



Classical music being used to keep loiterers moving

By Kevin Joy

The Associated Press

Posted Mar 31, 2013 @ 11:44 PM

Business News

[4 Stocks Undervalued By To Target Price With Short Covering](#)

[Morici: Jobs Growth Tanks in March](#)

[Stocks Slide as Jobs Number Fans Fears](#)

Suggested Stories

[A discarded cigarette ignites house fire...](#)

[Two arrested after SWAT raid on Canton Twp. home](#)

[Man dies in wrong-way crash on I-77 near Dover](#)

From the Web

[Cottage building plan: The Lasqueti Cottage Life](#)

[25,000 LED Lights Illuminate San Francisco's Bay... Commercial Integrator](#)

[Ireland's most haunted house to reveal its... IrishCentral](#)

[Sponsored content](#) [What's this?](#)

COLUMBUS — On a recent Tuesday evening, two men were arguing on the sidewalk outside the Downtown YMCA.

As the exchange grew more heated, Sue Darby turned up the volume on a set of speakers affixed to the building exterior.

The defuser: Antonio Vivaldi.

The delicate orchestral strains of the Four Seasons concertos prompted the opponents to walk away.

"I feel like it's a positive approach," said Darby, executive director of the Y, at 40 W. Long St. "People don't tend to stand around. There's a sense of security."

Since January at the Y, an iPod loaded with classical music has played repeatedly from 6 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. daily.

The speakers on the building were donated by the Capital Crossroads Special Improvement District, which represents Downtown property owners.

Although such a soundtrack might be regarded as a pleasant diversion — a welcome cultural boost, even — by many people, another motive is at play.

The music is designed as a social deterrent.

A recent survey of Y fitness-center members revealed concerns about sidewalk loitering, which the 400 residents of the facility aren't allowed to do. A rooming house across the street and an adjacent mental-health center sometimes exacerbate the clusters, Darby said.

The unorthodox sonic approach isn't new.

Some Short North residents have come to know the classical repertoire blasting outside the United Dairy Farmers store at 900 N. High St.

Although a manager on duty said the practice, about a year old, has "done what it's supposed to do," shopper Daveione Fluellen said he continues to see panhandlers hanging around.

Still, "It's peaceful," said Fluellen, 20, as a Mozart selection played in the background. Officials at the corporate offices of UDF didn't respond to three messages left by The Dispatch regarding the music.

Cleve Ricksecker, who lives in Victorian Village, considers the classical sounds a blessing.

"They used to have what appeared to be some petty drug dealers hanging out in front" of the convenience store, said Ricksecker, executive director of both the Capital Crossroads and Discovery special-improvement districts.

"All those people just disappeared when the speakers went up."

His hunch: "There's something about baroque music that macho wannabe-gangster types hate. At the very least, it has a calming effect."

The theory might have some merit.

Daniel Levitin, a psychology professor at McGill University in Montreal and author of *This Is Your Brain on Music: The Science of a Human Obsession*, said reactions depend on people's tastes.

When he used scanners to monitor brain activity, a subject's amygdala — the part of the brain governing emotions that can initiate a fight-or-flight response — was triggered after hearing music perceived to be unpleasant.

Whether one dislikes classical works or classic rock, Levitin said, audio aversion is far more innate than, say, negative visual stimuli because "there isn't much you can do to get out of its way other than moving yourself."

A crescendo effect seems evident.

Strains of opera and choral tunes have permeated a city train station in Portland, Ore, for more than two years — resulting in a reduction in service calls for help, The Oregonian reported. Similar success has been noted by small businesses in Seattle.

In New York, a public-spaces planning group touted such sounds as a boost to “overall ambience” at the city’s Port Authority bus station.

And, in Minneapolis, classical music was added last year to a troublesome light-rail vestibule as part of a “suite” of upgrades that included better lighting, security cameras and an increased police presence.

John Siqueland, spokesman for the Minneapolis Metro Transit system, said the situation has improved. Although he couldn’t quantify the direct effect of Beethoven, he called the aural component “fast, cheap and easy.”

One rider, he said, sent email to request the playlist.

Ricksecker has proposed installing speakers that play classical music at several Downtown Columbus spots known to attract loiterers, but he said property owners declined the offer.

COTA spokesman Brian Hoyt said the city’s public-transit authority hasn’t considered playing classical music at bus stops or inside vehicles, citing a lack of need.

And, he added: “It’s impossible to determine one type of music our passengers would like or dislike.”

What might it say about society when fine arts are used as a weapon?

The Columbus Symphony declined to comment. So did folks at classical radio station WOSA (101.1 FM).

But Timothy Russell, the outgoing music director of ProMusica, sees the debate from both sides — with an opportunity, he hopes, for an unintended outcome.

“First of all, I am always happy when people are listening to classical music,” said Russell, who is set to retire this summer after 34 seasons, “but I am sorry if people want to use it as a social deterrent.”

Part of me might hope that they actually just sit around and keep listening.”

Sponsored Result

Hot Stock Pick NTRR

Enters Medical Marijuana Industry, www.OTCStockPick.com

PGLC Stock

Why the smart money is back in Gold chicagofinancialtimes.com/pglc/

AGIN Stock

Has AGIN Become the Perfect Stock? graphenestock.net/trends-agin

Comments (7)

slimjim

4 days ago

Report Abuse

You must be logged in to report abuse.

Report Abuse

VERY creative without a down side. Well done to whoever thought of it.

GWEN

4 days ago

Report Abuse

You must be logged in to report abuse.

Report Abuse

FROM THE STORY: 'Theres something about baroque music that macho wannabe-gangster types hate.'

** Yeah, they may be gone for now; but mark my words, once they learn to dance the Minuet, they'll be back.

CantonAlleyCat

4 days ago

Report Abuse

You must be logged in to report abuse.

Report Abuse

If only the Stark County Y leadership knew of that secret. They maybe wouldn't have had all the problems in the rooming areas that they had.

This article demonstrates how well things work with the RIGHT PEOPLE in charge.....

mary v parker

4 days ago

Report Abuse

You must be logged in to report abuse.

Report Abuse

@Gwen, You honestly think they'll learn the Minuet?? :)

Don Cirelli

4 days ago

Report Abuse

You must be logged in to report abuse.

Report Abuse

This music tactic has been done before, with much success. Back in the late 80's an inner-city grocery store had a problem with pimps, prostitutes and drug dealers loitering in front of the store. The owner put up big loudspeakers playing Dean Martin, Frank Sinatra, Vivaldi, Lawrence Welk, Barry Manilow, 'Easy Listening', etc. No self-respecting 'gangsta' wanted to be seen in the vicinity of Barry Manilow music, so the offenders left.

HowDoYouKnow

4 days ago

Report Abuse

You must be logged in to report abuse.

Report Abuse

This is a cheap psyops 'parlor trick' that has been known for decades if not for centuries. For example, the Nazi's borrowed this 'trick' from the British and used it along with other tactics to get the Jews to calmly enter the showers. Maybe this article will make some of you start to consider your own reality. There are many 'tricks' that you don't know about and that you think are impossible that are used by the powers that be to control your thinking, actions, beliefs and values. You are living in a zombie pot frog matrix of classical order out of chaos.

GWEN

4 days ago

Report Abuse

You must be logged in to report abuse.



[Report Abuse](#)

@ mvp of course, they'll learn to dance the Minuet and acquire a taste for Crepe Suzette! :)
[Login](#) or [register](#) to post a user comment.

RENT WITH AVIS.
ENJOY FREE ALL-DAY DINING
AT SEAWORLD ORLANDO. RESERVE ▶

SeaWorld ORLANDO AVIS®

[Contact us](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Service](#) | [RSS](#) 

[CantonRep.com](#) | Canton, OH 44702

Copyright © 2006-2013 GateHouse Media, Inc. Some Rights Reserved.

Original content available for non-commercial use under a [Creative Commons license](#), except where noted.

[RadarFrog Merchant Directory](#) | [Internet Marketing by Propel Marketing](#) | [RadarFrog](#)