# Just join in? Audience Participation in Classical Contemporary Music

## Empirical Insights into Theory and Practice

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> "We just expect to have fun, to hear the piece and how it's meant to sound, to play a bit of tin foil and a bottle. I like the fact that you can just participate and you don't have to be a musician as such, 'cause I find it egalitarian and it's kind of quite… everyone's equal, I can participate in the same way anyone else can, I like that, it makes it accessible, it's a lovely idea." (Interview with participant, JT, London, June 15, 2016)

This is how one audience member, participating in a pre-concert workshop in London in June 2016, explained her expectations and motivation. The quote contains several important points: the participant, a woman in her sixties, expects to have fun and to play instruments, to produce sounds and contribute to the music. She counts on being a part of the performance, and she is looking forward to put away the differences between "us" and "them", i.e. audience and musicians. She mentions the word "accessible", and wants to derive meaning from the situation. Three areas of conflict are already noticeable from this short quote: A) the participant perceives a gap between music producers and music receivers, B) the participatory performance claims to be accessible and to bridge this gap, and C) the participant counts on getting some arcane knowledge from the other side: she hopes to be told "how it is meant to sound" (interview with participant, JT, London, June 15, 2016).

In this essay, I will present findings about a very special format of *Musikvermittlung*: participatory performances in the realm of contemporary

classical music. Our study[1] is indebted to an interest in the audience experience in general and at participatory performances in particular. I will give an outline of the project, describe the performances which we evaluated and present our empirical research on audience reactions. The essay will conclude with a consideration of the promises and pitfalls of participatory projects.

## Participatory Projects as Part of *Musikvermittlung*

For many reasons, institutions working in the realm of classical music have become more and more active in *Musikvermittlung* and have started looking into more inclusive, open-ended and alternative performance formats. Facilitated by practitioners of *Musikvermittlung*, audience members are invited and allowed to come closer, to enter formerly restricted spaces, to witness rehearsals, and participate in planning, organisation and performances to differing degrees. The classical and contemporary classical music scene, often criticised as over-ritualised and exclusive, has developed a considerable interest in participatory performances, supported by political considerations and demands to democratise culture (White 2013: 1, Brown/Novak-Leonard 2011). Participatory formats as a form of *Musikvermittlung*, such as the one evaluated here, have huge potential to address new audiences and to bind existing audiences closer by providing offers to connect with, think about, identify with or generally derive relevance or meaning from a performance (Barker 2006). Performances like these may loosen the strict framework of classical music in order to facilitate other experiences, and they may generally alter "the conventions of performance and audience relationships" (White 2013: 1).

Western classical music, as well as other art musics in India, Japan, and China, has gone through different stages of professionalisation; subsequently, roles in the performance of different kinds of music have become pre-determined. Today, Europe counts thousands of professional music ensembles and professional musicians who make their living (more or less) performing the kind of music they have been trained to play. In official and institutional settings of Western classical music there is usually no space for amateurs. This is why participatory performances within this ritualised and professionalised

1 Research has been conducted together with John Sloboda, Guildhall School of Music. Some of the results have already been published as Toelle/Sloboda (2019). This essay, however, was written solely by Jutta Toelle.

framework might seem contradictory, at first sight. Also, some musicians and ensembles are skeptical, fearing "the dumbing down of the legacy of professional artistic production" (Brown/Novak-Leonard 2011: 12).

In general, participatory performances such as those featured in this essay are not entirely new, even in the apparently restrictive environment of a Western concert hall. Since the 1960s, composers as diverse as Iannis Xenakis ("Oresteia", 1966), Francois-Bernard Mâche ("Répliques, pour orchestre et public muni de 800 appeaux", 1969), Malcolm Williamson ("The Stone Wall", mini opera designed for audience participation, 1971), Luc Ferrari ("Société V: Participation or not participation", 1981), Dieter Schnebel ("Abfälle I. 1. Reactions", 1960), Cornelius Cardew ("The Great Learning", 1968–71), Luciano Berio ("Sequenza VII", 1969), Tan Dun ("Orchestral Theatre II: Re", for two orchestras, bass and audience, 1993) and others 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 expressly inclusive and participatory performances: Rzewski's piece is scored "for any number of musicians playing melody instruments and any number of nonmusicians playing anything" (Rzewski 1969 [score]), while Andriessen's composition "Volkslied" calls for "an unlimited number and kinds of instruments in all octaves" (Andriessen 1971 [score]). Most of these participatory performance projects were rooted in political convictions, short-lived and bound to their time. Of these initiatives, no empirical data on participants' experiences were collected, and published accounts of these projects are largely biographical or anecdotal.

The term "participation" itself is difficult to pin down; it can mean a lot of different things. When describing performance situations, Alan S. Brown and Jennifer L. Novak-Leonard call the mere watching of a performance "observational participation" (Brown/Novak-Leonard 2011: 1) and then go on to classify participatory projects into five stages of involvement, ranging from more receptive – merely spectating or watching with "enhanced engagement" – to different stages of participatory involvement (stages 1, 2, and 3). Their participatory list starts with a performance with "crowdsourcing artistic content" (stage 1), where the audience is not on-stage but has at least contributed to the artistic work. Stage 2, "co-creation", is described as a project where "audience members become directly involved in the artistic experience" and "some level of artistic control is ceded to the participant/audience member". The authors name the highest stage 3 "audience-as-artist" ("where audience members take control, outcome depends on participants"). A lot of their classification, in a

publication intended more for arts practitioners than for researchers, has to do with the ceding of control by the performance organisers, and we will see that this ceding (and the debates around it) plays a significant role in all participatory projects.

In the context of this essay, I use the term *participation* or *participatory performance* (following Astrid Breel) in order to express "the contribution of audience members, determined mainly by the composer (and to a lesser extent by the circumstances of the performance), to the performance of the musical score" (Breel 2015: 369). She distinguishes pieces like the ones that will be evaluated here, 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: 369). The performances I will focus on could thus be called *outcome-oriented participatory performances*, as opposed to more process-oriented ones. I will also use the term *participants* more or less interchangeably with *audience members*, because in the performances we evaluated the difference between those who participated and those who did not was not quite clear. It was never questioned if all audience members were actively participating or not; at one performance, everybody did take part and play, at another, many people eventually stopped participating and just sat quietly with folded arms.

## The Pieces and Performances

For this study, we evaluated three performances in three cities – London, Frankfurt am Main, s'Hertogenbosch – in which three different ensembles performed the same two commissioned and newly composed pieces: "In the Midst of the Sonorous Islands" by Christian Mason (Mason 2016), and "The Sonic Great Wall. A Resonant Theatre for Thirteen Musicians and Audience" by Huang Ruo (Ruo 2016).[2] Both compositions include parts for audience members who take the role of performers, play instruments, meditate, whisper, hum and sing. The active participation of the audience not only forms an intrinsic part of both compositions, but had already been formulated in a commission brief which the composers received from the music ensembles.

2 For more information concerning the planning and process of the commissions, performances etc., see Toelle/Sloboda (2019).

The piece by Mason, "In the Midst of the Sonorous Islands", relies on ensemble musicians and audience members. The orchestra consists of 15 players plus percussion; a group of soloists is positioned off-stage, a continuo group on-stage. The spatial set-up of the piece is immersive and relatively complicated: after every movement the off-stage soloists move a bit closer towards the stage. In the score, there are extra staves for the five audience instruments, glass bottles, baoding balls, aluminum foil, chains and harmonicas. Five pages of text explain the audience activities, mostly by specifying playing techniques and cues. 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 thus needed for the execution of the work. The preface to the score 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" (Mason 2016: 4) as two different techniques are needed to play each of the audience instruments used, glass bottles and harmonicas. Just before the premiere, Mason said that the music for participants, while looking very easy, was "much more complex sonically, [and results in] something I'd never dare to write" (Mason, interview with JT, London, October 22, 2016).

The piece by Ruo, "The Sonic Great Wall. A Resonant Theatre for Thirteen Musicians and Audience", is scored for four wind, three brass and five string instruments, one percussionist and audience participants. The nature of the audience participation is specified in the score, in an additional stave. The composition 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" (Ruo 2016: 1). 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" (Ruo 2016: 13). In the performances investigated for the present study, the piece ended identically every time, with a mass meditation and slowly fading lights, but this is not specified in the printed score. The composition is supposed to represent the Great Wall of China as a "communication project, built to connect" (Ruo, interview with JT, London, October 22, 2016), by using a series of platforms. 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. The audience participants on either side of the pathways are then instructed to whisper poems; later, one musician walks along the pathway "while improvising and interpreting words shown or said by audience", and each audience participant 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" (Ruo 2016: 131). Musicians repeat the material, and the participants continue to display and read out words several times, until all musicians have arrived at their designated platform and the audience participants become quiet again.[3]

Both compositions are based on the idea of immersion in sounds and are complex in terms of their organisational structure and spatial set-up. Both compositions do not specify if all audience members present are allowed to – or have to – participate, and only one composer specified the training needed before the performance. This turned out to be a point of conflict: at one performance, audience members who had taken part in a workshop mingled with those who hadn't. Some members of the first group thus felt superior to those in the other group and complained about the alleged waste of time: why did they take part in the workshop and the other group just showed up and was still allowed to participate? (interview with participant, JT, London, June 15, 2016)

The performances took place in London (London Sinfonietta in St. John's Smith Square, October 22, 2016), Frankfurt (Ensemble Modern in Frankfurt LAB, October 20, 2016) and s'Hertogenbosch in the southern Netherlands (Ensemble ASKO Schönberg in the Muzerije, November 5, 2016). For our study, we used a multitude of empirical methods: we handed out questionnaires, which were identical in content in English, German and Dutch, to every audience member who was willing to take one. From the total of 638 paying attendees at the three performances, we received back and evaluated 273 questionnaires, which constitutes a very good return quote of 43%. In addition to the questionnaire survey, we collected ethnographic data via observation and informal interviews. Furthermore, we analysed the documentation process, including email correspondence, as well as printed and online material published by the participating ensembles.

3 For more detailed information concerning the compositions see Toelle/Sloboda (2019).

## The quest for the audience experience

The quest to know more about what the audience really gets from a performance is alive in all sectors of the performing arts (Burland/Pitts 2014). However, not a lot of audience research (beyond marketing studies) has been conducted in the realm of classical music performances, and even though our study is based on performances of classical contemporary music, it is music with participatory elements. We therefore felt the need to look beyond the disciplines and based our study design on topics prevalent in audience research in the field of theatre studies: the active/passive binary, the question of empowerment and agency and the search for community.

The differentiation of everybody present during a performance into active and passive is of utmost importance and at the same time very contested. The debate connects to the different stages of participation described above, but researchers also ponder the question of how active or passive audience members are when "merely" sitting and listening (Bishop 2006, Rancière 2011, Reason 2015, Breel 2015). Questions of empowerment and agency have also arisen, "relationships in the concert hall" (Small 1998) have been questioned: who is allowed to do what by whom, and who commands this agency? It seems most important then to stress that the relationship between performers and audience members is no dichotomy, but a continuum. As Ioannis Tsiouladis and Elina Hytönen-Ng argue, the interaction between both sides "oscillates between brief moments of *live* co-existence and long periods of preparation, expectation and imagination" (Tsiouladis/Hytönen-Ng 2016: 5–7).

In addition, there are after-effects to be taken into consideration – even ten, twenty or fifty years later, we can still be part of an audience at a particular event. We thus "need to look at the unfolding of the whole 'communicative event' which does not only include the current performance but also a limitless range of parallel discourses, historical and contemporary" (Tsiouladis/Hytönen-Ng 2016: 5–7).

In 1998, Christopher Small issued an important challenge to traditional historical musicology by proposing that performances of music are about relationships (see also Schütz 1951). By introducing the concept of "musicking", as "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 that we can begin "to see a musical performance as an encounter between human beings" (Small 1998: 10). Audience members may seek "perfect communion with the composer through a performance" (Small 1998: 44), oth-

ers may desire unity with the performers (Auslander 2008: 66), and of course audiences are also communities, defined by "publicness" and "co-presence", as David Hesmondhalgh has argued (Hesmondhalgh 2013: 86, see also Dearn 2017). Terry O'Sullivan suggests that audiences display three essential characteristics of community: shared consciousness, collective rituals and traditions, and a sense of moral responsibility (O'Sullivan 2009: 212). In our research, the contradictory situation of being single while together, and feeling excluded or included in this group plays a significant role. Georgina Born calls on audience researchers to avoid the reduction of the audience experience to listening and advocates that they "combine the practice and experience of reception with the need to attend to audiences as collectivities, in all their singularity" (Born 2020: 52). Hence, a researcher enters uncharted terrain when starting to talk about *the audience* versus *the audience member/members*.

Along these lines, in a participatory project such as the ones evaluated by us, some of the topics described become even more prevalent: the experience of being alone/alone in a crowd versus the group experience became more contested through the participatory elements of the performance, while the disputable division of everybody present into active and passive, into music producers and music receivers, turned out to be a compelling topic.

The basic research question eventually emerged behind our quest for the audience experience: given the already complicated and not very well researched "relationships in the concert hall" (Small 1998), how do the participatory elements of a performance influence these, in the experience of audience members? Exploring a core problem of participatory performances, we set out to explain the potential embarrassment raised by them, on the one hand, and the high hopes which organisers set on them, on the other:

> "What is it that makes participation exciting to some audiences, and horrifying to others? Or, perhaps, what makes some kinds of audience participation seem trivial and embarrassing, and others substantial, seductive and effective? In what ways are the additional activities (additional to the activity that usually adheres to the role of 'audience member', that is) of audience members meaningful?" (White 2013: 1)

This last concept, meaningfulness, eventually turned out to be the most compelling topic of this research, and maybe even the key to a successful participatory performance.

For the qualitative data, the focus of this essay, we used the answers to all open questions in the questionnaire:

- Question 5: "What was the best thing about the performance for you?"
- Question 6: "What – if anything – did you not like or find difficult about the performance?"
- Question 11: "What did you enjoy about the workshop?"
- Question 12: "Was there anything about the workshop you didn't enjoy?"

The comments section (question 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?"

## Category Building and Central Findings

The transcribed questionnaire results and interviews, our collected empirical material, was analysed using a thematic analysis framework in accordance with criteria outlined by Terry et al. (2017). In addition, quotes were identified and collected as qualitative evidence. The analysis tried to take into account the "messiness" of coding and classification (Law 2004). Of the 15 themes which resulted from the categorisation process, four recurrent themes of participants' experiences eventually emerged. These categories are closely connected to the central theoretical topics mentioned above: a "special group experience", an "interactive musical experience" and the "experience of shifting power relationships". An additional, more evaluative category which emerged was an evaluation of the participatory situation, covering "attention issues" and "meaningfulness".

The category "special group experience" revolves around the group feeling; obviously audience members experienced themselves as a group of people who have something in common (Barker 2006: 125). Participants commented that they liked "sharing the experience", "to be standing in the midst of all the people" (f64F/q11)[4] and "the experience of community without religious or spiritual connection" (f52F/q23). That the contradictory feelings of being single

4 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 am Main and DB for s'Hertogenbosch/ 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.

while in a group were not always supported and facilitated well by the organisers becomes obvious in one comment: "felt a bit isolated from the others, there were no ice breakers, so we were more a room of strangers than a team" (f29L/q12). However, such comments might relate to a workshop rather than a "standard concert" or musical performance; obviously, participants used different criteria than they would usually employ in the evaluation of a concert.

The category "interactive musical experience" points to the fact that many participants loved being so close to the music – much closer than in a standard concert – and that they actively contributed to the musical performance. It is important to note that one of the organisers said in a short speech before the performance of Mason's piece: "This piece can't be played without you" (field notes, JT, London Oct 21, 2016). In an abundance of musical metaphors, participants liked "the sense of being an instrument in an orchestra playing a part", "being a part of the sound world of Christian Mason's piece" and "that I was part of the resonating body".[5] They reported having witnessed things audiences usually do not get to see – like, for example, the trajectory from rehearsal to performance: "the sense of creating a unique performance together" (m65L/q5), "seeing how the music came together through rehearsal" (m23L/q11). 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 happening before and during the performance. Even more actively and already taking into account contested hierarchies, some commented that they liked "to perform with the Schönberg ensemble" (m48DB/q5) and "to make music together as the audience" (w35F/q5).

This feeling of contested hierarchies manifests itself expressly in the third category – "the experience of shifting hierarchies". Participants – originally only music receivers – used words from the other, the music producing side: "[the participation] made me feel like I was a musician", "[I liked the fact] that the audience can produce art with very few resources" (m53F/q11). Other comments mentioned the mingling of both sides by using inverted commas, such as "[I liked] having the orchestra amidst the 'audience'" (f23L/q5), "[I liked] the participation of the 'listeners'" (f67F/q5). What was experienced as most

5 "Dass ich Teil des Klangkörpers war". In German, the term "Klangkörper" stands not only for the sounding, resonating body of an instrument, but is also used for a music ensemble as a sound-producing unity.

special – above all in the workshops – was the exclusivity of the perceived closeness to professionals, the feeling that audience members 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 ("It was nice to see the musicians eating for once" (f57F/q23)).

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, which lays bare the individuality of experience. This frustration may be a consequence of the perceived intimacy implying equality for all: several participants noticed that in the end, professionals still remained professionals, and amateurs remained amateurs. Also, it was noted that in the realm of classical contemporary music as was performed here, composers and organisers obviously beforehand had been unsure about the capabilities of the participants. The scope of activities for participants was thus quite narrow, too narrow for some attendees, and also closely supervised, especially at one of the performances: "I think the audience (particularly rehearsed) could have managed a bigger/more complicated part." (f40L/q23); "child-like participation in Mason." (m37DB/q6)

In the course of research, we also collected evaluative comments by participants; they evaluate the participatory situation instead of just describing the experience: participants reasoned about the impact of the participatory elements on their motivations and on attention issues, hinting at factors influential for future decisions for their life journey, as human beings, concert visitors and *musickers*. This *activation* of participants thus appears to have reminded people of their potential, and the short interactions with other audience members, with the music and with the professional musicians seemed to open up a small window of opportunity to show what could be possible (see also the utopian flavour in one participant's comment: "every time the divide between audience and orchestras is lifted, it becomes lively", interview with participant, JT, Frankfurt, October 28 2016). Participants reasoned about going back to musical activities ("I am inspired to pick up my flute again", f49L/q23; "[I liked] being part of an ensemble/orchestra again", f35L/q11) and cherished the motivational substance of the community situation ("[I liked] the opportunity to make music together with people who may have never done that in their lives", f40F/q23; "the search for the answer to the question of what unites us as human beings", f52F/q23).

Many of these comments related to attention issues; quite a number of participants reported a feeling of being torn between listening and participating. Both activities were often felt to vie with each other for the attention of each participant. Some people perceived the participation itself as distracting, and the handling of the cues as too complicated; on the other hand, many respondents stated that the participatory elements had made them even more attentive. This leads to a confirmation of what practitioners hope to see result from the introduction of participatory elements: that they suspend the barriers between audience and musicians and thus enhance the concert experience: "if you go along practicing the music, you hear 10x more things than when you're only listening" (m51F/q11); "participating made me watch & listen closely – more than I usually do", (m69L/q23); "the experience of 'participating' actively as listener changes the ears" (m73F/q23).

"Changing the ears" might be one result of this whole participatory project, but there were of course many more results: the world premiere of two pieces, good performances which organisers, musicians and audience members perceived as largely successful, and hundreds of audience members confronted and possibly made familiar with pieces of contemporary classical music.

## Reflections on research experiences

Audience participation in classical music is a promising concept for many reasons – its utopian flavour, the activation of participants, and the fun of it – and it is eagerly embraced by organisers. Deducing this from our research, we give a couple of recommendations for participatory performances – and for researching them! As all unusual projects, participatory ones have to be organised very well, keeping in mind the concrete goals and establishing early and stable contact with audience members.

The goals of the whole project and its message must be clearly formulated: does the project happen in order to bind an existing audience closer to the ensemble, or in order to attract new audiences? Which audiences are targeted? This moment of the defining of goals had definitely been missed in the course of the project described above. Also, it was left unclear to what stage of participation (of those described by Brown/Novak-Leonard 2011, see above) the audience members would be allowed to ascend. In some comments, the disappointment by audience members about their mere spectatorship was

clear, while other participants were surprised that they actually were trained to follow cues by the conductor and do "real" musical work. Audience members actually moved between stages one and four, but in the end, the audience generally had very little agency, besides merely fulfilling roles thought up by the composers. The slogan "audience as artist", which at one point was used to market the performances, was clearly exaggerated.

Early contact with (potential) audience is paramount; it is necessary – albeit very difficult – to establish contact with potential, future audience members, in order to find out what they are willing and able to do (or not), and to keep them at it. In our example, there were several early workshops (up to six months ahead of the premieres) of both composers with audience members, i.e. people from ensemble mailing lists etc. who had signed up. At the very first audience workshop, Mason 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" (Christian Mason, conversation with JT; London, May 18, 2016). When it became obvious that his ideas were too complicated, he significantly reduced the complexity of audience activities. Generally, far more members of the public signed up for the workshops than actually attended them, and in all three cities it was problematic to recruit people willing to engage in participatory concerts in the role of audience performers (organisers of all ensembles; conversation with JT; London, May 18, 2016 and Frankfurt, Oct. 25, 2016). This probably relates back to Gareth White's question quoted above, about audience participation being exciting to some people and horrifying to others (White 2013: 1).

Interestingly enough, the compositions themselves, the written music, did not seem to matter a lot to the participating audiences. There were very few comments in direct relation to the music. Looking at our results, I think that as long as the music is perceived as accessible by a majority of the audience – and is neither too loud nor too taxing – it may serve as a mere vehicle for the participatory performance. Going back to the beginning, it might even seem strange that the realisation of the idea to promote participatory music started with commissions given out to composers. Would it not have been far more consistent to start a co-creative process, involving audience members and professional musicians alike? This of course would have been much more complicated, especially because the whole planning and organisational process – including the three performances observed – took place without any experienced practitioners in the field of *Musikvermittlung*. Compères were hired to guide people through the process, but the conductors,

the composers and the ensemble directors were also present, confusing the situation at times. However, the ensembles tried their best to organise the complicated setups and withstand all confrontations with happy, tired, exhilarated or disappointed audience members.

Audience research in participatory projects and performances offers a rare glimpse into the audience experience. The situation is comparatively open, as people are willing to talk and express their feelings. Furthermore, in comparison to conventional concert formats, the researcher observing participatory formats gets the full bandwidth of reactions provoked by the unusual setting, from enthusiasm to disgust (Breel 2015).

Participatory projects are contested but they can be very effective. They can make people think – people on all sides and from all walks of life. Organisers, musicians and audience members alike profit from ongoing debates about activity and passivity and about roles and relationships in the concert hall (Small 1998). Participatory projects heighten the attention for details, but participatory elements also make any performance much more difficult. They question and challenge the concert ritual, but they also enliven it. As much as many seasoned concert attendees hate participatory projects, they may be a way to approach new or reluctant concert goers. Rather than "sedating" a sitting audience with more or deeper information about the music performed, which might be one goal of *Musikvermittlung*, participatory projects serve to highlight a paradox. In the classical music realm, they happen – have to happen – in a highly specialised and professional field with highly diversified roles, where there seems to be absolutely no place for them. 85% of participants who filled out our questionnaire declared themselves willing to visit a similar performance again; even though many respondents also expressed feelings like disappointment, boredom or disinterest. There seems to be a big interest in "joining in", even if the practice is not as simple as the theory.

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## Biographical note

**Jutta Toelle** is a musicologist and historian whose research focus lies on musical live performances and the experiences of musicians and audiences. Her PhD thesis deals with the Italian opera industry of the late 19th century, while her habilitation project investigates the early modern narrative of "mission through music". Jutta was assistant professor of musicology at Humboldt University Berlin (2007-2012), Visiting Scholar at the University of Chicago (2012/13) and a PostDoc research fellow at the Max Planck Institute for Empirical Aesthetics in Frankfurt/Main (2013-2019). Since November 2019, she is Professor of Applied Musicology at the Gustav Mahler Privatuniversität für Musik in Klagenfurt, Austria.