potential for serendipitous magic, in order to replace the factory-produced monotony now prevalent in performance.*

**Heritage**

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**Living Organism**

*We do not represent the dead. We do not invest our time and passion into a heritage art form. Classical music is as living as any other art form - and we are the living representation of an ever changing organism.*

**Fatalistic**

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**Optimistic**

*“Classical music is dying” is the anthem of the traditionalists, who are unable and unwilling to activate change. We believe our music has never been as popular, diverse, and necessary than it is now. All it needs is a community who will represent it.*

**Irrelevant**

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**Socially Valuable**

*An art form for the elite has no impact on the world. We belong to society, the society of the 21st century, and our tool to create positive change is through music.*

**Close-Minded**

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**Open-Minded**

*Instigating honest conversations about what is not working in the system, and providing support for those to take action in changing it. Acknowledging taboos - such as diversity and mental health issues - rather than hiding behind the veil of tradition and conservatism.*

To be a part of the Collective is to understand that change and evolution are our duties; creating valuable experiences is our responsibility. Our reward is finding again the purpose and reason we came to this world to begin with.

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