

Decline in classical music sales can be stopped, says Select MD

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The decline in sales of classical music videos – which has shadowed that of CDs – can be arrested and even reversed by applying marketing flair, according to Anthony Anderson, managing director of leading UK DVD distributor and Naxos subsidiary Select.

Mr Anderson's remarks in the keynote speech at the opening of the Avant Première congress in Berlin were echoed by Herbert Kloiber, managing director of Clasart Clas-sic, which celebrated its 40th anniversary at the event.

About 400 video producers and distributors and television executives attended the event, which ran 16-19 February, marking the 55th anniversary of organising federation the IMZ, to see screenings about nearly 500 cultural programmes from 69 companies and

32 countries, ranging from a production of *Gianni Schicchi* starring Plácido Domingo and directed by Woody Allen, to *Logline*, a dance-opera shot at particle-physics facility Cern.

Mr Anderson said the decline in CD sales was beginning to level off, mainly due to the rise of streaming on free platforms. But 66% of album sales in the UK – and 69% in Germany – last year were CDs, and that figure for classical albums was 80%.

While free streaming 'presents challenges', he said, 'music on CD cannot be considered in the same way as cultural video programming'.

'While even classical music on CD is often played as background music, video programmes require a level of engagement by the consumer. This is a need that tends to be by physical product.' He also pointed to the

recovery of book sales – up 6.6% in the UK last year – after the arrival of ebooks.

But the industry should not just rely on the current retail leaders such as Amazon and iTunes. Artist signing sessions at performances were even more significant after the decline in bricks-and-mortar music stores and tv broadcasts of cultural programmes often led to a surge in demand for physical product. 'We have seen sales of tens of thousands of DVDs as a result of a television broadcast.'

He also urged greater use of social media. 'The best advocate here is the artists. After all, it is with the artist that there is the most intense level of engagement on the part of the consumer.'

He concluded: 'Don't give up on the DVD or Blu-ray just yet.'