

TOWARDS BRIDGING THE GAP IN A MUSICAL LIVE PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

Performances across diverse musical genres conventionally happen with a clear one-way structure; musicians perform while spectators listen, except when they sing along, for instance. In most cases, the audience's opportunities for participation are limited to relatively inexpressive forms of interaction such as clapping, swaying and interjecting. By contrast, recent emerging technologies for audience participation allow spectators to collaborate in expressive and targeted ways with performing artists to influence and shape musical live performances in real time. Already, a rich variety of custom-built instruments, devices and systems have been devised for audience participation with the potential to facilitate richly collaborative performance.

The artistic potential of such technology-driven audience participation is high both for musicians and their audiences. Furthermore, it can bridge the gap between the active role of musicians and the passive role of spectators. Participative technologies can qualitatively change the overall experience in new positive directions for all involved.

However, if not considered carefully, audience participation can be annoying, may fail, and may lead to frustration. While the reasons for this can be manifold, we posit that the chances of successful audience participation are greatly facilitated by well-considered design.

To this end, we systematically analysed a vast number of existing approaches of audience participation in musical and non-musical domains. In addition, we conducted two case studies at live performances to shed light on conceptual and compositional constraints within the process of designing audience participation.

Our insights are presented as a collection of structured design aspects able to characterise participatory music performances and their broader contexts. As a result, we propose the design toolkit "LiveMAP", which stands for "Live Music Audience Participation", and which supports the design and creation of participatory elements in a musical live performance.