

Religious Rituals as Festival Performances at *Musica Sacra Maastricht*

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1. Introduction

In the Dutch city of Maastricht one finds a bookstore in a former church building, a luxurious hotel in a former monastery, and a museum which contemporary architecture is inspired by the Florence Dome and carries the name of the monastery it was once housed in. It is the city in which once a year the churches, convents, and chapels function as concert halls during the festival *Musica sacra Maastricht*. And it is the site of the PHD research 'Festival *Musica sacra Maastricht*: discourses on sacrality', of which a pilot study will be presented here.¹ This article is an account of two rituals from different religious traditions, which were programmed as festival performances during the festival edition of 2012. The comparison between a Japanese Buddhist and a Roman Catholic ritual is an attempt to analyze how people relate to these different religious rituals in the non-liturgical context of the festival. First, the festival and the two performances will be introduced (2). Second, they will be analyzed on the characteristics of ritual and theater (3), relationality (4), and sacrality (5). Aspects that stood out during the fieldwork will be related to theoretical counterparts. In conclusion, the value of this pilot study will be estimated for providing insights into the ways sacrality is regarded and dealt with in contemporary culture (6).

2. *Musica sacra Maastricht* 2012

The overall research project addresses current manifestations of sacrality in the cultural domain of the Netherlands. *Musica sacra Maastricht* offers a relevant site of research as it deliberately wants to explore the width of the concept of sacrality through a large variety of musical performances. The program covers a wide variety of musical genres and styles, from Gregorian chant to Renaissance polyphony, from organ music to contemporary art music. In addition to concerts, the program also consists of theatre, dance, visual arts, and film events.

¹ This pilot study was first presented during the conference 'Performance of religious music in medieval and late modern culture' (November 2012, Tilburg University) and written into a paper for the Noster 'Grand course theology and religious studies' (December 2012). For this article I am indebted to Prof. John Harper, Dr. Martin Hoondert and Prof. Eric Venbrux for their feedback.

Since 1991 the program committee works with an annual theme, to provide a red thread for the programming. In the communication the annual theme is presented prominently, however for the visitors not so much the theme but the festival name and reputation remain central in deciding on what to attend.² The theme of the 2012 edition, Rites & Rituals, resulted in a programming of musical concerts with a ritual character and ritual ceremonies with musical components. Two of these performances will be presented next.

2.1. Kashôken – Dai-hannya-tendoku'e

The first performance of the 2012 edition was a Buddhist ceremony by the ensemble *Karyôbinga Shômyô Kenkyûkai*, consisting of thirteen Shingon monks.³ This performance was introduced with a lecture by Heinz-Dieter Reese, a Japan expert. This introduction was the last lecture of a symposium on the so-called prelude day of the festival, Thursday the sixth of September 2012. This symposium functioned as an exploration of theoretical approaches to sacrality and the annual theme. The third lecture formed an introduction to the ensemble, the traditions of the ceremony, and what to expect during the performance. The visitor numbers to this introduction exceeded expectations. The performance was announced in the general brochure of the Theatre at the Vrijthof (*Theater aan het Vrijthof*), the Maastricht theatre that organizes and hosts the festival. This brochure was released earlier than the festival program and at one point in the preamble to the festival the ticket sales were held off, to allow symposium visitors to attend the performance as well. The performance started at nine in the evening in the Saint John's Church, located across from the theatre at the *Vrijthof* square. After the introductory lecture, the visitors walked from the theatre to the church. At the entrance, the audience received a booklet with the order of the performance, titles, and explanations of each part of the ceremony. The title of the ceremony was *Dai-hannya-tendoku'e*, which means 'The large sutra of the transcendental wisdom' and is one of the most performed ceremonies within Shingon Buddhism.⁴ This performance was the first of three that were performed on consecutive nights during the festival.

² E. WILLEMS: *Publieksonderzoek Musica sacra Maastricht. Evaluatie festivaleditie 2011 'De Vreugde der Wet' & verkenning potentiële doelgroepen* (Maastricht 2012, MA Thesis) 106.

³ The full name of the ensemble is *Karyôbinga Shômyô Kenkyûkai*, but the abbreviation of *Kashôken* is commonly used. In the rest of the paper the ensemble will be referred to by this abbreviation.

⁴ Background information can be found in the Festival Brochure *Musica sacra Maastricht, Riten en rituelen* (Maastricht: Theater aan het Vrijthof, 2012) 30.



Illustration 1: *Kashōken* performing *Dai-bannya-tendoku'e* in the St. John's Church, Maastricht on September 6, 2012 [Photo: Sanne Willemsen / Kiet Duong]

As soon as the thirteen monks entered, each sound they made was part of the performance. Including the sound of the thick wooden shoes they were walking on, which well resonated with the stone floors of the church. The different parts of the ceremony were also indicated on flat screens placed on both sides of the nave. There was no stage, resulting in lesser visibility for those sitting beyond the first few rows. The many small, delicate acts taking place on the central altar close to the ground were only visible for those sitting in front. The first part of the ceremony knew many of these acts while cleansing the space where the performance took place. The main and longest part of the ceremony consisted of the symbolic reading of six hundred holy books, the sutras. These are made of harmonica folded paper, bound by a hard cover on each end. The monks lifted one end up in the air, letting the harmonica unfold. During the reading they recited the book title, the name of the translator, the title of the specific part, the first seven lines, the middle five, and the last three of each book. This central part was enlivened by traditional *shōmyō* hymns praising Buddha and other gods. During *Sange*, one of the hymns before the symbolic reading, Lotus flowers were scattered all over the floor. During this performance they did not use actual flowers, but pieces of colored paper representing the Lotus. In addition to the chanting, several sound objects were used, amongst others the conch shell horn. After the final hymn, sung while walking down the nave towards the church entrance, the doors were closed behind the monks. Members of the audience looked around somewhat puzzled, exchanged looks with neighbors, and slowly got up from their seats. People clustered together in small groups and talked about the performance. I heard some people express how different they thought this was, that it was hard to find words to describe

this experience and that it was so meditative. Most of all people commented on the fact that this Buddhist ceremony took place in a Protestant church.

2.2. Schola Maastricht – ritual elements of *Sacrum Triduum Paschale*

The next day, Friday the seventh of September 2012, the choir Schola Maastricht performed ritual acts and Gregorian chants of the Holy Week in the Saint Martin's Church. Upon entering the church at a quarter to ten in the evening, the tickets were checked by an employee of the Theatre at the Vrijthof, recognizable by the logo on his shirt. Upon checking the ticket he expressed the wish for the visitors to have 'a nice performance'. The church was more than half full at this time of arrival, fifteen minutes before the start. The program booklet explained that the performance followed the rituals and songs of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday. It carried all the Latin texts that were sung, including Dutch translations.

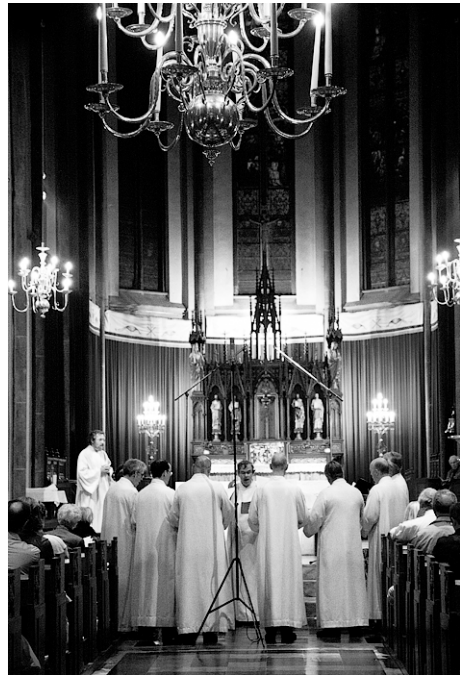


Illustration 2 & 3: Schola Maastricht performing ritual elements of the *Sacrum Triduum Paschale* in the St. Martin's Church, Maastricht on September 7, 2012 [Photo: Sanne Willemsen / Kiet Duong]

Schola Maastricht entered the church singing, walking through the nave to the altar and the church choir. The performed acts were amongst others the washing of the feet, the veneration of the cross, the lighting of the light, the baptism of the catechumens, and a closing procession in which the Schola walked down

the nave in the direction of the church doors.⁵ Afterwards the applause was hesitant; it started a while after the singers left the nave and stopped singing.

At the beginning and end of the performance an elderly man was seemingly singing along with the Schola. Afterwards another man walked up to him, asking why he was singing along. He answered that he was not singing, but lip-synching along. It was obvious he had knowledge of the lyrics and rituals. On the last row, a man in his early thirties and an older man were seated. The younger man responded immediately after the applause was done. Referring to the *Shin-gon* performance of the night before, he stated how much better this evening had been than the night before. He said he could understand and connect with the rituals of the *Sacrum Triduum Paschale*. The monks had made him restless and it felt as outside his comfort zone. The older man sitting next to him described this performance as a summary of Easter in one hour. He referred to this performance as his childhood, while he still attends church nowadays. However, he did not mind seeing this outside of the liturgical year. He described it as a nice summary of one hour, but that the summarizing did not harm the religious meaning of the rituals. Additionally, the young man expressed his admiration for the effect of the shutting down the lights during the lighting of the lights. He stated that this should be done more in the context of theatre and that it worked like magic. They were joined by the president of the program committee, who also referred to the performance in relation to his childhood and that he had been an altar boy. After realizing younger generations do not necessarily grow up with the knowledge of these rituals anymore, he said that made it even more important to program these kinds of performances in the festival.

3. Ritual and theater

The two performances can be characterized in many ways, and located on many positions on the binary scale with ritual and theater at its ends. A useful instrument for the purposes of this article is the approach of performance scholar Richard Schechner. In his analysis of ritual performances, he outlines that a performance is usually called either ritual or theater depending on its context, function, and purpose.⁶ If the performance is aiming at transforming its participants, it is often called a ritual. If the purpose is to entertain, it will rather be called theater. No performance is purely one or the other, therefore Schechner presents the binary of efficacy and entertainment.⁷ Most performances are situ-

⁵ During these ritual acts, no participation of the visitors was required. During the lighting of the light, the church lights were turned off and the Schola members walked with candles through the nave. The visitors did not receive any candles.

⁶ R. SCHECHNER: *Performance studies. An introduction* (New York / London 2006²) 79-80.

⁷ SCHECHNER: *Performance studies* 80. A straightforward link between efficacy and ritual is subjected to debate by, amongst others, philosopher Frits Staal. He argued against the characteristic of efficacy of ritual in for instance F. STAAL: "The meaninglessness of

ated in their purposes somewhere between these two ends of the binary. However, there is no such thing as one purpose for a performance. A purpose can be intended by the performers or the organizers of the performance. But it is dependent on the experiences of the audience members whether this purpose comes across. Based on their experiences, they can construe their own purposes of a performance.

3.1. The question of applause

The two festival performances described above are examples of the importance of experience, for instance notable in the applauses. It was not explicitly mentioned before either performance what should happen with the applause. There was somewhat confusion at the first two performances of *Kashōken*. After these performances the audiences did not respond with applause. After the second performance, the audience had already gotten up from their seats before the church doors had completely closed after the monks left the church nave. In doing so, it seems the audience regarded the performances primarily as a ritual from a specific religious tradition for which it is improper to applaud, rather than a festival performance. Or they might have felt confusion about their presence as festival visitor at this religious ceremony: where ritual (ceremony) and theater (festival) meet contestation arises.

The Japan expert, who had given the introductory lecture before the first performance, talked to the festival producer after the second performance. He expressed the wish of the monks that applause would follow the ceremony after the doors had shut behind them. It was considered improper to applaud while they were still in the nave, because every movement and sound was to be regarded as part of the ceremony. But afterwards, applause was seen as a sign of respect and appreciation for their effort. Thus, before the start of the third performance, the producer got up in front of the audience, announcing there was room for applause at the end of the performance. Consequentially, the audience indeed applauded after the church doors had completely closed.

After the performance of Schola Maastricht, it took a while before the audience started to applaud hesitantly. One visitor wrote afterwards how she had appreciated there not being an applause after the performance, because that would have seriously influenced the sacred atmosphere that was created during the performance.⁸ She described herself as a devote churchgoer and she fully experienced the religious significance of the rituals, despite them being performed outside of the proper liturgical moment. If the performance would have ended with a standing ovation, this perhaps would have harmed this significance for her. There exists a discrepancy between the field notes of the researcher and the recollection of the informant. The field notes demonstrate

ritual', in *Numen* 26 (1979) 2-22 and IDEM: *Rules without meaning. Ritual, mantras, and the human sciences* (New York 1989).

⁸ E-mail correspondence, September 2012.

there was, however hesitantly, applause. This competes with the absence of applause experienced by the visitor. Perhaps the hesitation was enough for the informant to hold on to the sacred atmosphere after the singing had stopped. For others to applaud, could indicate that some saw the evening purely as a festival performance rather than a religious ritual. In whatever way, the members of the audience perceived the performance, by means of the applause they wanted to show their appreciation for the performed.

3.2. Interstitial forms of performance

In the distinction between ritual and theater in relation to the purposes of performance, Schechner attributes different roles for the audience. He situates a participating audience under the purpose of efficacy and an observing audience under the purpose of entertainment. Musicologist Christopher Small unites both types of audiences in addressing the active character of performance by means of the verb 'musicking'.⁹ He sees 'a musical performance as an encounter between human beings that takes place through the medium of sounds organized in specific ways'.¹⁰ In this encounter, all involved parties play an active role and contribute to the meaning of their encounter in their own ways; the audience just as much as the performers. Parallel to the purpose of the performance, the role of the audience can be positioned on a sliding binary scale between the opposites of participation and observation and this corresponds with the individual experience of the visitor. Anthropologist Roy Rappaport sees participating audience members as performers, while passive visitors remain observers. However, he acknowledges that participation and observation are two poles on a continuum. In a performance, there always will be varying degrees of audience participation. Rappaport addresses the gliding scale of performance types as 'interstitial forms, performances that, lying as they do, between culturally recognized forms, derive their peculiar force from their very ambiguity'.¹¹ The ambiguity can be found in both performances of *Kashóken* and Schola Maastricht, which combine existing ritual from longstanding religious traditions with the contemporary concert practice. By selecting and summarizing different elements of the rituals, the rituals became appropriate for the festival. That this ambiguity leads to confusion is demonstrated by the question of applause. It led to uncertainty on how to characterize the performances and how to behave accordingly.

The confusion on whether to applaud or not relates to what concert, festival, and church visitors know about etiquette in their worlds. After concerts applause is expected, after religious rituals it is not. The confusion then shows the fine line between theater and ritual and the different ways in which people en-

⁹ C. SMALL: *Musicking. The meanings of performing and listening* (Middletown 1998) 10.

¹⁰ SMALL: *Musicking* 10.

¹¹ R. RAPPAPORT: *Ritual and religion in the making of humanity* (Cambridge 1999) 41.

gage with the performances. The question whether the performances are to be regarded as rituals or concerts, as transformative or entertaining, or as something in between, is not the most important one to ask. The fact that people *are* participating in these performances – that they are organized by a program committee, performed by choirs, and attended by an audience – and in doing so *relate* themselves to the others participating: that is where the relevance lies.

Small sees a clear and unavoidable relationship between artistic practice and ritual when he states: ‘Ritual is the mother of all arts. (...) Ritual does not just *use* the arts but itself *is* the great unitary performance art in which all of what we today call the arts (...) have their origin.’¹² Small emphasizes how the meaning lies in the very act of creation and participation, which is underlined by the variety of ways people are involved in the festival performances and retrieve meaning from the performances in their own ways. In addition to the active character of musical performance, the context in which the performances take place is also of importance. That is the festival *Musica sacra Maastricht*. This context is also responsible for a blurring of the lines between ritual and theater. The festival offers its program to explore the notion of sacrality through music. Whether this exploration occurs through experiences of ritual, experiences of theater, or experiences that lie in between: all of them are contributing to the meaning of the performances.

4. Relationality in performance

The ways people relate to the performances is highly individual and the processes of meaning-making and attribution are ongoing during and after the festival weekend. Yet general patterns can be discerned. This is for instance shown by the two men who sat at the back row of the Schola Maastricht performance and who had attended the *Kashôken* performance the night before. They both, in their own ways, related what was performed to their own familiar world, and as they wished this world to be. The young man related it to his personality and character, and its fit with the ways he experienced the performed. He also related it to his profession, the business of theatre. Both the older man and the president of the program committee related the performances to their youth as well as their adult lives, church visits, and the religious tradition the performed stands in. By comparing Schola Maastricht to that of *Kashôken*, they came to the conclusion that the Schola performance better matched their frames of reference, the world as they know it. While the Buddhist performance less matched with their worlds, both performances still affirmed their ideas on how they wanted their world to be.

Whether it is ritual or theater, transformative or entertaining, Schechner claims that during a performance people are led into a “second reality”, sepa-

¹² SMALL: *Musicking* 105-106.

rate from ordinary life'.¹³ While performances often occur in for those performances specifically designated places and times, they are never completely separate from ordinary life. What takes place during performances is always related to existing frames of reference, even if the performed falls completely beyond these frames. Therefore, Schechner his view of performance as a liminal, set-apart world can be nuanced by Small's relational approach to performance. By seeing performance as an encounter between human beings through a particular medium, of for instance musical sounds or vocals, it becomes a way of establishing relationships between those involved in the performance.¹⁴ Furthermore, during performances, ideals about human behavior and relationships are addressed in for instance the design of the space where the performance takes place, the way a performance is carried out, and what the role of the audience is to be. All these ideals are engaged with by people participating in a performance. Thus in addition to actually establishing relationships, they also relate these established relationships to their ideals about relationships and the world they function in.¹⁵

This relational approach emphasizes Small his view on the meaning of performance. All those involved in whatever way contribute to the meaning of the performance. As demonstrated by the responses of the men above who went to both performances, that which is experienced is related to the world as they know it, and how they wish it to be (or not be). Also in the response of the woman who appreciated the absence of applause after the Schola Maastricht had stopped singing, this duality of ideal and known is present. These visitors position themselves in a network, relating that what happens during the performances to their knowledge of and ideals about their worlds. This is a part of Small his theory which needs much more empirical research to analyze whether it is generally applicable. However, the first findings of this pilot study offer an interesting insight towards this generalization. This approach of what happens during a performance and the process of appreciation results rather in a connection between the everyday life (that which is known) and a set-apart world (ideals) than in a separation of the two.

5. The sacred

With its title, the festival *Musica sacra Maastricht*, implicates to present performances regarding sacrality in relation to music. The members of the program committee insist that they do not provide directions or definitive answers on what sacrality in music is, but instead offer an exploration of the diversity of the sacred through a range of musical performances. Obviously in the decision-

¹³ SCHECHNER: *Performance studies* 52.

¹⁴ SMALL: *Musicking* 13.

¹⁵ SMALL: *Musicking* 47-49.

making process of programming selections and choices are made on what is fit for the festival program, thus expressing ideas on sacrality and taking stances on it. As pointed out before, a performance can have multiple purposes or multiple effects on those participating. The festival offers the frame of sacrality, but only during and after the performances the effect of this frame can be analyzed and can be greatly dependent on the degree of involvement in the performance. The PHD project therefore studies the involvement of four groups – program committee, performers, audience, and critics – in the festival and the discourses on the relationship between music and sacrality that exist within these groups.

In addition to the discursive practices during the festival, the theoretical counterparts concerning the notion of sacrality demonstrate approaches from two angles.¹⁶ First, there is the approach to that which is regarded as sacred by means of attribution. Objects, events, persons, institutions, traditions et cetera can be declared sacred at any given time. This occurs on collective as well individual levels, and these attributions can change in character overtime, gaining or losing in importance. Secondly, the sacred is a category of experience. Like the attribution category, it can be experienced in many ways; by looking at an art work that greatly appeals to emotions, by being part of a large crowd in celebrating a coronation event, or, indeed, experienced during a musical concert. Also in this category, the experience can be highly individual and shared by a collective.

At the festival *Musica sacra Maastricht*, these two categories both appear in the ethnographic material. For instance, the festival in its entirety or specific concert locations as such are identified as special, set-apart, or sacred in themselves. But also, the experience of sacrality, described in an atmosphere or particular sounds, is apparent while the festival takes place. On the other hand, because of the festival frame of sacrality, people can also, due to a negative experience, talk about the absence of sacrality when describing the experienced.

Two examples from the data show the intertwined use of the term ‘sacred’. Music critic Maurice Wyche opened his review on the festival by stating that *Musica sacra Maastricht* has established a reputation with digging up curious per-

¹⁶ For an overview on the terminology of the ‘sacred’, see A.L. MOLENDIJK: ‘The notion of the ‘sacred’’, in: P. POST & A.L. MOLENDIJK (eds.): *Holy Ground. Re-inventing ritual space in modern western culture* (= Liturgia condenda 24) (Leuven / Paris / Walpole, MA 2010) 55-89. This article shows the continuous debate on the definition and use of the terminology of ‘the sacred’ and ‘sacrality’. As stated above, the approach taken here deals with the terminology on two levels. Corresponding to the category of attribution, the sacred is that which stands out with special meaning, is non-negotiable and un-touchable. With regards to the category of experience, sacrality deals with the overwhelming, unknown, ungraspable, however yearned for. Functioning as umbrella term, sacrality can be manifested in religious forms, but also in cultural practices and social institutions.

formances. He then described the *Kashôken* performance as most curious of all:¹⁷

But how exotic the look of it might be, musically there is little to experience. A little bell, single-voiced monotonous singing. Apart from the aesthetic sight – after all we are peeking at praying monks together – a performance programmed as a concert should position music above everything else. Otherwise, we might as well scratch the first word of *Musica Sacra*.

As described above, many visitors responded to the curious character of the performance, the space in which it was performed, and the sounds differing from western concepts of music. One visitor wrote afterwards how she had disliked the performance, felt it was completely unsacred, and compared it to a fair show. She could not concentrate on the sounds because of ringing church bells outside and coughing neighbors. She related her experience of exoticism and amusement to the performers, of whom she was sure they must have felt that as well. All in all to her it was ‘definitely not a sacred ritual’.¹⁸

These responses are indications on what is expected of the festival, when the fine line between ritual and theater is crossed, and when the intended frame of sacrality appears not to work. The critic expected a concert and was disappointed in the musical part of the evening. In his language he disapproved of the exotic character of the performance, expressing a discomfort in looking at the monks in acting out their worship. The last sentence of leaving out the word ‘musica’ from the festival name implies that the critic did relate the ceremony to sacrality. From the rest of the quote it seems that he equates sacrality with religion. The term ‘exotic’ is also used by the visitor, who felt a certain insincerity or meaninglessness in the performance of the ritual acts and songs. During an earlier interview, this visitor firmly indicated not to be religious at all, but this does not prevent her from wanting a degree of sincerity in a performance of religious rituals. For her, this sincerity is linked to the experience of sacrality in a performance. For the lady at the Schola Maastricht performance, the religious significance of the rituals, with which she was familiar, related to the sacred atmosphere she referred to afterwards. And in two responses, the performed rituals were related to childhood memories. Nostalgia seems to evoke more positive experiences than exoticism, when it comes to the performance of religious rituals and assessments of that which is experienced as sacred.

¹⁷ M. WYCHE: ‘Uitersten bij jubileum *Musica sacra*’, in *De Limburger* (Sittard, 10 September 2012) 10. In Dutch the quote reads: *Meest curieus is de anderhalf uur durende boeddhistische ceremonie door dertien Japanse monniken. (...) Maar hoe exotisch de aanblik ook is, muzikaal valt er weinig te beleven: een tik op een belletje, eenstemmige monotone zang. Los van de esthetische kwestie – we zitten met zijn allen biddende monniken te bekoekeloeren – zou het bij een als concert geprogrammeerde voorstelling toch zeker om de muziek moeten gaan. Anders kunnen we het eerste woord van *Musica Sacra* maar beter schrappen.*

¹⁸ E-mail correspondence, October 2012.

Beyond the level of nostalgic or exotic feelings, the responses can be related to the theory of musicking. All these people, the president of the program committee, the critic, the members of the audience, participated in the performance in their own ways. Nevertheless, they participated, if you will, they 'musicked'. Their responses demonstrate that their musicking did not take place in a completely separate world, but was very much related to their known worlds. In this pilot study, the more critical responses were related to the performance that stood further away from this known world. By evoking memories and nostalgia, the Schola performance heightened the degree of participation for members in the audience. This notion of familiarity made that one man lip-sync, and led others to engagement instead of looking with an exotic eye. The younger man in the audience, who experienced the rituals by their theatrical quality, still showed more involvement in the Schola performance than in the *Shingon* performance. While the latter could be addressed on its theatrical elements as well, he did not feel participant enough to actually engage with what was going on. By means of these different degrees of participation on the binary scale between observer and participant, the visitors above related the performed to their known worlds, how they felt this world should be, and positioned themselves in it. These different degrees of involvement, of participation, or indeed of musicking, are seemingly related to whether people experience or attribute the notion of sacrality in the performance of a religious ritual in a festival context.

6. Conclusion

This comparative pilot study of two performances of religious rituals provided a first opportunity within the overall PHD project to relate fieldwork to theoretical concepts. The gathered ethnographic data regarding the three highlighted aspects – the fine line between ritual and theater, relationality in performance, and the experience and attribution of sacrality – stood out during the fieldwork and is continuously used to assess whether theoretical concepts actually work in the field. By studying the field and relating remarkable events to theories regarding performance, music, and sacrality, the field is familiarized with and academic theories are confirmed, complemented, or changed. It can be concluded that in shaping, presenting, and experiencing possible forms of sacrality through musical performance, many different parties are involved. The festival *Musica sacra Maastricht* is a clear example of that. It is a festival to which many people relate in their own particular ways. Performing ethnographic research at the 2012 festival edition provided a first encounter with the versatility and variety of relationships established during and around the festival. The challenge for this research lies in the exploration of possible patterns of how these relationships are shaped and take form, and how attribution of meaning takes place. In turn the study of the field is essential in developing theories on the

relationship between the concepts of sacrality and music. By means of that, this research aims to provide insights into the continuously changing ways in which sacrality is regarded and dealt with in our contemporary culture.

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