

**Karen Burland & Stephanie Pitts (editors), *Coughing and Clapping: Investigating the Audience Experience*. Oxford: Routledge, 2016. ISBN 1-40-946981-6 (hardcover) £115.00. ISBN 1-13-828458-0 (paperback) £34.99. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315574455>**

Music psychologists have come a long way in terms of understanding the concert-going experience in the past few decades. Researching the live music experience have evolved from sneaking large equipment into the Bayreuth Festival in order to measure electrodermal activity in the early 1990s (Vaitl, Vehrs, Sternagel, 1993) to large-scale investments in infrastructures such as at the LIVELab at McMaster University in Canada, established in 2014. The two decades between these select examples contain a wealth of other research that reflect the growing and much needed research into understanding the various aspects of attending a live performance.

While not many people have the time to casually pick up and read over twenty years of research that attempts to tackle questions regarding how people engage with live-music, Karen Burland and Stephanie Pitts' 2014 edited collection *Coughing and Clapping*, provides a broad and accessible point of entry into this field. The book is part of SEMPRES's *Studies in The Psychology of Music* series that takes a holistic and empirical approach to widely understanding all aspects of the live music experience. I say widely because those familiar with SEMPRES's typical types of publication (such as *The Psychology of Music*) might be surprised to find chapters in this collection dedicated to topics like the architecture of a concert venue (Robert Kronenburg, Chapter 4), which are typically outside the realm of topics addressed at conferences attended by music psychologists. That said, this approach is intriguing as each author pulled the curtains back on a part of the concert going experience that might go unnoticed by most.

In order to provide a sense of cohesion and continuity to the reader, Burland and Pitts organize the book into three major sections that mirror the three stages of a concert going experience: Preparing and Anticipating, Listening and Connecting, and Reflecting. Each section is connected via *Interludes* from the editors that transition the reader from essay to essay as to provide a sense of flow.

Well placed as the first topic in this collection is Daragh O'Reilly, Gretchen Larsen and Krzysztof Kubacki chapter on *Marketing Live Music* that sets the tone for further chapters by quite successfully demonstrating that the consumption of music from a marketer's standpoint is unlike that of other goods and services. The authors argue that the quality of a live music event is far more dependent on the consumers that attend the event in order to make the experience a success than just evaluating success by number of tickets sold. They assert that the symbolic or cultural aspect of attending an event is paramount to the consumers experience – a theme that returns again in subsequent chapters.

One of the chapters that is perhaps the most representative of the overarching themes of the collection is Stephanie Pitts' chapter "Musical, Social, and Moral Dilemmas: Investigating Audience Motivations to Attend Concerts". This chapter synthesizes three separate empirical studies by the author and their colleagues published elsewhere that examine the motivations of first time and regular concert attendees. Here, the diversity of reasons why someone might choose to attend a concert outside of any sort of need for self-edification is situated within the literature and decades of previous studies. Not everyone attends concerts to partake in some sort of transcendental and spiritual experience. The research throughout this book suggests that concert going is much more social than most traditionalists might soon accept.

The theme of the social aspect of the concert going experience permeates through to the middle of the book. From Lucy Bennett's chapter discussing audience's proclivity for "Texting and Tweeting at Live Music Concerts" to Sidsel Karlsen's chapter on "Context, Cohesion, and Community: Characteristics of Festival Audience Members' Strong Experiences with Music", the reader is continuously reminded about the importance of the surrounding community which they find themselves a part of during the live music events.

With the exception of a chapter by Stevens, Dean, Vincs, and Schubert's, entitled "In the heat of the Moment: Audience Real-time Response to Music and Dance performances", the middle chapters in the Listening and Connecting section take a much more qualitative approach to answering the questions they set out to ask. This would be of interest to any researchers who study what individuals most value in the concert experience outside of the sonic elements that the events are supposedly based around.

The real strength in this collection comes from each of the authors highlighting how fruitful collaborations can be between artists, audiences, and empirically minded researchers. This connection is made most explicit in the final chapter by Melissa C. Dobson and John Sloboda titled "Staying Behind: Explorations in Post-performance Musician-Audience Dialogue" where Dobson and Sloboda flip the



traditional “ask the performer” model and create an environment where “it is the audience who gives and the musicians who receive, thus offering the opportunity of a more explicitly collaborative two-way relationship between artist and audience” (p. 159). I found that reading the reflections of the artists and audience members was actually very motivating; Collaborations like this could be a novel way for researchers with empirical backgrounds to assist arts organizations.

Overall the book is accessibly written and I would most recommend this text not to an audience of the people researching the concert-going experience, but rather those working in the trenches of arts management organizations that might be stuck in dated and parochial views of what it means to attend a live music event. Reading the chapters on “Investigating Audience Motivation to Attend Concerts” (Pitts, Chapter 3) and “Explorations in Post-performance Musician-Audience Dialogue” (Dobson and Sloboda, Chapter 14) I wanted to pass this along to friends working in arts administration who often wonder what the next best step in the health of their arts organization or performing ensemble might be, hoping they might use this text as a springboard for coming up with fresh, new ideas. This collection demonstrates how researchers are able to further understand questions that directly relate to musicking, performers are able to relate in a deeper and more meaningful way to their audiences, and industry practitioners are further able to understand and improve on the concert experiences as a whole.

Reading this book is a great reminder of how vast and complex questions of musical engagement can be. From attempting to collect moment to moment unconscious fluctuations in our physiological state to creating maps of the strong memories that result from going to live music events that shape our identity, a diverse sample of what music psychology has to offer can be found in this book.

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## **References**

Vaitl, D., Vehrs, W., & Sternagel, S. (1993). Prompts-leitmotif-emotion: Play it again, Richard Wagner. *The structure of emotion: Psychophysiological, cognitive, and clinical aspects*, 169-189.