

Toelle, J., & Sloboda, J. A. (2019). "The audience as artist? The audience's experience of participatory music." *Musicae Scientiae*. April 2019.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1029864919844804>

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*The audience as artist? The audience's experience of participatory music*

Abstract:

This study aimed to uncover potential effects on and meanings experienced by audience members who participated in performances ('participants') of intentional efforts to integrate participatory elements in art music practice. We document a recent project in which two contemporary composers were commissioned to write new pieces including parts for audience participants. We analysed observational and questionnaire data from three concerts that interrogated the experiences of participants at three participatory performances in different countries (n = 273), and identified key emergent themes from participant responses: *special group experience*, *interactive musical experience*, *experiencing shifting power relationships* as well as an evaluative theme about the consequences of participatory elements. These categories connected substantially to concepts of active/passive, empowerment and community prevalent in discourses about participatory theatre. Quantitative analysis of participants' ratings showed high levels of affective and cognitive engagement, moderated most by prior attendance at a preparatory workshop, and least by demographics or levels of prior musical engagement/experience.

Keywords: audience research, contemporary music, participation, performance studies

Every music performance is a live experience for everybody present. These live experiences are produced through the interaction between musicians, audience members, and the environment; as experiences, they are spontaneously co-created by all actors (Auslander, 2008; O'Reilly, Larsen, & Kubacki, 2014). The interactivity is thus decisive for live experience, and participatory aspects are inherently linked to that.

This paper addresses the evaluation of three concerts in three cities in which different ensembles performed the same two newly composed pieces of classical contemporary music. Both pieces include parts for audience members who take the role of performers (henceforth 'participants'), required to play instruments and other objects, meditate, whisper, hum and sing.

It is well understood that any kind of visible interaction between the audience and the performers is generally prohibited, other than between works, at a 'standard concert' in the Western art music tradition (Sennett, 2002, 206; Weber, 1997; Gross, 2013); the prevailing classical concert culture is not designed to give audience members the possibility to participate actively, but to enable concentrated listening in silence, amongst other things. Among promoters of institutionalized Western art music, however, there is a big interest in a more explicit engagement of the audience at classical music concerts, due to the perception that modern audiences feel uneasy with established rituals and norms of the concert tradition.

Researchers have documented a trend towards welcoming younger audiences whose interests "lie elsewhere, beyond attendance" (Brown & Novak-Leonard, 2011, p. 12). Stephanie Pitts calls "the act of attending concerts and sitting quietly as a live performance unfolds [...] an increasingly incongruous activity in our data-rich, fast-paced world" (Pitts, 2014, p. 31). Many arts organisations currently seek to make concerts less restrictive by including explicit participatory practices because they recognise that art is often seen as elitist and inaccessible, accept the need to widen cultural participation and are more likely to obtain funding for such projects.

The term participation itself is difficult to pin down; Thomas Turino established a binary distinction between presentational versus participatory music, the latter implying that everyone present at a performance joins in, mostly in amateur and community music settings (Turino, 2007; Pitts, 2005). In the concerts we evaluated, we interpreted audience participation to mean the contribution of participants, determined to different extents by the composer, to the performance of the musical score. They could thus be called outcome-oriented participatory performances. In her disambiguation, Breel distinguishes these pieces – which are "constructed by the artist, but need the audience to execute the work fully" – from projects with a participatory process "which involve the participants in the creation of the work" (Breel, 2015, p. 369).

Participatory performances such as those we evaluated are not entirely new even in the apparently restrictive environment of a Western concert hall. Since the 1960s, composers as diverse as Iannis Xenakis, Francois Bernard Mâche, Malcolm Williamson, Luc Ferrari, Mauricio Kagel, John Cage, Dieter Schnebel, and Cornelius Cardew have experimented with audience participation in the form of singing, clapping or producing other sounds; works such as Frederic Rzewski's *Les moutons de Panurge* (1969) and Louis Andriessen's *Volkslied* (1971), for example, were composed for inclusive and participatory performances: Rzewski's

piece is scored “for any number of musicians playing melody instruments and any number of nonmusicians playing anything” (score, *Les Moutons de Panurges*, 1969).

Most of these participatory performance projects were rooted in political convictions, short-lived and inextricably bound to their time. Crucially, from an empirical perspective, no data on participants’ experiences of these initiatives were collected systematically. Rather, published accounts of these projects are largely biographical or anecdotal.

## **Theoretical considerations**

Because there are no studies of participatory performances of Western art music, we drew mostly on research undertaken in performance, theatre and media studies to contextualise our investigation. Three topics predominate in the theoretical literature on participatory performances of music in Western art traditions: the distinction between active and passive, the question of empowerment and agency through participation, and the search for community and relationships.

### *The distinction between active and passive.*

In musicology and traditional musicological reception studies, more specifically, concert audiences are seen as quiet and thus passive, recipients of a message from the composer conveyed ‘top-down’ via the conductor and performers. In contrast to this view, drawing from research in ecological perception and related topics, Clarke asserts that “[T]here really is no such thing as passive listening, or the ‘rapt contemplation’ that is its more loftily expressed counterpart, but only different varieties of more or less concealed or sublimated active engagement” (Clarke, 2005, p. 205). White also claims that all audiences are somehow participatory: “Without participation performance would be nothing but action happening in the presence of other people” (White, 2013, p. 3). Reason (2015) criticizes the binary distinction between active and passive audiences and, along the same lines, Rancière (2011) challenges the idea that being a spectator is a bad thing and that seeing – or listening – is by definition linked to passivity (see also Freshwater’s [2009] critique). Adlington draws attention to the fact that the organizers of participatory music projects in Western art music seem to assume that a “submissive and ultimately passive audience” needs to be “guided, encouraged or instructed away from the manner in which they themselves [are] inclined to while away their leisure time” (Adlington, 2013, pp. 164-65). Ultimately, Reason calls on researchers to evaluate performances according to their aesthetic and experiential qualities for the audiences, and not just to “valorize active spectatorship for its own sake over optical passivity” (Reason, 2015, p. 279). Since Reason carried out research on participatory theatre, we might refer to “aural passivity” when talking about performances of music too.

A similar doubt is expressed in Bishop’s (2004) famous critique of Bourriaud’s concept of relational aesthetics, often cited as a framework for the ways in which participatory projects in theatre and music are crafted and marketed nowadays, with their emphasis on experiences, encounters and exchange (Bourriaud, 2002, p. 22). Bishop stresses the tendency of Bourriaud’s concept to “value intention over reception in a manner that results in an erasure of actual spectators” (Bishop, 2004, p. 62). This disregard of the participant may be seen as a danger in outcome-oriented participatory performances, as distinguished by Breel (2015). In these pieces, the participatory elements for audience performers must be implemented in

exactly the way the score prescribes and leave hardly any room for the individual's creativity or interpretation. This leads us to the second topic.

#### *The question of agency and empowerment through participation.*

A general observer might believe that it is impossible to include participatory practices in Western art music for various reasons. The music is written by a composer and performed from a score, which normally leaves no room for participatory creativity by audience members. Also, the music and the way it is performed publicly seem to rely on the presentational context, with a stage confronting an auditorium, marking the division between performers and audience (Auslander, 2008, p. 66). In his seminal book *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman defines a performance as an open situation, with no strict roles and no fixed power relations: "all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants" (Goffmann, 1959, p. 8), but a public performance of Western art music is generally undertaken by trained musicians who present something to and perform for a non-specified audience (Small, 1998). Thus, in concerts taking place in formal surroundings, the power relations between musicians and audience are always clear (Nightingale, 1996) and indeed they are often determined already by the architecture of the concert hall or opera house. It has been pointed out that in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries a reversal of power occurred, at least in the realm of British theatre. Where, originally, there was a burden on the actor to please the audience (Sennett, 1974), eventually "actors became the masters, and audiences took on more servile roles" (Fisher, 2003, p. 66). Nowadays, the audience is supposed to wait for input: neither in a traditional Shakespeare production in a major theatre nor in a standard symphony concert is the audience supposed to do anything else besides listening, watching and applauding at certain points.

For all these reasons, "creative expression on the part of the audience member" is difficult to accommodate in Western art music, and the request to move "from a 'sit-back-and-be-told culture' to a 'making-and-doing-culture'" (Brown & Novak-Leonard, 2011, p. 7) is challenging. But, even though the participating audience's agency is limited to its role, predetermined by the musical score – as is the role of the cellist or the flautist – participants might nevertheless experience some sort of empowerment, as will be shown.

#### *The search for community and relationships*

In 1998, Christopher Small issued an important challenge to traditional historical musicology by proposing that performances of music are about relationships. Through the concept of *musicking*, "an activity in which all those present are involved and for whose nature and quality, success or failure, everyone present bears some responsibility", he claimed, we can begin "to see a musical performance as an encounter between human beings" (Small, 1998, p. 10). This went against the received views of the time; as Small observed, Dahlhaus stated that "the concept *work* and not *event* is the cornerstone of music history" (Dahlhaus, 1983, quoted after Small, 1998, p. 4). While some audience members may seek "perfect communion with the composer through a performance" (Small, 1998, p. 44), others may desire unity with the performers (Auslander, 2008, 66). Performing arts audiences are communities, defined by 'publicness' and 'co-presence', as David Hesmondhalgh has argued (Hesmondhalgh, 2013, p. 86, see also Dearn, 2017). O'Sullivan (2009) suggests that audiences perform three essential characteristics of community: shared consciousness, collective rituals and traditions, and a sense of moral responsibility. Barker (2006) refers to an audience as an 'interpretative community' (p. 129), while Karlsen (2014) found music festivals to be a source of informal learning and a potential community of practice.

The aim of the present study was to provide detailed empirical data that could be used to show how these contested notions are reflected in the experiences of audience members at a concert of participatory, contemporary, classical music. As befits the first such investigation, the approach taken was based on the available theoretical literature, most of which focuses on theatre rather than musical performances, and was exploratory rather than hypothesis-driven.

The opportunity to carry out the research emerged as a result of the inauguration of the CONNECT project, the initiative of a Swiss foundation (Art Mentor Foundation Lucerne), aiming at sustainability and at “the building a bank of music with public participation at its very heart” (press release online at <https://www.askoschoenberg.nl/assets/NewsImages/REVISED-Press-Release-March-2016.pdf>, November 17, 2015). CONNECT involves four European contemporary music ensembles: London Sinfonietta, the Amsterdam-based ensemble Asko|Schönberg, Ensemble Modern in Frankfurt, Germany, and Ensemble Remix in Porto, Portugal. Three cycles of CONNECT were planned (2016, 2018, 2020) and for each cycle, two composers were or would be selected and commissioned to write a 20-minute piece of music for up to 15 musicians and participating audience. The slogan *The audience as artist* was used in all marketing materials.

London Sinfonietta, Asko|Schönberg and Ensemble Modern did not commission the research or formulate any research goals beyond stating their interest in knowing more about their audiences in general and the CONNECT audiences in particular. Rather, the research was proposed to them by the first author and they agreed to be part of the study. On this basis, the study was designed to investigate the following research questions:

1. How did audience participants experience the participatory performances? How did they rate the music and their experiences of participation? In particular, what evidence was there in the open-ended responses of participants of the presence and impact on them of active/passive dimensions, empowerment, and community?
2. How were participants’ experiences influenced by differences between the composition of each group of participants in the three performing situations?
3. What lessons can be drawn from these experiences for those organizing concerts with participatory elements? In particular what challenges were presented in these performances in relation to the delivery of artistic quality and aesthetic engagement?

## **Methods**

A range of methods was employed: 1) ethnographic data collection via observation and interviews; 2) a questionnaire survey yielding quantitative and qualitative data; and 3) the analysis of documentation including email correspondence, material published by the participating ensembles and website research.

In order to provide context for the analyses that follow, we introduce the two works that were performed in the CONNECT concerts, and then outline the way they were introduced to participants in workshops and at the performances themselves.

*Materials: The works written for CONNECT*

The ensembles chose two composers for the first cycle of CONNECT, Christian Mason (British, born 1984) and Huang Ruo (Chinese-American, born 1976). Both composers were given briefs about duration, instrumentation and form of the works to be written. The nature of the audience participation – the distinguishing factor of the commissions – was not part of the contracts but, according to members of the organizing team, was communicated privately via email and telephone (personal conversation via email with JT, May 2, 2017). Both compositions are based on the idea of immersion in sounds and are complex in terms of their organizational structure and spatial set-up.

Christian Mason's piece *In the Midst of the Sonorous Islands* is written for an ensemble of professional musicians and audience members participating as performers. The orchestra consists of 15 players and percussion instruments: the nine solo instruments (flute, clarinet, oboe, horn, trumpet, trombone, violin I, violin II, viola) are positioned off-stage and a continuo group (bassoon, tuba, harp, pianoforte, violoncello, double bass, percussion) is on-stage. In the score there is an extra staff for the audience performers, with lines for each of the five groups of instruments played by the audience ('audience instruments'). The audience participants are divided into Groups A (playing aluminum foil, chains and baoding balls, at least 30 players each) and B (playing glass bottles and harmonicas, 24 players each). According to the score, at least 138 audience participants are needed for the execution of the work. The audience instruments, their playing techniques and the cues are explained in minute detail in the preface to the score – the composer even specifies the kind of aluminum foil to be used (score, *In the Midst of the Sonorous Islands*, Breitkopf & Härtel 2016). The preface states that participation in Group A does not require preparation ("anyone who turns up on the night can play foil, chains or baoding balls"), while participants in Group B need to attend "a workshop of c.2 hours technical preparation and will benefit from having previous musical training" as two different techniques are needed to play each of the audience instruments used, glass bottles and harmonicas. At a conference held on the day of the world première, Mason noted that the music for participants, while looking very easy, is "much more complex sonically, [and results in] something I'd never dare to write [otherwise]" (*Connecting Audiences with Contemporary Music*, Southbank Centre, October 22, 2016).

The participants do not play from their own printed music but react to cues given by the percussionist from a raised platform. As early in the piece as bar 2, the conductor is encouraged to "turn to the audience and shape audience activity" and also to "use simple physical gestures to shape their [the participants'] textures". The composer also stresses that "the relationship between the conductor and the audience should be established during the introduction to the concert." The groups of participants are to be spread out in the auditorium, following the principle of "safety in numbers" (all quotations from the preface to score). The professional musicians are also affected by the relatively complicated, immersive set-up as the score contains stage directions for them as well. At the start of the piece, the nine off-stage soloists are positioned far away from the continuo group. After each movement, they move closer to the stage. By the last movement, all the professional musicians are on the stage together.

The piece by Huang Ruo, *The Sonic Great Wall. A Resonant Theatre for Thirteen Musicians and Audience*, requires four wind, three brass and five string instruments, one percussionist and audience participants. The nature of their participation is specified in the score, with an additional staff for the participants. The piece starts with a "relax[ed] meditation session with

the audience in standing-up position”; then “the audience starts quietly humming [...] while standing still with eyes closed”. Meanwhile, the orchestra plays sustained notes and very long, soft chords, with the occasional percussion instrument or didgeridoo joining in. After 54 bars “in total darkness”, in bar 55 the lights slowly fade up, and the violin and double bass signal the audience “to slowly open their eyes and quietly sit down” (score, *The Sonic Great Wall. A Resonant Theatre for Thirteen Musicians and Audience*, Ricordi London 2016). In the performances investigated for the present study, the piece ended the same way, with a mass meditation and slowly fading lights, but this is not specified in the printed score. The piece represents the Great Wall of China as a “communication project, built to connect” (text by Huang Ruo, programme booklet, London Sinfonietta, October 22, 2016), using a series of six mini-stages. Some of the musicians are instructed to walk from one mini-stage to the other while playing, following pathways along which participants are seated on both sides, as though running the gauntlet. The participants on either side of the pathways are then instructed to whisper poems they have chosen themselves “while the solo musician is passing in the front”, decreasing in volume when the soloist has walked past (bar 76). Later, a fourth musician walks along the pathway “while improvising and interpreting words shown or said by audience”, and each audience performer sitting alongside “writes down and displays a selected word from the poem on a blank sheet facing outward, while randomly reading out other people’s displayed words” (bar 239). Musicians repeat the same material, and the participants continue to display and read out words several times, until all the musicians have arrived at their designated mini-stage. Then the participants become quiet again.

While Christian Mason’s piece treats the participants as additional producers of sound and relies on the patterns of sound they create, Huang Ruo’s composition is organized more ‘horizontally’. It calls on participants to provide their own material and to take action leading to close contact and sometimes, ideally, direct interaction and confrontation with the musicians that have not been predetermined by the composer.

### *Procedure: Workshops and performances*

#### The preliminary workshops

‘Reading sessions’ involving the composers and professional musicians preceded three preliminary workshops, involving composers, musicians and potential audience participants, which took place several months before the concerts in 2016. The workshops, like the concerts, were innovative; as the participants were to produce sounds that would be integral to the performances, they were invited to attend together with the composers and musicians. The workshops fulfilled several goals: they were not just part of each ensemble’s education and outreach programme but also functioned as an opportunity for the composers, who were still working on their pieces, to try out their participatory ideas with potential participants and musicians. Two workshops were held with Christian Mason in London in May and Frankfurt in June, and one was held with Huang Ruo in Amsterdam in May. Ten participants attended the workshop in London, 15 in Frankfurt and 20 in Amsterdam. All three workshops were also attended by one or two researchers (JT, JS and a student assistant) who did not take part in any activities but observed from the side of the venue. They also talked informally to participants, musicians and organizers, and took notes.

Generally, far more members of the public signed up for the workshops than actually attended them, suggesting that it could be problematic to recruit people willing to engage in

participatory concerts in the role of audience performers (personal conversation with JT, London, May 18, 2016). Christian Mason brought many different instruments to both workshops, which he distributed to participants so as to try out several techniques, but eventually incorporated only a few of them. At the very first workshop he stated that his goal was to find out “if the audience manages to react to gongs or any other cues, even when they’re excited” (personal conversation with JT, same day). At the Frankfurt workshop, which was otherwise similar to the one held in London, the composer and one of the musicians took it in turns to conduct the participants, indicating changes in dynamics or different levels of intensity through gesture.

Huang Ruo also used his workshop to experiment with participants. He had already decided on the organizational basis of his piece, saying “there are going to be two musicians on each platform, and the audience... they are going to be part of it, they will be participating in the piece – without instruments, just with their voice” (personal conversation with JT, Amsterdam, June 15, 2016). He introduced his work to those who were present and demonstrated how a poem could be recited in Mandarin, encouraging participants to explore different ways of using their voices.

It became clear from the workshops that participants would need clear instructions, and they were slower than had been expected at reacting to certain cues. In a personal conversation with JT Christian Mason observed that the instruments and range of techniques he had envisaged participants using to play them were too “complicated” (London, October 21, 2016) and consequently simplified his piece.

Additional workshops were held immediately before the concerts in London (October 21) and Frankfurt (October 28 and 30).

#### *Pre-concert workshop and performance in London (October 21-22, 2016)*

The workshop was held the day before the concert took place in the concert venue and involved all those who would be taking part in the performances. The atmosphere was friendly and excited. The managing director of the London Sinfonietta, Andrew Burke, began by addressing the 50 or so participants, saying “These pieces can’t be played without you. You are giving the world première tomorrow” (field notes by JT, London, October 21, 2016). Christian Mason then introduced his piece, explaining the different techniques for playing the instruments. As the participants started playing, a dense mass of sound developed. To thin out the texture, Mason suggested that they use strategies that would give rise to a degree of unpredictability. These included falling silent, choosing a number between 1 and 10 and counting down from it before starting to play again.

Huang Ruo then gave an introduction to his piece, in which he clarified his picture of the Great Wall of China with its watchtowers serving as a means of communication along the wall. For the purposes of the London performance he divided the participants into four sections and taught them to sing simple four-bar melodies, reading from notated music, in addition to the meditating, humming and whispering. Music students were appointed as section leaders to conduct their sections, standing up and demonstrating when to start singing.

The participants’ final rehearsal with the professional musicians took place immediately before the concert. Both composers took the participants through the topics of Friday’s

workshop again, and then the focus of attention quickly shifted to the professional musicians, who still had organizational problems to solve. Meanwhile, the participants started to display signs of boredom and started chatting (field notes by JT, London, October 22, 2016).

The London Sinfonietta concert took place on October 22, in St John's Smith Square, a dark and imposing 18<sup>th</sup> century church in Westminster, London, which now functions as a concert hall, with an audience of 224. Amongst the audience seated in chairs in rows, there were several music stands, but no mini-stages. The professional musicians were on a platform at the east end of the church. At the beginning of the concert, Huang Ruo took to the stage and explained everything again, in order not to exclude anybody present from the participatory parts of his piece. The organizers and the composers apparently expected every audience member to participate in the pieces, but this was never clarified. The audience performers who had attended the workshops thus had no advantage over the members of the audience who just showed up for the night, and there was palpable disappointment by the workshop attendees (field notes by JT, London, October 22, 2016).

When the music students stood up in order to cue their sections to start singing, they even conducted and held big signs, because the concert organizers obviously feared that the audience participants wouldn't understand what to do without getting these very clear cues. This disturbed the atmosphere of the performance notably and gave the concert a school-like atmosphere. Towards the end of the piece, during the second humming episode, most of the participants coalesced eventually on the same note (field notes, JT, London, October 22, 2016).

After an interval, Christian Mason explained his piece and the playing techniques required for several minutes, rendering virtually superfluous everything the participants had learned in the workshops they had attended. The conductor rehearsed the participants and professional musicians in excerpts from the piece before it was performed in full. During the rehearsal, members of the audience displayed signs of impatience and started chatting (field notes by JT, London, October 22, 2016). However, the immersive set up of Mason's piece achieved impressive sonic results as the solo musicians who were positioned among members of the audience at the back of the hall gradually moved closer to the continuo musicians on stage, joining them there just before the fourth and final movement. Mason perceived the concert as very successful, describing "mysterious blends between the on-stage and the off-stage sonorities" in the church acoustic (email from Christian Mason to JT, November 7, 2016).

#### *Pre-concert workshops and performance in Frankfurt (October 28 and October 30, 2016)*

Two workshops were held in the Frankfurt LAB, a 'black box' auditorium in a former industrial warehouse, which also served as the performance venue. Prospective audience performers could choose between the workshops, each of which was attended by 30-40 participants.

The first workshop took place on October 28. Christian Mason began by telling participants that they were to 'set the scene' ("your role is to make the landscape through which they [the professional musicians] are walking"). He used a series of images for the different activities they were to perform, such as "imagine yourself like you're a bird in the forest, everyone has his/her own song" (field notes by JT, October 28, 2016). Next, he explained the instruments and techniques for playing them. Then participants practised responding to cues. These were provided by two previously-appointed section leaders who translated cues from the

percussionist into action cues for the audience instrumentalists. After a break, Huang Ruo recited a Chinese poem to motivate participants to become more confident to perform. He instructed them to try to distract the professional musicians from their pathways, telling them to “draw him in, but he’s trying to move on” (field notes by JT, October 28, 2016). In Ruo’s piece, the interactions between the professional musicians and participants sometimes became very loud, ending in short battle-like confrontations.

The second Frankfurt workshop, which took place on October 30, was attended by Andrea Thilo, who would play the role of compère at the concert. Even though the workshop organizers were pretty sure that everybody present understood English (and a vast majority obviously did), they still felt obliged to provide a translator. Thilo thus translated but also acted as a mediator between the composers and the participants. By diligently explaining the humming episodes in Ruo’s piece in German, she cut short every possible personal connection between composer and participants (field notes JT, Frankfurt, October 30, 2016).

The concert also took place on Sunday, October 30, as part of the Ensemble Modern subscription series. At this performance, unlike the one in London, there were mini-stages for the professional musicians in both pieces and effective lighting for musicians and audience instrumentalists. There was an introduction by the compère, then conductor Franck Ollu demonstrated the cues for the end of the first humming episode in Ruo’s piece. Some quite intimate communication situations and dramatic interactions (with musicians moving aggressively towards a loudly vocalising audience member) resulted from the exchanges between the audience members (seated on the pathways between the mini-stages) and the musicians walking through them (field notes JT, Frankfurt, Oct 30, 2016). Not all audience members participated. In the final humming section again the audience coalesced on the note of the double bass.

During Christian Mason’s piece, the roughly 30 people playing baoding balls were allowed to walk around, while the other audience instrumentalists sat in carefully selected seats, devised by the composer in order to allow for the immersive blending of sounds. Mason again used the picture of the audience providing the environment or landscape for the musicians and went to great lengths to explain in minute detail what kind of sound he wanted from the audience instruments ([tin foil sounds] ‘like dying fire, little bits of charcoal, even less sound, like crackling ice’, field notes JT, Frankfurt, October 28, 2016). Interesting effects resulted from the unusual set-up of the hall: the promenading audience members were set in motion every time they played the baoding balls. Mostly, they shifted towards the solo musicians – when they subsequently (after each movement) moved towards the stage at one end of the hall, the whole action also shifted visibly. Spotlights on a group of audience musicians clearly embarrassed them: they shied away from the light, blushed and had obvious difficulties producing the expected sounds (field notes JT, Frankfurt, October 28, 2016).

At the end, there was a lot of applause; “it felt special, and as if something important was happening” (feedback email from Christian Mason to JT, November 7, 2016).

### *The performance in Den Bosch (November 5)*

The concert in Den Bosch on November 5 took place in the Muzerije, an 18<sup>th</sup> century brick building, now housing a cultural centre. The free concert which started on a Saturday at 2 pm was part of the *Novembermuziek* festival. A number of festival concerts was scheduled

directly afterwards, so time was tight for everybody involved. The audience first had to wait in a narrow hallway, but the atmosphere was excited and relaxed. No workshop took place beforehand.

The concert took place in two adjacent rooms; during intermission, the audience was led into a foyer linking one room with the other. Mason's piece, this time scheduled first, was performed in a small dark hall with the audience seated on raised benches on one end and room for the musicians on the other end. In the small hall, everything was intimate and close; especially for the musicians who stood amongst the audience during the first movement. Fedor Teunisse, artistic director of Asko | Schönberg, gave a short introduction to the performance and told the audience members that they could choose whether to participate or not. The intimacy of the hall had several advantages: the cues for the audience instrumentalists worked very well, and the musicians could be seen and experienced at work. However, as the lights stayed on the entire time, some audience members felt observed (field notes JT, Den Bosch, November 5, 2016). Christian Mason wrote two days later: "This was the venue that achieved the greatest sense of equality between professionals and amateurs. It really felt that we were making one orchestra together (something probably impossible in a bigger venue)." (feedback from Christian Mason via email to JT, November 7, 2016).

During the intermission, Teunisse briefly explained the audience actions in Ruo's piece, then the participants were organized into sections and led into the bright atrium of the building where the Ruo piece was performed. In this space, a smaller room had been designed by Theun Mosk, consisting of a white floor and white mini-stages, surrounded by 'walls' of white fabric. Most of the 80 or so participants took seats on benches along the zig-zagging pathways between the mini-stages, some had to stand. The musicians were positioned on the mini-stages and on a slightly bigger stage in one of the corners. In this restricted space, people sat very close to each other, and the musicians were also very close as they walked through the audience as if through a guard of honour. This intimacy increased the embarrassment potential of the situation, while the interactions between musicians and participants were a lot softer than in the Frankfurt concert. Many audience members eventually got distracted (and the explanations had been quite short), so they became confused and forgot their tasks (field notes JT, Den Bosch, November 5, 2016).

### *Questionnaire construction and analysis*

In order to offer all participants an opportunity to provide detailed feedback in a practicable manner a questionnaire was chosen as the means to gather feedback. The questionnaire consisted of three parts: questions about the concert, questions about the workshops, and a section enquiring into musical background and demographics. The full questionnaire in English is given as Appendix 1.

The decision was made to hand out an exactly identical questionnaire to all three audiences directly after the end of each performance, in translated versions in Germany and the Netherlands. This was decided so that direct comparisons could be more easily made between the three audiences. Questionnaires were handed out as participants left the performance space; however, they were invited to remain in the surroundings of the space until they had completed their questionnaires, which were then to be placed in a box or handed to a steward.

Questions 1 to 4 asked for evaluations of both pieces separately (7-point rating scales, ‘strongly disagree – strongly agree’): two of them concerned enjoyment and the feeling that the performance was well-done, two asked for cognitive states (‘I got a clear sense of how the piece is put together’/ ‘I understood what the audience’s part was’). Two open questions asked for positive (‘best thing about the performance’) and negative opinions (‘was there anything you did not like or find difficult?’) about the performance. Several questions referred to the workshops; they asked for attendance, an enjoyment rating and how people had heard about the workshop. There were also two open questions for positive and negative opinions about them (‘what did you enjoy about the workshop?’, ‘was there anything about the workshop that you didn’t enjoy?’). The third part of the questionnaire focused on demographics (age, gender, formal education, years of music lessons, familiarity with the music, self-evaluation (‘I would consider myself a musician.’), regular concert attendance, preferred type of concerts. The last question asked if the respondent would consider attending a similar event again. Some space was also provided for additional comments and thoughts. As the participants submitted their answers in handwriting, the first step in the analytic process was to type them up, to facilitate readability, and put them into a spreadsheet to facilitate analysis. The original orthography was kept, and the comments in German and Dutch were translated into English by the researchers. Qualitative analysis preceded quantitative analysis, as the most important aspect of the investigation was to characterise the conceptual frameworks which participants used to articulate the dimensions of their experience. Quantitative analysis followed, and was concerned to explore similarities and differences between the three audiences in their ratings of the performances, their demographics and musical experience, and the impact of prior attendance at the workshops, since only a minority of each audience participated in these.

## **Results**

Respondents were 273 (43%) of the 638 attenders at three performances of these works. The great majority (77%) were regular classical concert attenders (mean number of concerts attended was 19 per year). However, only a minority (31%) were regular attenders at contemporary classical music concerts. Analysis of qualitative data is presented first, then the detailed analysis of further quantitative data.

### *Qualitative data*

For the qualitative analysis, we used the answers to all the open questions in the questionnaire: Questions 5 (‘What was the best thing about the performance for you?’), 6 (‘What – if anything – did you not like or find difficult about the performance?’), 11 (‘What did you enjoy about the workshop?’) and 12 (‘Was there anything about the workshop you didn’t enjoy?’). The comments section 23 (‘Please let us know about other thoughts or comments.’) was also incorporated; as was, in one case, the answer to Question 22 (‘What is your feeling about attending a similar event again?’). The written responses were analysed using qualitative content analysis; the aim of the analysis was to develop a number of inductive topics that represent the participants’ experiences in these specific concerts. Because the available theoretical topics, stemming from performance research and theatre studies, fall short of the complexity of the material, especially regarding the musical aspect of

this kind of participatory performance, we used data-driven categories which emerged directly from the material.

The participant code is as follows: m/f for gender, then the age, then the letter for the respective concert the respondent attended: L for London, F for Frankfurt and DB for Den Bosch. For example, the code “f40L” indicates a 40-year-old female attendee of the London concert. The participant codes are followed by the letter q and a number, implying which question the quotation was answering (see paragraph above for questions).

Significant data-driven themes emerged which were used for interpretation and analysis:

- I. *special group experience*
- II. *interactive musical experience*
- III. *experience of shifting power relationships.*

The theoretical topics from the literature review – the active/ passive binary, the question of empowerment and agency and the search for community – turn out to be closely connected with the three categories which did emerge from the analysis. The active/ passive binary spreads over all three categories, while the topic ‘empowerment and agency’ is most clearly connected to Category III (experience of shifting power relationships) and to a lesser extent also to Category II (interactive musical experience). The search for community amongst participants and between participants and professional musicians is implicated in Categories I (special group experience) and III (experience of shifting power relationships).

An additional theme which emerged from the material is an evaluation of the participatory situation (Category IV), with the subcategories *derivation of meaning* and *attention issues*.

#### I. Special group experience

The topic *special group experience* is connected with external factors of the performance (such as the acoustics, the lighting or the set-up of the hall and organizational aspects like the compère, the announcements and instructions given), the other people influencing the subjective experience (mostly the musicians and other audience members) and all participatory elements of the performance, especially the audience activities such as playing instruments, singing and humming. Many comments referred to subjective personal experiences or internal dimensions of the experience of a participatory concert. Comments about the special group experience show it to be independent from the musical substance of the performance, participants seem to have appreciated the experience even without taking note of the musical content. As subcategories, *community* and *immersivity* have emerged.

The topic *special group experience* revolves around the idea of *community*: audience members perceive themselves as a group of people who share something (Barker 2006, 125). In our research, participants were aware that they took part in an experiment together, shared a space with professional musicians and other audience members, and created and experienced something together over a course of time.

‘sharing the experience with composers, performers and audience’ f40L/q5

‘possibility to work with other people’ f23L/q11

‘die Erfahrung von Gemeinschaft ohne religiösen oder spirituellen Zusammenhang’ [‘the experience of community without religious or spiritual context’] f52F/q23

Even without the musical framing, respondents noted the *immersivity* of the experience, mainly due to external factors such as the seating (or standing) arrangements.

‘inmitten der Menschen zu stehen’ [‘to be standing in the midst of all the people’]  
f64F/q11

‘musicians around the room made it feel like we were in the piece’ f36L/q5

Some comments in the *immersivity* subcategory were negative as well: several respondents from London commented that the group experience did not work as well as expected, mainly due to the traditional set-up of the hall and its auditorium style.

‘I think it would have been more community collaborative if we were in a circle or at least in a position we could see each other’ m65L/q23

‘Felt a bit isolated from the others, there were no ice breakers, so we were more a room of strangers than a team’ f29Lws/q12

The *special group experience*, one of the goals of participatory activities such as this, was perceived as important; this differentiates such a concert from a ‘normal one’ where audience members do not get to interact as much or as explicitly (Cochrane 2009). For most participants – regular attenders of classical and contemporary music concerts (see III.1) – the concerts constituted a deviation from the ‘norm’ of a classical or classical contemporary music concert.

This category also shows the importance of conceptual and organizational plans which allow audience members to have such a special group experience. This concerns external factors such as an immersive set-up of the hall and the seating arrangements, but also social aspects such as the inclusivity of what is offered to the audience.

## II. Interactive musical experience

The theme *interactive musical experience* connects directly with the music performed. Other audience members, the musicians and the conductor play important roles in the comments. The experience relies on the music and on the way it is performed. As subcategories, *being aware of the musical process* and *accessibility of the music* have emerged.

References to the *interactive musical experience* indicate several dimensions and stages of the interaction between the listener and music, including practice, learning, expertise, rehearsal and performance. They all imply that the participants became *aware of the musical process*. The idea of becoming a performer emerged strongly, of playing a relevant and satisfying part, of creating something and of being important to the outcome of the whole evening. People felt closer to the music than normal, as if they witnessed things audiences normally do not get to see – like, for example, the trajectory from rehearsal to performance.

‘om op te treden met het Schönberg ensemble’ [‘to be performing with the Schönberg ensemble’] m48DB/q5

‘the sense of creating a unique performance together’ m65L/q5

‘seeing how the music came together through rehearsal’ m23Lws/q11

‘very beautiful sounds produced through some audience mechanisms’ m23L/q5

‘participating gave me a greater appreciation of the structure behind the two pieces’ m40L/q5

‘learning to take part and follow the conductor’ m65L/q23

This category also includes respondents who felt dissatisfied with the interactive musical experience, such as with the musical part that was assigned to them. In these cases, they did not feel included in the musical process.

‘the part I play in Ruo's piece wasn't as clear or as satisfying’ m47L/q6

‘not having a score’ f66L/q6

An important subcategory here is the *accessibility of the music* and of the musical experience. Especially in the workshop comments, frequent mention was made of the experience that participants could explore music and instruments in their own time and the fact that art was produced with rudimentary means. Some members of the German audience commended the fact that the music was explained to them: ‘so that the fear of (contemporary) music is taken away from amateurs’ [‘dass Laien die Angst vor Musik (modern) genommen wird’] f61F/q5, while others declared that they disliked this very element.

Several comments about the *accessibility of the music* also refer to metaphors of an immersive and genuinely musical or sonic nature, such as ‘being part of the resonating body’, ‘soundworld’, ‘sound landscape’, ‘being an instrument in an orchestra’. Interestingly, only a few comments even in this category relate directly to the contrasting musical materials provided by the two composers – thus hinting that the kind of music performed may not be perceived as very important, so long as its surface elements fit into the scheme of a contemporary classical music concert.

### III. The experience of shifting power relationships

The topic *experience of shifting power relationships* is connected to experiencing other people, such as the musicians, the composers and other audience members and their impact on subjective personal experiences. This experience is thus less connected to the music and the particulars of the performance; but rather, as in other forms of participatory performances within an institutionalized art frame, shifting hierarchies are being perceived and noticed by respondents (Heim 2016). This does not mean that the actual power structures changed that much or even that all actors perceive these changes – since standard power structures were

reaffirmed afterwards, just like in many other situations of temporary role reversal. The window of opportunity, however, was perceived to have been opened for a short time.

Predictably, the claim that hierarchies are being challenged, that power relations start to shift, at least during the workshop/ performance, is a popular one among those who organize participatory performances. By looking at the terminology used by the respondents to depict the participatory situation, we see that their perceptions of power relationships differ: it is notable that the terms mentioned range on a continuum. Some hint at relationships between audience members and musicians on an equal footing (interaction, connection, interplay, collaboration), some imply top down ways (engagement, integration, being able to take part/ to engage). The subcategories that emerged are *becoming a performer*, *closeness to professionals*, *feeling unnecessary* and *a challenge to the whole concert situation*.

This *experience of shifting power relationships* apparently worked especially well during the workshops, seen as a kind of extension to the concerts: here, amateurs became performers and created art and the barriers of professional music-making were seemingly abolished:

‘dass das Publikum mit wenigen Mitteln Kunst gestalten kann’ [‘that the audience can form/ fashion art with very few resources’] m53F/q11

‘das Ausprobieren-können und dass dieser [der Workshop, J.T.] unabhängig von eigenem musikalischem Können und Verständnis funktionierte’ [‘being able to try out something and that it [the workshop, JT] worked independently from one’s own musical abilities and knowledge’] f52F/q11

‘Neue Musik zu machen’ [‘to make New music’] f64F/q11

The perceived shifting of hierarchies was also implied by some respondents by using quotation marks:

‘die Beteiligung der ‘Zuhörer’’ [‘the participation of the ‘listeners’’] f67F/q5

‘having the orchestra amidst the ‘audience’’ f23L/q5

What was experienced as most special – especially in the workshops – was the exclusivity of the amateurs’ (perceived) *closeness to professionals*; the feeling that they had been let in on professional secrets. On the other hand, the fact that participants noted their unusual proximity to the musicians made the habitual gap even more visible (‘schön, die Musiker alle mal beim Essen zu sehen’ [‘It was nice to see the musicians eating for once’] f57F/q23.

‘having a closer connection to performers and conductor by being part of it’ f56L/q5

‘being with the orchestra’ m47L/q11

‘Nähe zu Komponisten’ [‘the closeness to the composers’] f46F/q11

‘Einblick in die kreative Berufsmusiker-Welt’ [‘insights into the creative world of professional musicians’] f35F\_1/q11

The downside to the shifting power relationships and the perceived closeness was that a few respondents complained about *feeling unnecessary*, about not being taken seriously or feeling underestimated, hinting at the individuality of the experience. This frustration may be a consequence of the perceived intimacy implying equality for all: respondents noticed that in the end, professionals still remained professionals, and amateurs remained amateurs. Also, respondents noted that in the realm of difficult classical contemporary music as was played here, composers and organizers were not sure about the capabilities of the participants. The scope of activities for participants was thus quite narrow and especially in London, they were closely supervised.

‘kinderachtige participatie Mason’ [‘child-like participation in Mason’] m37DB/q6

‘I think the audience (particularly rehearsed) could have managed a bigger/ more complicated part. This would avoid the 'cameo' sensation’ f40L/q23

‘im Mason Stück kam der Beitrag des Publikums nicht durch – er war quasi überflüssig’ [‘in the Mason piece, the contribution of the audience didn’t get through – it was quasi unnecessary’] f77F/q6

A perception of challenged power relationships can also lead to a *challenge to the whole concert situation* and – at least in the experience of some participants – to a collapse of the whole performance. Several respondents complained that the concert had turned into an experimental or an educational situation (especially given that some spent several hours in workshops preceding the concerts). Through the lengthy introductions as mentioned above, the musicians became teachers, the participants mere students, and the concert stopped being a concert.

‘I think that there was too much instruction in the beginning of each piece - we could easily have learned along with the piece. It lost the concert feeling a bit. ... I think it is important that the concert doesn’t lose its professional aura and profile and that engaging the audience does not need much instruction and rehearsal. I like to participate but I also like to attend, get moved and touched – the staged performance is still important. Otherwise, I kind of feel being part of an educational situation and not an artistic and cultural event’ f40L/q22

‘It did feel more like an experiment than a performance, which was slightly weird as an audience member’ m15L/q23

#### IV. Evaluation of the participatory situation

In the questionnaires, participants not only reported about what they experienced but they also assessed and evaluated the participatory situation. Here, the comments are of a self-evaluative character, reasoning about the impact of the participatory elements on respondents’ motivations and on attention issues. This topic connects to subjective personal experiences and of course to the participatory elements of the performance. As subcategories, *derivation of meaning* and *attention issues* emerged.

It was striking to see that several participants seemed to *derive meaning* out of their participatory performance, e.g. an influence of the participatory project on their motivations

to do other things in the future. The ‘activation’ of participants thus appears to remind them of their potential – of what they had achieved or mastered in their past – and to influence their motivations and their life journey, as human beings, concert visitors, musicians and *musickers*. One lady said that it was wonderful to engage with poetry again (it was announced on the website that workshop participants could bring a poem for the Ruo piece), and that she had taken this engagement with poetry as a pretext to read some poems to her hospitalized mother (personal conversation with participants, JT, Frankfurt, October 28 2016). The short interactions with other audience members, the music and the professional musicians seemed to open up a small window of opportunity and show attendees what could be possible (see also the utopian flavor in one participant’s comment: ‘überall, wo der Trennungsstrich zwischen Publikum und Orchester aufgehoben wird, kommt Leben rein’ [‘every time the divide between audience and orchestras is lifted, it becomes lively’]) (personal conversation with JT, Frankfurt, October 28 2016).

‘being part of an ensemble/ orchestra again’ f35L/q11

‘I am inspired to pick up my flute again’ f49L/q23

‘I have never been to a classical event and it was fantastic to see the brilliance of the conductor and musicians perform’ f49L/q23

‘Möglichkeit, Musik mit unterschiedlichen Menschen zu machen, die vielleicht noch nie in ihrem Leben Musik gemacht haben’ [‘the opportunity to make music together with people who may have never done that in their lives’] f40F/q23

‘die Suche nach der Antwort auf die Frage, was uns als Menschen gemeinsam ist’ [‘the search for the answer to the question what unites us as human beings’] f52F/q23

The subcategory *attention issues* refers to positive or negative consequences of the participatory elements; quite a number of respondents mentioned their difficulty to do several things at once, a feeling of being torn between listening and participating. Both activities, the listening and the participating, seemed to vie with each other for the attention of each respondent. Some perceived the participation itself as distracting from the music, some felt that contemporary classical music already demands a lot of attention, making participation by the listeners too much to handle.

‘one loses the experience of the entire piece’ m76L/q23

‘Die neue Musik verlangt so viel Aufmerksamkeit, da muss man nicht unbedingt mitmachen...’ [‘New music asks for so much attention that one doesn’t really have to join in...’] f59F/q23

‘sometimes I couldn’t enjoy the music as I was more focused on doing my start/end playing well, I would add one more piece where we don’t participate to close eyes and relax’ f42L/q23

Small described concert listeners as ‘spectators with nothing to contribute but our attention to the spectacle that has been arranged for us’ (Small 1998, 44), and even though this view has frequently been challenged (Pitts 2005; Clarke 2005; Pitts 2014), and we should avoid to underestimate the social relevance of paying attention being key to the social constitution of

performance (Polak 2007). The comments of participants show how difficult it can be to add a further element to listeners' attention – it appears as if any addition would result in a state of competition between different aspects of behavior in a situation where overall attentional resources are limited. The possible effect of such fragmentation of attention is definitely one of the risks of actively involving an audience.

The attention issue, however, was also perceived positively: several respondents stated that the participatory elements had made them even more attentive. This leads to a confirmation of what practitioners hope to see as result of the introduction of participatory elements: that they suspend the barriers between audience and musicians and thus enhance the concert experience.

‘Wenn man die Musik mitübt, hört man 10x mehr, als wenn man nur hört’ [‘if you go along practising the music, you listen to 10x more things than when you're only listening’] m51F/q11

‘Meedoen betekent opletten!’ [‘participating means being attentive’] f28DB/q5

‘participating made me watch & listen closely – more than I usually do’ m69L/q23

‘die Erfahrung, als Zuschauer ‘mitzumachen’, ändert die Ohren’ [‘the experience to participate actively as listener changes the ears’] m73F/q23

### *Quantitative data*

In order to explore how participant experience was modulated by differences between the three performing situations (including the composition of the audience), we employed quantitative analysis of the questionnaire data.

Several questions posed explored basic demographics, and the musical background and experience of audience members. The mean proportion of participants who completed the questionnaire was a substantial 43% and this was not significantly different for the three venues (as shown in table 1). Since completing the questionnaire was voluntary and time-consuming (up to 30 minutes) this points to a significant engagement and interest in the research process on the part of participants. It seemed to really matter to them that their views were recorded.

The mean age of the audiences differed according to venue, with the London audience containing a significantly greater proportion of younger people than the other two audiences, bringing the mean age to 39 (15 years below that in Frankfurt and Den Bosch). The Den Bosch audience contained significantly fewer university graduates than the other two audiences (as shown in table 1).

On the music-specific descriptors, the London participants scored significantly higher on the self-rating of themselves as musicians than did the other two audiences. This was in part due to a significant contingent of students from music colleges in the London concert, which was not a feature of the other two concerts. This fact also helps to account for the lower average age of the London audience. Despite this difference, the mean number of years of music lessons taken did not significantly differ between the audiences, the average number of years

being 10; neither did the self-rated familiarity with contemporary music (mean = 3.71 on a 5-point scale where 1 = none, and 5 = a great deal); nor did the proportion of participants regularly attending contemporary music concerts (mean = 31%). Thus, although the London audience contained more musicians than the other audiences, these musicians did not seem to manifest a greater prior engagement with contemporary music of the sort being performed at these concerts. Indeed, the audience that contained the most frequent attenders at live musical events was the Den Bosch audience (mean of 32 per year), and the audience containing the highest percentage of regular attenders at classical concerts was the Frankfurt audience (83%). The Den Bosch audience contained the lowest proportion of classical concert attenders, (63%), but even this figure was quite high, and far higher than for contemporary classical concert attendance. Thus we could say that these participants were experienced consumers of classical concerts, but not so much of contemporary music. In key respects, therefore, these were quite similar audiences in the three venues.

Thus, the way these concerts were promoted appears to have been successful in recruiting participants previously somewhat unfamiliar with contemporary music concert attendance, while nevertheless being regular classical concert goers.

Table 1: Comparison of the three audiences on demographic measures

[Insert Table 1 about here]

*Effect of demographics and prior musical experience on ratings of the performances*

Table 2: Mean ratings for the Mason and Ruo pieces (all respondents)

<i>7 point-scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree)</i>	Mason	Ruo
I enjoyed this piece	5.8	5.7
I feel that this performance was well done	6.3	6.2
I got a clear sense of how the piece is put together	5.9	5.9
I understood what the audiences' part was	6.4	6.2

Respondent ratings for the two performances show that both affective and cognitive reactions to each piece were uniformly high, although one cannot discount the possibility of some desirability bias in the responses (Johanson & Glow, 2015). There were no significant differences in these responses between the three locations, as tested by one-way ANOVAs ( $p > 0.05$  in all cases).

Statistical analysis revealed only six significant relationships (over 72 analyses) between these ratings and the characteristics of the participants (as presented in Table 1). Age and enjoyment were significantly positively correlated, such that older participants rated their enjoyment of the Ruo piece more highly than younger participants ( $r = .22, p < 0.01$ ). There were no other significant age effects. Rating the Mason performance 'well done' was significantly positively correlated with self-rating of being a musician ( $r = .16, p = 0.01$ ) and also with the number of years of music lessons ( $r = .13, p < 0.05$ ). There were no significant effects of familiarity with contemporary music – ratings did not depend on prior familiarity. However, enjoyment of both pieces negatively correlated with overall concert

attendance in the preceding year (Mason  $r = -.23$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ; Ruo  $r = -.16$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ). The more concerts attended, the less these pieces were enjoyed.

Finally, participants who regularly attended classical concerts got a clearer sense of how the Ruo piece was put together (mean = 6.03) than those who did not attend classical concerts (mean = 5.38,  $p < 0.01$ ). There were no statistically significant effects associated with regular attendance at contemporary music concerts.

In sum then, the impact of demographics and prior musical experience on the global ratings of the specific concert experience was small. The vast majority of the ratings were unaffected by these factors, which suggests that, in general, enjoyment of and engagement in these performances did not require a particular background or level of musical experience. The small number of significant effects observed are consistent with the view that in some cases increased experience tends to lead to both greater understanding and less enjoyment. This is unsurprising – connoisseurs can make finer distinctions and be more critical. What is perhaps more surprising is that these differences are not dependent on specific experience with contemporary music, but rather on levels of engagement with classical music more generally.

#### *Effect of prior attendance at the workshops.*

The participants contained those who had attended one or both pre-concert workshop as well as those attending neither. This allowed examination of effect of workshop attendance on ratings of the pieces. There were no significant effects on any ratings of attendance at the early workshops. However, attendance at the workshops immediately preceding the concert did have significant effects. Table 3 shows the mean ratings for the Mason and Ruo pieces according to attendance at this later workshop. Significance was tested by one-way analysis of variance.

Table 3: Mean ratings for the Mason and Ruo pieces (attendees at subsequent workshops)

[Insert Table 3 about here]

Attendance at the workshop had a significantly positive effect on all ratings for both pieces. However, the effect was small. Workshop attenders and non-attenders both gave high ratings. Since all participants received instruction and training in their performance roles during the concert itself, this may have diminished the advantage experienced by the workshop attenders. That the early workshop had no significant effect on the participants' experience could be due to two factors. Firstly the lack of effect could simply reflect the passage of time – they may simply have forgotten any details after so many months; secondly, the compositions were in a more preliminary form at that early stage, and their final manifestations could have been sufficiently different to diminish any positive effect of encountering them early on.

## **Discussion and Conclusions**

This study focused on the reactions of those who attended the CONNECT concerts; we were above all interested to know how audience participants experienced the *participatory elements* of the performances.

The first research question sought evidence of the presence and impact of the dimensions of active/passive, empowerment, and community in free audience responses. We found that participants experienced a mixture of group feelings and personal emotions, of being active and of being a recipient of instructions, of interacting with the music, of being a part of a community and of feeling empowered. All the above mentioned dimensions were present, and they were also quite prominent. The active/ passive distinction, ill-defined as it is, is present, as is the concept of a perceived community as the goal of the performance – being a member of an audience always is a combination of an individual experience and a group experience (even though in classical music this may not be explicit). But a very salient dimension is the experience of shifting power relationships. This perception of empowerment in a familiar situation can lead to the derivation of new meaning (White, 2013), and our data shows how quickly participants feel that power relationships in a performance situation are contested. As a result, the perceived gap between performers and audience is diminished or bridged, which may be perceived as an ‘emancipatory act’ (Dinkla, 1996, pp. 282-3). Dinkla warns though that the border to manipulation at this point is fragile, which becomes obvious in the data as well: alongside a handful of people who hated almost everything about the concerts there was a considerable number of comments about expectations raised but not fulfilled. Audience participation comes with a personal risk of exposure for the audience members (White 2013), and some CONNECT respondents did indeed express their feeling of not taken seriously in this exposed situation, at feeling underestimated, manipulated and reduced to child-like actions (see III above). Perceiving shifting power relationships can thus be liberating and empowering, but it can also expose the individual. There is definitely a risk in this part of the audience members’ experiences during participatory projects. However, we are able to confidently conclude that the dimensions of active/passive, empowerment, and community, as found in the available theoretical literature, figure prominently in our data.

The second research question asked whether and how the audience experience was different as result of the three different performing situations. This was explored through a quantitative exploration of participant responses to the performances which showed a high degree of affective and cognitive response to both new pieces in all venues. This response was further (and systematically) heightened among those who had attended workshops immediately prior to the performance. In contrast, effects of demographics and prior musical experience on response were few across the three different settings. Although tangible differences in presentation, setting, and response could be observed in the three different venues, these seemed not to substantially affect the positive reaction to the initiative. Attendance at the workshop immediately prior to the concert was the most systematic influence on participant response, making an overall positive response even more positive.

The third research question asked for lessons which can be drawn from these experiences for those organizing concerts with participatory elements. Here we consider the organization of the project, the message to be conveyed to the participants and the inclusivity of the project.

A very important part of the organization of such a project appears to be the workshops. They were a critical component of the audience experience during CONNECT and a constitutive element of the whole participatory project, even though only a proportion of the participants attended them. The workshops had a positive effect on the attitude of those who attended and

on their ratings for the music (see III above). Running well-organized workshops with clear and effective goals and a relaxed, inclusive atmosphere could be among the most important factors determining the success of similar initiatives. The workshops might contribute towards making audience participation projects not only effective, but also perceived as substantial by audience and musicians. Granting audience members access to professional musicians and allowing (or even fostering) interaction, however minimal, meets inclusion goals – the social significance of having all (non-professional and professional) participants in one room, speaking to each other as equals, has been welcomed by the CONNECT audiences. The workshops thus moved beyond the active/ passive distinction mentioned in the literature review; and they demonstrably provided the kind of community attendees may be looking for.

The organization of such a participatory project also requires someone who leads during workshops and performances by talking and explaining content to audience members. This person may be the director/ manager of the ensemble, the conductor, a composer, a musician or a specially hired professional facilitator or compère. While seeing and hearing a composer speak about her work can be very special, the presentation might risk being perceived as unprofessional or too complicated. On the other hand, while a professional facilitator or compère, even without insider knowledge, can possibly set a better tone in providing clear guidance to the audience or empowering its members, facilitation through somebody directly involved in the artistic endeavor has the advantage of potentially delivering personal artistic insights to the audience members and establishing a sense of greater equality, at least for a short time. In the CONNECT series, different solutions were tried out, with mixed success.

Generally speaking, the message to be conveyed to participants, also via promotional material, is of some importance. The goal of the CONNECT ensembles – London Sinfonietta, Ensemble Modern and ASKO Schönberg – in taking part in the participatory performances was not entirely clear. Was it to attract new audiences; to bind existing audiences closer to the ensemble; to stage something quite unusual (yet still overwhelmingly traditional, see below); or to take part in trendy participatory art? In any case, it has become clear that the claim ‘audience as artist’, used by all CONNECT marketing material, was misleading; ‘audience as performer’ would have been considerably more to the point. Generally, this implies that the scope of action allotted to participating audience members has to be made clear, which was not always the case.

The inclusive character of the participatory endeavour is shown by our study to have very high importance. Those putting on such events thus have the challenge of ensuring that as many audience members as possible feel taken seriously, involved and engaged. This implies that the participatory activities should be designed in order to possibly include everybody – not too difficult and not too simple at the same time. In this respect, it is necessary to keep in mind the ambiguity many CONNECT audience members perceived concerning the simultaneous demands of listening and playing, of paying attention to the music, the musicians and the conductor’s cues. This may again hint at the above mentioned, hitherto ill-defined active/ passive distinction – if audience members perceive themselves as passive in a ‘standard’ concert, what does ‘activity’ mean for them? Could this ambivalence regarding activity and passivity be the reason why so many participants felt distracted by the activities or claimed that they couldn’t do several things at the same time? It might be concluded that some audience members believe that activity – in whatever sense – is something that should not be encouraged in a concert, and that, on the other hand, those who commented that participation increased their attentiveness normally experience themselves as not entirely

passive.

The available theoretical literature, arising as it does mostly from performance and theatre studies, mostly excludes a key aspect of the concerts explored here: the musical content itself. As the CONNECT project started with commissions to composers, there was one certainty from the start: that there was a score to perform differentiated this project from some other participatory art projects. However, possibly the most surprising finding of the entire investigation was the conclusion that the nature of the music as such didn't really seem to matter very much to the participants: in the experiences reported by the respondents, the participatory activities dominated. In the free questionnaire responses, only a handful of comments referred directly to the music and its elements or structure. At one occasion where one of the researchers presented first results of this study, a lady who had attended the CONNECT performance in Frankfurt claimed that she hadn't been aware that composers were involved. She thought the music was part improvised, part devised by the producers of the evening (personal conversation with JT, Frankfurt, October 21, 2017). It could be claimed thus that the kind of music performed at such an event is not important; so long as it is perceived as relatively accessible and enables interactive experiences.

It could be claimed that the concept of participatory music directly contradicts the idea of a composed work. So long as music for a participatory performance is composed by someone, as long as a score exists which prescribes every moment and every movement, participatory elements will tend to come across as somewhat limited and artificially constrained. Most CONNECT audience members in all three cities perceived the situation as constructed and as a deviation from the norm of a 'standard concert', but it also influenced their willingness to talk and to provide information about their unusual experiences. Our research thus took advantage of the intimacy and immediacy of the situation, and of audience members who mostly experienced themselves – for once in the realm of classical music – as empowered, competent and taken seriously.

We are aware of the limitations of our research. More research on similar participatory projects and performances is needed, but one result of our study is clear. Notwithstanding the diverse situations of the performances and the cultural differences (and age differences, see above) between the audiences, the judgements and feelings of the respondents were remarkably similar. The great majority of questionnaire respondents in all three cities said they would visit a similar concert again. This hints at a certain need for – or at least interest in – audience participation, especially in the realm of institutionalized classical music – exactly where there seems to be normally no place for it.

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