

Artful Participation - Doing Artistic Research with Symphonic Music Audiences

In the 21st century, symphonic music institutions face challenges that endanger their traditional *Modus Operandi*. Although symphonic music is widely accessible, it has lost its previous position as the leading source of musical culture. The numbers of visitors are stagnating or declining. Audiences are aging. Due to budget cuts, government funding is no longer guaranteed. In an “experience society”, the social value of classical orchestral music has changed profoundly. The need for innovating symphonic music practices is widely acknowledged. In my presentation I ask how improvements in the quality of audience participation can contribute to the innovation of the symphonic music practice

Empirically, my presentation reflects on the participatory experiments (co)designed by the South Netherlands Philharmonic, the Maastricht Conservatory, and Maastricht University in the NWO/SIA-funded [Artful Participation project](#). This project combines strategic research into reasons for the declining interest in symphonic music with practice-based artistic research which has the form of five experiments with new forms of audience participation. We are experimenting with the new audience roles of maker, citizen and expert, thus actively involving audiences in programming, making and assessing symphonic music.

I am interested in how mobilizing the orchestra as a “lab” may contribute to new forms of knowledge production as well as innovative performance practices and alternative repertoires of evaluation. In my presentation, I draw on recent research in the field of science and technology studies on participatory experiments to analyse their potential for innovating symphonic audience engagement. Recently, public participation research in domains such as urban planning, public health, art and architecture, and environmental management has often taken the form of experiments. In these experiments, lay or amateur audiences engage with technical, scientific or aesthetic matters in ways that challenge traditional expert approaches of enacting innovation trajectories or creating artistic performances (Lezaun, Marres and Tironi 2017). Conducting experiments with symphonic music audiences thus becomes a method to both study and shape new forms of participation.



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Peter Peters is professor in the innovation of classical music at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Maastricht University, the Netherlands and director of the Maastricht Centre for the Innovation of Classical Music. His research focuses on innovating classical music practices, with a keen interest in the role of symphonic music and its value for society; the ways in which the relationship between performers of classical music, such as symphony orchestras and their audience is mediated; and how classical music practices contribute to the preservation of our cultural and social sounding heritage.

He leads the four year NWO/SIA funded Artful Participation project that combines strategic research into reasons for the declining interest in symphonic music with artistic research to innovate this practice in artistically relevant ways. He recently co-edited *Dialogues between Artistic Research and Science and Technology Studies* (Routledge, 2019) with Henk Borgdorff and Trevor Pinch.