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Participatory music notation:

Composition for mixed-experience performance contexts

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Abstract

Use of notation in participatory music can productively mediate participation, audience reception, and participatory/presentational tensions. Interviews with practitioners show egalitarian leadership and open membership strategies produce mixed-experience groups that are wide-ranging in the type and level of experience of members. Open approaches to sound production engage participant freedom, representing and substantiating the utopian. A potential trend is identified here: mixed-experience contexts with more open approaches to sound production appear to be more likely to use notation in ways that are more fundamental to participation. Through composition, development of notation, and instigation of a participatory performance context, research findings are engaged to produce a body of new works as a contribution to both participatory and expert fields. The relationship between notation and context is modelled as an ecological network. The relational qualities of notational forms are categorised by Peircian semiotic sign-type and degree of precision. This notation function typology is applied to the body of new works. This analysis is combined with performance comparisons of expert and mixed-experience work versions. Trends are exposed: participatory values are exemplified by the relational qualities of the notational forms used.

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