

• ASHGATE POPULAR AND FOLK MUSIC SERIES •

ROXY ROBINSON

MUSIC FESTIVALS

AND THE

POLITICS OF PARTICIPATION

An Ashgate Book

ROUTLEDGE



MUSIC FESTIVALS AND THE POLITICS
OF PARTICIPATION

For Boone

Music Festivals and the Politics of Participation

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General Editors' Preface

Popular musicology embraces the field of musicological study that engages with popular forms of music, especially music associated with commerce, entertainment and leisure activities. The *Ashgate Popular and Folk Music Series* aims to present the best research in this field. Authors are concerned with criticism and analysis of the music itself, as well as locating musical practices, values and meanings in cultural context. The focus of the series is on popular music of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, with a remit to encompass the entirety of the world's popular music.

Critical and analytical tools employed in the study of popular music are being continually developed and refined in the twenty-first century. Perspectives on the transcultural and intercultural uses of popular music have enriched understanding of social context, reception and subject position. Popular genres as distinct as reggae, township, bhangra, and flamenco are features of a shrinking, transnational world. The series recognizes and addresses the emergence of mixed genres and new global fusions, and utilizes a wide range of theoretical models drawn from anthropology, sociology, psychoanalysis, media studies, semiotics, postcolonial studies, feminism, gender studies and queer studies.

Stan Hawkins, Professor of Popular Musicology, University of Oslo and
Derek B. Scott, Professor of Critical Musicology, University of Leeds

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Preface

Writing this book felt a lot like trying to hit a moving target, for its subject matter – collaborative forms of participation at music festivals – was in flux. During the course of six years of research such forms became, nonetheless, an increasingly discernible facet of the UK industry. This was largely down to the fact that immersive design, already fashionable in the fields of contemporary theatre and art, was making its way into festival culture. The question was, what were the underlying causes of this trend? And, had it recast the role of the festival audience? I began to explore this by looking at how two very successful events – Burning Man, in the United States, and Secret Garden Party, in the United Kingdom – were entangled, focusing on the ways they both idealized audience autonomy and extreme participation. The capacities of both were growing at speed, and they similarly alluded to what was to me a peculiar, and, I'll willingly admit, romantic notion: a festival produced by its audience. Not in a cerebral or symbolic sense, but actually produced – with ticket-buyers physically creating entertainments on site. The surreal environments of these two festivals, one inspired by the other, were the outcome of many hands. They were built by crews and collectives sourced from festival-goers, recreating the urban diversity of the world outside while subverting its norms and values. Towards the end of an extensive analysis of the ideals shared by these events, and their suffusion into the larger sector of British boutique festivals, Hampshire's BoomTown Fair had quickly grown to prominence. With an extreme approach to theming, narrative, visual display and mixed programming, by 2014 this event had become the fastest-growing independent festival in the UK. It championed an ethos of extreme participation that was inspired by the same ideologues underpinning Burning Man. By the time you find this book in your hands, there may well be other, large-scale festivals conspicuously aligned to this ethos, or perhaps the trend will have gone out of vogue. Whatever the future may hold for music festivals, this book is focused on the ideals of events that sit within a particular breed, as they are today. Throughout this book, I often refer to this category as boutique (though I have never felt wholly comfortable *labeling* festivals, and as Chapter 4 testifies, there are variant meanings associated with the term). I can state with confidence that the popular theatricality, costumes and diversity of arts to be found at some of these events – as illustrated on the front cover of this book – are intriguing phenomena to behold. Although examining how financial incentives for economic survival have shaped this colourful terrain forms an important theme in my approach to understanding this celebratory context, I hope to do full justice in illuminating the reader on what is – essentially – a bacchanalian culture of human expression.

During the course of this task I fortuitously learned that asking for help was no faux pas but was frequently done by authors in my position. As a consequence of this timely realization, it is with gratitude that I acknowledge my colleagues, friends and family for their kind support. For a review of this book in its early stages, thanks are owed to Professor Karl Spracklen at Leeds Beckett University. I also received valued assistance from Dr Emma Webster, at Oxford Brookes, who provided editorial help and suggestions relating to the material found in Chapter 3. I also owe thanks to my research assistant Cassandra Kilbride for her enviable efficiency and attention to detail, and to the various photographers who donated the use of their images (Seb Barros in particular, who supplied the eye-catching cover image). Credit is also due to the UK Centre for Events Management, at Leeds Beckett University, which part-funded the research, and to the industry figures and collectives that have, over the years, kindly donated their time to the project in various ways: Freddie Fellowes, Ben Challis, Claire O'Neill, Lak Mitchell, Kaptain, the Booty Skool Dropouts, Bearded Kitten, Alex Trenchard, Demelza Blick, the Happy Slap Boutique, the Danceoff crew and the Asbo Disco. Just before this book was published, I received an email from a Burning Man rep (much to my excitement), Zac Cirivello – the event's media co-ordinator. Zac remains known to me only through email, but he is owed a sizeable 'cheers' for fact-checking all of the information relating to Burning Man found in this book, and for some very kind words of encouragement. For keeping me buoyant (an essential for completing any book), Rowan, Katie, Helen, Dan, Colleen, Tenley and Claire: the next round is on me. I would also be treading dangerous ground if I forgot to thank my family, especially my marvellous dad, Massoud Yeganegy, who has always spurred me on, encouraged me to publish, and done much to help me reach the finish line. Particular thanks are owed to Professor Derek Scott, my mentor and friend, for his insight and guidance, without which this book would have forever remained 'almost done'. Finally, I am enormously grateful to my husband, Ben Robinson, to whom this book is dedicated. He organized all of the stunning photography found in this book, and supplied me with his usual reassurances, inspiration, feedback and love. Immeasurable thanks.

Chapter 1

Into the Fields

A field in Hampshire was once home to an onslaught of electronic dance music, in the summer of 1999. A 15-year-old version of myself stumbled through ankle-deep mud and discarded detritus, gazing at up trees as they blinked with silver strobes. Throngs of revellers did their best to dance across the saturated fields, to shuddering bass and repetitive beats. Organized by the leading concert promoters Mean Fiddler (now Festival Republic) this rave was actually Homelands Festival, my first festival experience and a fully licensed event, headlined that year by the Chemical Brothers, Underworld and Faithless. Located a short distance from Southampton, Homelands was the talk of the town, though its offerings were simple by today's standards – a profusion of burger stalls and a few sparsely decorated marquees surrounded an outdoor stage hosted by BBC Radio 1. Thirteen years later, I revisited the same field but the scene had changed dramatically: I was in the midst of the kaleidoscopic chaos that was BoomTown Fair, an independent festival that beat with a Bristolian heart. An arsenal of visual stimulation exploded upon entry as a high street of individually decorated discothèques, a main stage town square, and a set-designed city of art installations formed a vivid, three-dimensional backdrop to the carnivalesque proceedings. This festival's presentation as a town, both through its branding and the physical realization of space, forged a masquerade of the metropolis, incorporating all amenable objects, encounters and festival-goers into its theatrical display. In this setting, festival-goers were recast as residents, many of whom had helped to build the town's multifarious and colourful milieu. BoomTown, though uncommon in its explicitly civic positioning, offers an extreme example of a subtler shift towards diversified programming and immersive arts perceptible in the British music festival sector as a whole. How events within this sector enshrine the role of the festival-goer, in ways that articulate a politics of participation, is an issue at the core of this book.

It would be sensible to clarify, at this point, what is meant by the phrase 'a politics of participation', which forms the latter part of the book's title. It is a phrase that is similarly used by Thomas Turino in *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation* (2008). Documenting the musical practices of the Shona villages in north-eastern Zimbabwe, where the traditional *Bira* functioned as an inclusive percussion ensemble with no prescribed performers or audience, Turino traced how the colonial import of concert culture brought with it a presentational performance format. Presentational performance was associated with an 'educated people' – and as a consequence, came to be highly valued by the cosmopolitan middle class (Turino 2008, 139). Over time, this format objectified the virtuosic performer and gradually sidelined more direct forms of participation in music (2008, 122). The

performative dichotomy of the presentational and the participative modes, used to interpret these historical events, should not be taken as a method for deciding what counts as *meaningful* action and what does not – as Turino himself noted, the concert model was not an inauthentic mode that betrayed some true Zimbabwean style (2008, 144). Yet it did reveal a behavioural pattern, reinforced by human roles 5 and the construction of space, which produced different statements of value 6 regarding the audience and their contribution to performance. In the participative setting, performance is dependent on direct and physical audience involvement, where *participants* are valued as performers, whereas the presentational setting relies upon their separation from the performance as complicit *spectators*. There are, of course, shortcomings in labelling audiences in this way – in the project of defining the roles that regulate media and popular culture, scholars from a range of disciplines have interrogated the concept of spectatorship, and indeed, essentialist pairings like production/consumption, activity/passivity (Levy and Windahl 1985, 110; Biocca 1988, 51; Gottdiener 2001, 6). Yet these pairings, like Turino's dichotomy, are crucial in understanding constructs that are meaningful to music festival culture.

This book draws upon and offers an extended interpretation of Turino's politics of participation because the context examined exemplifies a coinciding politics with a reverse trajectory: festivals that exclusively utilize line-up based business models have become gradually overshadowed by an increasing number of 'boutique' music festivals which favour an increased emphasis on the immersive environment, playfulness and varying types of direct audience participation. Though they may be more complex than the Zimbabwean *Bira*, the festivals discussed in this book echo Turino's conceptualizations because they follow, like the *Bira*, an event design that awards the *audience member* the role of performer, adventurer, artist or creator. Democratizing schemes are increasing the number of festival co-producers, many of whom are sourced from the public, while spatial construction asserts coinciding principles of co-authorship and interactivity: art installations for example are there to be touched, embellished, used as shelter, climbed on or into, or used as a scenographic backdrop to audience-based, theatrical display, while interactive games, themed environments and costume heighten a sense of play. Aligned with the moral code of relational art, there is an attempt to unite audience members with the objects of their experience, closing the proximal gaps between spectacle and spectator. How these features are based around an ideal of festival-goer action is explored via key events, after a broader examination of socio-economic forces as the context for these emergent social milieus. Understanding the interplay between these forces and the incentives of festival gatekeepers is crucial to a complete perspective of the factors that shape participation today. Many promoters are struggling to overcome the commercial challenges presented by dependency on big name artists – such as soaring fees, the imposition of artist exclusivities and the general shortfall of ticket-selling artists able to play a burgeoning number of events. With a significant quantity of festivals jostling for notice among festival-goers, and limited means for securing top artist

billings, participative programming has become crucial to adding a different kind of value. The ideals surrounding audience agency are, then, commercially framed – and in my view that is not a contradiction in terms. The presence of the mitigating force of instrumentalization, that makes its mark on many alternative cultures associated with music, has indeed influenced festivals, though in ways that do not necessarily amount to their ‘heat death’ (Spracklen 2014, 252–66). The commercial nature of many music festivals should not obscure the fact that many express a cluster of values, and if purchases can be viewed as a statement of value – at least in so far as in valuing some tangible or intangible aspect of the product – then audiences might *also* state their preference for what it is their ticket purchase represents.

It would be a misleading generalization to imply that all festivals favour the features discussed in this book. They do not. Events that primarily emphasize line-ups, such as Reading, Parklife and T in the Park, remain enormously significant to the music festival industry in terms of capacity and annual turnover. It is also the case that most events do not fall neatly into the participative/presentational dichotomy but blend these two modes together. It is more useful to consider the presentational and participative festival as occupying two opposite ends of a spectrum, with (for example) Reading Festival on one end, and Burning Man on the other – with most other festivals somewhere in between. The purpose of this book is to investigate the tensions that exist within this spectrum, by exploring the challenges to hierarchies in festival production, and their associated values, within the festival scene. This begins with a focus on the economic growth and development of the British festival industry, which occupies the first half of the book. This is followed by a discussion of the wider scene of ‘boutique’ festivals in Britain, as niche gatherings that repackage the sensibilities associated with an antecedent counterculture. Then, by examining the ‘No Spectators’ philosophy of the American event Burning Man, and a selection of British festivals that have drawn influence from its approach to production, I evidence a confluence of promoter incentives, transatlantic exchange and the audience’s desire for creative collaboration. Drawing upon ethnographies centred on BoomTown Fair (Hampshire) and Secret Garden Party (Cambridgeshire), as the two most compelling examples of systemic audience integration in creative programming in the UK, the British sector is shown to be developing new and hybridized alternatives to concert-style festivals, which primarily award performative emphasis to musical line-ups.

Researching Festival

Existing research on contemporary pop and rock music festivals is not substantial in quantity, though it is growing, in line with the popularization of music festivals more generally. As professional and degree qualifications in Event Management and Music and Business Management have also become

more common, there is parallel growth in a strand of festivals research rooted in the tourism and management disciplines, much of which focuses on economic impact, the optimization of systems and practices, and the motivations of stakeholders and attendees. Naturally the methodologies employed in these investigations often rely upon quantifications of socio-economic and survey response data. Considering motivational studies, for example, survey data has been used to explore broad hypotheses: large samples were used for studying the link between nationality and the motivations of festival-goers, for example Lee et al. (2004); and similarly, Crompton and McKay (1997) used survey data to consider various motivations for attending festival events. As has been noted by Anderton, much of the contemporary research about festivals tends to be 'rationalist, instrumentalist, and managerial in their focus' (Anderton 2009, 42). As valuable as these studies are, they are not matched in number by studies using deep-slice, experiential approaches, or studies that consider festivals from politics, anthropology and social sciences perspectives. In fact, there remains a problematic lack of academic studies on festivals using the qualitative approach (Holloway et al. 2010). As a consequence, the theoretical foundations laid down by the early studies of carnival and celebration, which apply perspectives from anthropological, cultural and social theory (such as Turner 1979; Clarke 1982; Bakhtin 1984; Bristol 1985; Falassi 1987; Danow 1995) are somewhat detached from music festivals of the modern age. As a result, the socio-political relationship between contemporary festival and quotidian society, and the systems that influence participation, remain areas of research relatively uncharted. Though the scope of this book is inevitably limited, it is hoped that its contents will begin to fill this gap in festivals scholarship – addressing, if not concretely resolving, some larger questions regarding their fundamental significance in society as arenas that perform new possibilities and new forms of social organization.

Taking the social constructionist view that language produces, rather than reflects, inter-subjectively shared meanings (Eagleton 1996, 52), the research explores the construction of 'participation' within festival culture as an idealized act with socio-political meanings that extend beyond the directly experienced sphere of festival. As portrayed by other scholars within the constructionist tradition (such as Foucault 1969) the production of meaning via discourse is also linked to behavioural practices. Action embodies the meanings expressed in discourse – as this book argues of festivals allied to a politics of extreme audience participation. These festivals generate a *social praxis* through synergizing participative ideals with event production, merging belief, discourse and tangible production.¹ The findings of this book are the outcome of a methodology that explored these elements in depth, focusing on the meanings surrounding a 'No Spectators' idiom, deploying in-depth interviewing with the organizers identifying with this ideal

¹ *Praxis* is taken from the socialist Antonio Labriola who called Marxism the 'Philosophy of praxis' in *Socialism and Philosophy* (1912). This study employs the concept to indicate ideologically informed practice in the context of festival cultures.

and analyses of artefacts and online spaces that challenge spectatorship through design, imagery, marketing and communications. I also experienced how these meanings were brought to life at the live events. The range of festivals mentioned in this book is wide, though in-depth analysis is limited to Burning Man, Secret Garden Party and BoomTown. This selection was not formed arbitrarily: these particular events lie at the centre of a cultural nexus of shared ideals relevant to the study and were chosen because of the transatlantic relationship they evidenced, through information readily available in the public domain. They are each aligned to the ideal of audience-produced festival, though this is, as shall be documented in the subsequent chapters, expressed in different ways.

It is important to acknowledge that the content of this book has been heavily influenced by the many personal and professional experiences that unfolded outside the formal frame of academic research. Fifteen years before the publication of this book, I began to experience festivals through the role of a commercially disinterested festival-goer; as my interest deepened, I decided on a career in events. I founded a metropolitan festival in 2004 – ‘Raisetheroof’ – which outgrew its home at the Brudenell Social Club (capacity 200) and went on to become a 1,000 capacity party at the Leeds West Indian Centre, a venue famous for its dub and reggae nights (namely, SubDub), where it remained for some years. Ten years of promoting a festival-esque club night was an absolute thrill; I took immense pleasure in planning every aspect of it myself, booking bands, handing out flyers, painting decorations. These years provided an invaluable insight into the scene (and an unforgettable experience). Though music was fundamental to Raisetheroof, the presence of ancillary features were also important: costume, theming, interactive installation art, markets, workshops and a very open volunteering policy were all integrated into the execution and experience of the event. This medium allowed me to tangibly explore the principles of immersion and democratized festival production, and how they influenced crowd participation and atmosphere. Risking my own capital by putting events together was crucial, aligning me to the incentives and perspectives of the promoter; someone who, whatever their vision for the event, must sell tickets, and must present and price events in ways amenable to this single-most important outcome. As discussed at length in Chapter 3, promoters play a difficult game governed by the economic rules of the live music industry, which cannot always be predicted. Being one of those promoters was advantageous in illuminating the way in which two things – visions for participatory festivals and commercial incentives – were radically shaping the industry at large. This was revealed to me from multiple perspectives, and other experiences in industry were similarly formative: in 2008, I was employed as the production manager of the ‘Big Love Inflatable Church’ – a fully immersive performance installation that allowed audience members to get ‘married’ in mock wedding ceremonies, with actors posing as vicars and bridesmaids. With this unique feature, and a troupe of flamboyant performers, I toured a number of summer music festivals across the UK including Glade, RockNess, Electric

Picnic, Bloom and Bestival. This experience was vital, allowing me to perceive, first hand, the way in which audience-centric features were utilized by festivals in their increasing emphasis upon immersion and play. Despite its simplicity, and relative low cost to the event promoter, the Inflatable Church often garnered rapt attention from both the press and from festival-goers. The novelty way in which it enshrined the audience member's participation, while satirizing tradition, was irresistible to the public.

As I took on freelance management contracts with Kendal Calling festival (2009) and then Beacons festival (2012–14), while lecturing part-time in event production, I was ultimately focused on the creative and participatory aspects of festival design – but was compelled to consider also the optimization of operations, efficiency and profits, each in compliance with rigorous UK regulation. During this time I also fell in love with and married a festival promoter, whom I had met on a freelance contract, and many of our dinner conversations would include festival news and gossip (they still do). If this mixture of personal circumstance, necessity, hobby, profession and academic enquiry, an amalgam which has crystallised in the formation of this book, qualifies me as a 'fan as researcher' or 'critical insider' – it is worth considering the shortfalls associated this approach. Fans, or indeed practitioners, who limit their research to their own experiences, can be regarded as 'me-searchers' who fail to inform their findings with real critical thinking and theoretical credibility. Challenged by both Andy Bennett and Kevin Hetherington, the fan-as-researcher approach stands accused of advocating and romanticizing cultures, failing to present characteristics with critical reference to the researcher's own, potentially distorting, influence on research outcomes. Bennett in particular points to a trend in cultural studies for 'younger researchers' to report uncritically on music subcultures (Bennett 2002, 460, 462; Hetherington 2000, 10). Although no *uncritical* approach to insider-based research should be supported, it is also true that exploiting pre-existing roles for the purposes of research is a kind of shortcut that can draw enriched insights from level of access that a 'disinterested' or less connected researcher simply would not have. It seems sensible to argue that it is a lack of reflexivity that is really at the heart of the problems expressed here, rather than the fan-as-research methodology itself. The role of the researcher is not, for example, to support the judgements of value that inevitably make their way into discussions about 'mainstream' versus 'underground' or 'alternative' culture, but rather, to acknowledge their meaning as constructed *discourse* for understanding the relational poise of what is being studied. As the following investigations will show, the ideal of extreme participation is enshrined in emancipating terms at the festivals under study – though it is not the aim of the author to reproduce these associations as fact. Neither is an uncritical presentation of spectatorship as 'bad' or 'alienating' intended. Rather, the aim is to acknowledge the milieu that *constructs* this system of associations, to posit some explanations as to why the idea of spectatorship is challenged, and to explore how far this critique relates to a broader pattern of production and consumption within British festival culture.

Culture and the Politics of Control

The politics of participation at the heart of this book can be understood in terms of a wider deliberation over who controls the creation of content. The unequal level of access to the apparatus of content production is a historically contentious issue, whether that content is arts-based or simply consists of factual information. Prior to the emergence of the Internet as an informational commons, the mass consumption of information through the medium of television, for example, raised a number of illuminating perplexities. This had to do with the troubling impotence implied by the television audience – which could be considered an enfeebled, inert group, unaware of the larger, informational processes that absorb and control them. This has been described as a ‘hypodermic’ model of mass communication, which places audience perception as conveniently malleable and uniformly defined by media stimulus (Biocca 1998, 57). These assumptions are now widely discredited, yet the concerns the hypodermic model brought forth expressed an enduring fearfulness regarding what happens to society when the production of goods and services are controlled by the few, and consumed by the many. As mediated information became increasingly ubiquitous, anxieties regarding who controlled the media were sharpened into distinct critiques. The media form could, it was feared, be used as a hegemonic weapon and a tool for brainwashing the population – a prospect forcefully argued in Jerry Mander’s *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television* (1978). He presents a serious epistemological problem: how can we really know reality, when so much of what we know is based on artificial representations? Today, we may smile retrospectively at Mander’s visceral unease with the introduction of the electronic screen into daily life, something that is today a staple of modern living. Drawing upon the light experiments conducted by Dr John Ott, Mander argued that the artificial light that television produced physically numbed the mind of the spectator upon entry into the eye, nullifying critical capacities and ‘dimming the mind’ (see IX and X, 170–215, 1978). A pseudo-scientific conclusion, perhaps, though his other observations are not so easily written off: working as a successful advertising and public relations executive in 1960s San Francisco, Mander observed how access to the mass dissemination of information was limited to the rich, for the principle purpose of further enrichment (1978, 19). The comparative poverty of civil rights and environmental groups rendered their infrequent forays into mass media advertising mere drops in the informational ocean. Instead, they had to resort to headline-grabbing direct action to raise awareness of their causes (1978, 18). Social injustices could be hidden from view or narrowed into distorting sound bites that hid their true complexities. Fears regarding who controlled information were not unfounded: viewers could confuse real and mediated experience, and had little awareness of the way in which the media transformed information. Collectively, the media also produced ominous depictions of reality: according to Haggren et al. (2005, 14–15), mesmerizing yet meaningless cornucopias of superficiality and violence disabled viewers both from reality, and from the means to create

content. Thinking about what forms of entertainment might reverse this perceived malaise, most idealizations of more ‘direct’ or ‘creative’ forms of participation offer solutions to the ills of a pliant populace. They express, therefore, anxieties surrounding the control of culture, and, more broadly, consumerist society. The issue can be described as follows:

The role of the producer is to create suggestions. The role of the consumer is to experience them. This is a form of one-way communication. Controlling the shape of suggestions means controlling the experiences of the recipient; the media relationship is always a relation of power. Media that are based on one-way communication always have authoritarian structures. (Haggren et al. 2005, 4–5)

This theoretical lens would be shortsighted if it sidelined the possibility for any noteworthy creativity embedded in the act of consuming information. However, if we were to grant that some forms of media definitely do restrict the audience’s ability to ‘create suggestions’ and alter informational content, then it would follow that any adjustments allowing for multiple voices could offer a solution to narrow production. This rationale for democratization has been raised before: with reference to the letters page of a newspaper, the canonical Marxist Walter Benjamin acknowledged how the medium transforms consumers into producers, granting the reader access to authorship (Benjamin 1931, 90). Problematically such adjustments to established media make little difference to the *kind* of information that is disseminated, for the power of selection remains with the principle producer. As is similarly recalled in Benjamin’s terms – the Soviet press ‘still belongs to capital’ (1931, 91). The dialectic between production, consumption and the tensions that lie in the space between, have inspired other ‘redemptive’ forms of media: the gatekeepers of alternative cultures have responded to excess commercialism by initiating the complete takeover of production, as discernible in the DIY scene of amateur-produced music newspapers, zines, non-profit gigs and independent record labels. Although these media exist largely on the margins of culture, mass file sharing, open source software, the blogosphere and social media, on the other hand, could be viewed as a widespread virtual realization of user-based cultural production. The same ethic of user-produced content has also defined a movement in the art, theatre and festival contexts that can be described as interactive, immersive, or understood as a ‘relational aesthetics’ (Bourriaud 2006, 160, 171). Bourriaud’s relational aesthetics addresses benign consumerism by casting participation, and the co-authorship of art, as an idealized solution – a political act. The participatory model is a tool for challenging the narrow control of cultural production – eliminating traditional lines between spectators and artists in a ‘domain of exchanges’ (2006, 162). Therefore, when we speak of increasing participation via the co-creation of media, art or festival, we are alluding to an egalitarian ideal, where no meaning-makers are excluded.

In the framework of cultural celebrations, whether there is an exclusive or participatory system of production can often be discerned through event design. Different event designs embody different values about the audience and their relationship to performance, which are then animated by the kinds of behaviour the designs permit. Vicky-Ann Cremona's investigation of audience participation and carnival forms in Malta, for example, evidenced the vital connection between event design and patterns of theatricality in audiences, underlining how carnivalesque behaviours – a form of participant-produced content – can be shaped or curtailed by seemingly innocuous elements (Cremona 2004, 69–90). The label *ludus*, previously used to define organized and competitive forms of play, is applied to the extensively regulated carnivals of Malta, found in the regions of Valletta and Rabat. At the ludic carnival, highly ostentatious performers are at the centre of its theatrical emphasis, both prior and during the show, rendering the live atmosphere conducive to watching (2004, 70, 71). This, argues Cremona, is a deviation from the historic carnivals at Valetta: adapting Turner's use of the term *paidia* (describing unregulated and 'agonistic' forms of play), these paidian carnivals were characterized by spontaneity and interaction between performers and participants (2004, 70, 76). Thus, Maltese carnival had bifurcated into two cultural strands that reproduced contrasting values surrounding the legitimacy of audience participation – a duality that was, in part, down to commercial forces that sought to enhance the touristic potential of the celebrations. Prior to the involvement of the National Festivities Committee in the 1920s, the carnival lacked emphasis on display and included non-competitive vehicles with amateur decoration, providing platforms for members of the audience to dance upon. Gradually, the carnival committee rerouted the procession to occupy wider streets, physically separating the spectators and placing them at a greater distance from the performative focus – undermining spontaneous communication, and the interchangeability of roles that had once blurred the dividing lines between performers and spectators (Cremona 2004, 72). Conspicuous demarcation, which allowed only official and authorized performers to make up the procession, put an end to laypeople joining it on undecorated, unprepared trucks. This, as well as popular and improvised comedy, was lost as the carnival became increasingly structured and predictable (Cremona 2004). The carnival can be described, then, as a once-collaborative event that was incrementally altered for the purposes of tourism and profitable economies of scale. As a side effect, the audience's capacity to spontaneously create performative content was limited over time. Ironically, Cremona reports that the demand for countryside carnival increased because they remained free of these forces and their informal, spontaneous, 'paidian' qualities were retained – preserving a greater degree of audience participation, countryside carnival was increasingly seen as a more authentic celebration and tourists were attracted to the experiences that could be found there (2004). This research is vital because it acknowledges how far degrees of display, spatial proximity and the placement of performers within an event design holds remarkable power in legitimizing, or suppressing, modes of audience participation. These subtle factors can inhibit or

liberate audiences from their role as spectators, and designs that inhibit are, as Cremona has shown, sometimes the result of commercial instrumentalization. The variant role of performance in the *ludic* and the *paidian* carnivals can also be aligned with presentational and participative modes as defined by Turino (2008, 23, 65). The presentational mode, like the ludic carnival, emphasizes the virtuosity and elaborate display associated with a concert tradition, which the participative replaces with a collectivized and fluid approach to performance. A politics of alienation versus empowerment inevitably emerges from these classifications: Cremona is not afraid to posit, for example, that the modernization of the carnival was negative because it curtailed the audience's creativity through *restricting* participation to spectatorship (Cremona 2004, 72). The subtext implies that participative carnival in its pure and uncorrupted form represents a more authentic mode of social celebration, because it allows uninitiated audience members who are not trained performers a level of direct control in becoming part of the performance. Whether one wishes to buy into this judgement or not; that carnival can pass from an inclusive event to one that implicitly prohibits audience participation is exemplified by these accounts, which also highlight how adaptations to convivial *space* can promote or extinguish popular theatricality. Divergent carnival traditions offer an exemplary case of participative and presentational performance competing within the same social frame.

Music Festivals and Audience Agency

Simon Frith's observation that there was a separation of the audience from artists at the 1969 Woodstock constitutes no more than a single line in *Sound Effects* (Frith 1981, 222). This claim is contrary to the (albeit scant) festival research, which prefers to examine festivals as arenas for carnivalesque, participatory and 'active[ly] engag[ed]' crowds – found (for example) in the work of Laing (2004, 7) and Botstein (1999, 481). Attempts to define the festival crowd have reified the associations between expressivism, crowd sociality and the deterministic consumer, though this treatment has also produced problematic assumptions regarding the level of agency attributable to the audience. For Botstein, the audiences of pop and rock concerts offer up a sharp contrast to the subordinated silence of the concert hall audience (1999). Recognizing the shortcomings of labelling an audience as passive, he uses the similarly slippery notion of the active audience to contrast the formality of the concert hall performance with the fluidity of the rock concert audience:

In the case of rock concerts [audiences] are so actively engaged in their own self-expression that, as audience members, they create their own event and sound. They are also convinced that the 'meaning' of that to which they are listening is not stable and lies not in the music itself and is certainly not limited by any