

# Musicalizing All Souls' Day Rituals

*Martin J.M. Hoondert & William Arfman*

## 1. Introduction

In 2006 the Capella Amsterdam choir sang the *Planctus David super Saul et Jonathan*, a text by Petrus Abaelardus (1079-1142), who also composed the music. The broader context of this performance was that it was part of an annual concert on the first Sunday of November in Lochem, entitled: 'Requiem for...' (*Requiem voor...*) The text of the first stanza is as follows:

<i>Dolorum solatium,</i>	A consolation for my woes,
<i>laborum remedium</i>	a remedy for my suffering
<i>mibi mea cithara.</i>	is what my harp is for me.
<i>Nunc quo major dolor est</i>	Now that my woes have increased
<i>justiorque moeror est</i>	and my sorrows are more justified
<i>plus est necessaria</i>	I need it all the more.

The Requiem concert in Lochem can rightly be considered a commemoration ritual. November, when the leaves are falling and nature is dying, is the month to commemorate the dead. In the Roman Catholic liturgy, November 2<sup>nd</sup> is All Souls' Day, and since the tenth century this has been the day that the church commemorates those who passed away in the course of the year and prays for their salvation. Music is and has been an important part of these commemoration rituals. The above-cited stanza from the *Planctus David* gives expression to the consoling function of music. In this article, we want to reflect on the functions that music can fulfill as part of commemoration rituals.<sup>1</sup> To this end, we will present three cases of musical rituals: an All Souls' Day Requiem concert and commemoration rituals in two churches in the Netherlands. As in the work of Professor John Harper, keynote speaker at the international conference and master class at which these contributions were originally presented, our focus in doing so will be on the performative dimension of these musical rituals.<sup>2</sup>

Rituals without music hardly exist. Wolfgang Suppan in his anthropological study *Der musizierende Mensch* brings to our notice that in all cultures known to us music is used. He states *daß überall dort, wo Kulthandlungen (...) vollzogen werden*,

<sup>1</sup> Throughout this article, function is used as a catch-all term to discuss the things that performances and rituals do or achieve. It should not be taken to imply that a functionalist approach is being employed in which rituals or performances can be reduced to their functionality.

<sup>2</sup> This conference, entitled 'Performances of religious music in medieval and late modern culture', was held on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> of November 2012 at Tilburg University.

*Rezitation in erhobener Sprache, Gesang und Musik nicht fehlen.*<sup>3</sup> It is therefore remarkable that in many studies of ritual no attention is paid to music. In the *Journal of ritual studies*, published since 1987, we find only a few articles in which music is explicitly made into a theme.<sup>4</sup> And in Catherine Bell's much-used handbook of ritual studies, *Ritual. Perspectives and dimensions*, music as a keyword is lacking.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, Ronald Grimes, one of the founding fathers of the interdisciplinary field of ritual studies, hardly pays attention to music in his publications. In his autobiographical book *Marrying and burying*, he writes some moving chapters about the death and burial of his son, his grandmother, his mother and his father. However, only in the description of the burial of his mother music is mentioned, and even there the attention it gets is restricted to one small paragraph.<sup>6</sup>

In this article, we will concentrate on music but without ignoring other ritual elements such as space, text and gesture. In order to do so, we will present several case descriptions of commemoration rituals linked to All Souls' Day.<sup>7</sup> However, we want to do more than merely offer descriptions, we also want to analyze and interpret the functions of music. Before presenting the cases, we will therefore focus on the concept of 'function' in relation to music and ritual in some more detail. For this we will borrow a few ideas from the field of performance studies, the main consideration for this being that music is experienced first and foremost by doing and listening rather than by reading a score. Music, as Christopher Small has claimed, is a verb.<sup>8</sup> The same can be said of ritual: it is not in the first place a script or a mental activity, but rather an embodied practice, to be experienced by doing. Richard Schechner, one of the leading authors in the field of performance studies, distinguishes seven functions of performances, which can be applied both to ritual and to music.<sup>9</sup> These functions are: 1. to entertain, 2. to make something that is beautiful, 3. to mark or change identity, 4. to make or foster community, 5. to heal, 6. to teach, per-

<sup>3</sup> W. SUPPAN: *Der musizierende Mensch. Eine Anthropologie der Musik* (Mainz / New York 1984) 32.

<sup>4</sup> M. TAKAHASHI & T. OLAVESON: 'Music, dance and raving bodies. Raving spirituality in the Central Canadian Rave Scene', in *Journal of ritual studies* 17/2 (2003) 72-96. H. PHELAN: 'Borrowed space, embodied sound. The sonic potential of new ritual communities in Ireland', in *Ibidem* 20/2 (2006) 19-32.

<sup>5</sup> C. BELL: *Ritual: perspectives and dimensions* (New York / Oxford 1997).

<sup>6</sup> R.L. GRIMES: *Marrying and burying. Rites of passage in a man's life* (Boulder etc. 1995) 136.

<sup>7</sup> This article is a joint effort and has benefited from the exchange of ideas and criticisms. However, there has been a division of labor according to our respective research experience. Hoondert is primarily responsible for parts 2 and 4; Arfman for part 3. The introduction and conclusion (parts 1 and 5) are products of collaboration, the final versions being written by Hoondert.

<sup>8</sup> Chr. SMALL: *Musicking. The meanings of performing and listening* (Middletown, CT 1998).

<sup>9</sup> R. SCHECHNER: *Performance studies. An introduction* (New York / London 2006) 45-48.

suade, or convince, and 7. to deal with the sacred and/or the demonic. Schechner adds that for some people

one or a few of these [functions] will be more important than others. But the hierarchy changes according to who you are and what you want to get done. Few if any performances accomplish all of these functions, but many performances emphasize more than one.<sup>10</sup>

The seven functions mentioned seem to us to constitute a rather pragmatic list. Are there any more functions that could be distinguished; in other words, is the list exhaustive? In his book on rituals, emeritus professor of liturgy, Gerard Lukken, mentions ten characteristic dimensions of rituals.<sup>11</sup> Although dimensions and functions cannot be equated without further discussion or clarification, a comparison of the seven functions of performances mentioned by Schechner and the ten dimensions of ritual mentioned by Lukken nevertheless yields interesting insights that allow us to evaluate Schechner's list. The comparison, with Schechner as the starting point, results in the following table:<sup>12</sup>

<i>Schechner – Seven functions of performances</i>	<i>Lukken – Ten dimensions of rituals</i>
1. To entertain	--
2. To make something that is beautiful	--
3. To mark or change identity	1. Mediation of the past and the future 6. Expressive dimension
4. To make or foster community	9. Social dimension 10. Political dimension
5. To heal	4. Relief and channelling 5. Therapeutic dimension
6. To teach, persuade, or convince	8. Ethical dimension
7. To deal with the sacred and/or the demonic	7. Invocatory dimension
--	2. Formalization
--	3. Condensation

The comparison shows that there is quite a bit of overlap between the two lists, but that there are a few relevant discrepancies as well. We notice that the first two functions distinguished by Schechner, to entertain and to make something beautiful, are not explicitly mentioned in the list drawn up by Lukken. How is this to be interpreted? First of all it is important to note that Schechner describes performance 'as ritualized behavior conditioned/permeated by play'.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> SCHECHNER: *Performance studies* 46.

<sup>11</sup> G. LUKKEN: *Rituals in abundance. Critical reflections on the place, form, and identity of Christian ritual in our culture* (= Liturgia condenda 17) (Leuven / Paris / Dudley, MA 2005) 54-73.

<sup>12</sup> We maintain the original numbering used by the authors.

<sup>13</sup> SCHECHNER: *Performance studies* 89, also 49-51.

By doing so, Schechner appears to position play and ritual at the extreme ends of a continuum: 'Ritual has seriousness to it, the hammerhead of authority. Play is looser, more permissive – forgiving in precisely those areas where ritual is enforcing, flexible where ritual is rigid.'<sup>14</sup> From this point of view, it might be argued that to entertain or to make something beautiful are ludic functions of performance, which do not play a predominant role in performances of a ritual kind. Strangely enough, however, Schechner himself claims that rituals tend to have the greatest number of the functions he listed represented in them. In fact, 'to entertain' is listed as a function of such varying ritual performances as shamanic healing and a charismatic Christian church service.<sup>15</sup> Maybe, then, the twin performative functions of beauty and entertainment escaped Lukken's notice, or perhaps the former should be subsumed under the heading of what he calls the expressive dimension and the latter under the social dimension. If this is indeed the case, does that mean that Lukken considers these functions as secondary, i.e., not essential to ritual? In any case, a comparison of the two lists shows that to him ritual exhibits other important characteristics such as condensing and formalizing behavior into traditions. These are precisely the aspects of ritual that Schechner seems to be referring to when he says ritual has a certain seriousness or rigidity to it, even though he does not put them on his list of functions. In yet another list, found in Catherine Bell's previously mentioned handbook, this aspect of ritual is even more clearly emphasized. Of the six entries, an impressive four refer to the repetitive nature of rituals in one way or another, i.e., formalism, traditionalism, invariance and rule-governance.<sup>16</sup> Although Schechner refers to the concept of restored behavior to indicate that every act is 'constructed from behaviors previously behaved' he still chooses to emphasize the uniqueness of every particular performance.<sup>17</sup> There is however another plausible reason why Schechner would discuss the repetitive nature of performances but, unlike Lukken, not put it on his list, and that would be that condensation and formalization might be dimensions or characteristics of ritual, but they are not part of its functions. In fact, they are the means by which ritual achieves such functions, as will be discussed in more detail below. By comparing Schechner's and Lukken's lists, we come to recognize there are two sides to the ritual coin. On the one hand, if like Schechner we pay attention to the concept of play, such functions as entertainment and beauty come to the fore; on the other hand, if we focus too much on play, we might miss out on such dimensions as formalization and condensation. In our analysis of the function of music in ritual commemorations, then, we will strive to pay attention to play without neglecting the element of repetition (formalism, traditionalism) by making use of both lists.

<sup>14</sup> SCHECHNER: *Performance studies* 89.

<sup>15</sup> SCHECHNER: *Performance studies* 46.

<sup>16</sup> BELL: *Ritual* 138-169.

<sup>17</sup> SCHECHNER: *Performance studies* 29.

Having established a conceptual basis for the analysis of performative functions, the question of how performances achieve the effects they have, has only been touched upon briefly. How exactly do rites manage to entertain, beautify, mark identity, foster community, heal, persuade and invoke? In trying to analyze the performative dimension of ritual activities, Catherine Bell argues that this is due to the dynamics of multisensory framing.<sup>18</sup> Through the stimulation of their senses, those present are not merely being explained something; they are led to experience it. Performance theory teaches us that our reactions to a performance, such as a ritual or a concert, are primarily structured by experiences rather than interpretations. In her book on the transforming power of performances, German performance theorist Erika Fischer-Lichte describes an intriguing example of a performance by the artist Marina Abramović. She points out that it is the sensorial impact of this performance, not the interpretation of the separate elements, that transforms the audience from observers into acting subjects.<sup>19</sup> In performances, these multisensory experiences are framed so as to distinguish them from routine reality as something significant that is deserving of attention. Bell adds that '[s]uch frames not only distinguish performance as such, they also create a complete and condensed, if somewhat artificial world', thus emphasizing Lukken's ritual dimension of condensation.<sup>20</sup> Within the frame, then, a temporary world is created, a holistic microcosm that renders the multisensory experiences coherent and meaningful, thereby validating them.<sup>21</sup> In other words, it is through framing them in a special way that performances achieve their functions.

## 2. All Souls' Day rituals in contemporary culture

All Souls' Day is an ecclesial ritual, celebrated in the Roman Catholic Church as well as in some other churches on November 2<sup>nd</sup>. According to legend, it was instituted by abbot Odilo of Cluny in 998.<sup>22</sup> Originally, the liturgy of All Souls' Day was aimed at the salvation of the deceased from purgatory through prayer, the Eucharistic sacrifice in the Requiem mass and observances in cemeteries. Many popular rituals are associated with All Souls' Day as well. Besides the ecclesial rituals, we currently notice an abundance of All Souls' Day rituals outside of the churchly institutions. Cemeteries organize All Souls' celebrations,

<sup>18</sup> BELL: *Ritual* 160.

<sup>19</sup> E. FISCHER-LICHTE: *The transformative power of performance. A new aesthetics* (London / New York 2008) 11-18.

<sup>20</sup> BELL: *Ritual* 160.

<sup>21</sup> BELL: *Ritual* 161.

<sup>22</sup> J. BÄRSCH: *Allerseelen. Studien zu Liturgie und Brauchtum eines Totengedenktages in der abendländischen Kirche* (= Liturgiewissenschaftliche Quellen und Forschungen 90) (Münster 2004) 79-114. B. LUYKX: 'Allerzielen', in L. BRINKHOFF et al. (red.): *Liturgisch woordenboek* (Roermond 1958-1962) 1, 102-103.

often in collaboration with artists. Institutions like hospitals and care centers invite relatives of patients who died in the past year to a memorial service in early November. Crematoriums organize a light or candle evening on which candles are burned at the urn field. It is remarkable that a Roman Catholic liturgical feast should have been absorbed into a broad ritual field of commemoration and mourning like this.

In this article we include both ecclesial and non-institutional All Souls' Day rituals. In our opinion, the boundaries between these rites of collective commemoration have become blurred: we come across the same ritual elements, including music, in nearly all of these performances. As such, we could speak of the emergence of a ritual field aimed at collective commemoration, for which traditional All Souls' Day practices seem to have served as loose templates.<sup>23</sup> For the purposes of this article, this field of All Souls' Day rituals has been divided into three categories.

First, there are the ecclesial rituals, as we find them in the Roman Catholic Church, but also in the Anglican Church for instance and in certain Protestant churches. The current official designation of All Souls' Day is: 'The commemoration of all the faithful departed'. These days, the focus is no longer exclusively on salvation, but rather on commemoration. In local parishes, the next of kin of the 'faithful departed' are invited to celebrate All Souls' Day. It is an important stage in the mourning process. The names of the deceased of the past year are read out and the surviving relatives receive a little cross with the name of the deceased person written on it. This Roman Catholic ritual is still performed in the parishes. The deceased are also commemorated in the Protestant churches, for example on the last day of the year or the last Sunday before Advent. Recently, some protestant churches have moved the commemoration of the dead to November 1<sup>st</sup>.

Secondly, there are the commemoration rituals held in cemeteries and at the urn fields of crematoriums. These rituals follow on from the Catholic custom of cleaning the graves, refreshing the flowers and visiting the graves with relatives on November 2<sup>nd</sup>. The rituals in this category are pure and simple: candles are handed out and people light them in commemoration of their departed loved ones. Sometimes music is played, for example by someone playing a bagpipe. The rituals in this second category can follow upon an ecclesiastical service, but they may equally be organized by a public cemetery or a crematorium. A new, emerging ritual in this category is *Allerzielen Alom* (or 'All Souls' Day Everywhere'), a project that was started in 2005 by artist Ida van der Lee on a cemetery in Amsterdam.<sup>24</sup> She used the arts to ritualize the mourning process

<sup>23</sup> W. ARFMAN: 'Innovating from traditions: the emergence of a ritual field of collective commemoration in the Netherlands', in *Journal of contemporary religion* 28 (2013) (Forthcoming).

<sup>24</sup> I. VAN DER LEE: *Allerzielen Alom. Kunst tot herdenken* (Zoetermeer 2008); IDEM: *De muze van het herdenken. Vijf jaar Allerzielen Alom* (Zoetermeer 2010); Th. QUARTIER et al.: 'Kreatives Totengedenken. Rituelle Erinnerungsräume in einem niederländischen

and revitalize old Roman Catholic folk practices associated with All Souls' Day. Her project has spread like wildfire across the Netherlands.

The third category includes the type of Requiem concerts referred to in the introduction. For about ten years now, such Requiem concerts have been organized in connection with All Souls' Day. It is important to note that the Requiem has been part of the Roman Catholic All Souls' Day liturgy for centuries.<sup>25</sup> Although music is part of all the old and new All Souls' Day rituals, it is predominant in the third category. In this category, we might even go so far as to say that music *is* the ritual.

In this article, we will focus on the first and third categories. For these categories, we will explore the functions of music in connection with commemoration and mourning. Music also plays a part in the second category, but since these newly emerging rites have already received their fair share of academic attention, they have been left out of the comparison made here.<sup>26</sup>

### 3. Music and ecclesial All Souls' Day rituals

With so many new All Souls' Day practices emerging in the last few decades, it is easy to overlook the developments that have simultaneously taken place within the churches. However, when we argue that the various ritual practices discussed here form part of a larger ritual field, we are expressly including ecclesial rites as part of this larger phenomenon. The cases discussed below, and the ties they exhibit to other nodes within the field, are a case in point.

#### 3.1. Oudewater

It is All Souls' Day 2012 in the tiny city of Oudewater and befitting the renewed popularity of this day, the local Saint Francis Church organizes not one, but two different ritual events. One of these is rather new, having started as recently as 2010, and takes place in the church's own cemetery. It is part of a larger project of the diocese of Rotterdam and could be classified as a Catholic response to the previously mentioned artistic *Allerzielen Alom* commemorations. In terms of the categories described above, it is a clear example of the second category. With this ritual event drawing attention as being quite innovative and being performed in a semi-public space, it is easy to overlook the commemora-

Kunstprojekt', in *Jaarboek voor liturgie-onderzoek / Yearbook for liturgical and ritual studies* 24 (2008) 155-176; W. ARFMAN: *Analysing Allerzielen Alom. Material culture in an emerging rite* (s.l. 2011); E. VENBRUX: 'New identity of All Souls' Day celebrations in the Netherlands. Extra-ecclesiastic commemoration of the dead, art, and religiosity', in D. J. DAVIES & C.-W. PARK (eds.): *Emotion, identity and death. Mortality across disciplines* (Farnham / Burlington, VT 2012) 161-173.

<sup>25</sup> BÄRSCH: *Allerseelen* 230-237.

<sup>26</sup> See note 24 for a selection of such research.

tive service organized inside the church or to simply label that as a traditional service and be done with it. This would be a shame, as the service itself is not nearly as static as such a label would connote. In addition, the location of the Protestant church, where the event needs to be held because the parish's own Catholic church is being renovated, is nearly filled to the brim with parishioners. After the parish priest, the acolyte and two lay members of the evening wake committee have entered the church, the service opens with the song 'Who's allowed in as a guest'<sup>27</sup> sung by the so called Oosterhuis choir, accompanied on the piano by their choirmaster. The choir is named after Huub Oosterhuis, a somewhat controversial Dutch theologian, ex-priest and above all poet and liturgical lyricist, whose work has become popular in both Protestant and Catholic churches throughout the Netherlands. The Saint Francis Church of Oudewater also has a men-only Gregorian choir, but they were scheduled to perform at the cemetery ritual this year, having done the church service last year. Although it is mainly the choir singing this welcoming song, loosely based on Psalm 15, several parishioners join in as well. Because the service has to be held in one of the local Protestant churches rather than their own church, the choir has been relegated to a position in the back. As a result, those wanting to watch the choir perform are forced to strain their necks.

After a word of welcome by one of the two members of the evening wake committee, who introduces the theme of this commemorative service: a name in stone, the choir performs a song titled 'The water shall break stones'.<sup>28</sup> Unlike the previous song, the lyrics are poetic rather than biblical, but again there is little singing being done by the parishioners themselves, in spite of the fact that all the lyrics of the service have been included in the service booklet distributed upon entering the church. The next song, 'Cherish the Names',<sup>29</sup> is likewise sung virtually exclusively by the choir. It follows after the recitation of the names, which is accompanied by the placing of stones labeled with the names of the deceased next to a candle.<sup>30</sup> However, the subsequent song 'Light that touches us in the morning',<sup>31</sup> which follows after the first text reading, is one where most of the parishioners join in. This sudden change appears to be the result of the choirmaster temporarily stepping away from the piano and having turned around to face the congregation, targeting her orchestrations at them rather than the choir. The various songs that follow, however, such as 'This one thing we know' after the second reading, the acclamation 'Take me as

<sup>27</sup> *Wie mag te gast zijn?*, written by Huub Oosterhuis, composed by Antoine Oomen.

<sup>28</sup> *Het water zal stenen breken*, written by Michèle Naljis, composed by Tom Löwenthal.

<sup>29</sup> *Koester de Namen*, written by Sytze de Vries, composed by Toon Hagen.

<sup>30</sup> It should be noted here that this ritual practice is not a yearly occurrence but an alternative to the more common lighting of candles, thought to be more appropriate to this year's theme and interestingly enough based on the 2011 edition of the Protestant Requiem service in the nearby town of Reeuwijk, to be discussed in more detail below.

<sup>31</sup> *Licht dat ons aanstoot in de morgen*, written by Huub Oosterhuis, composed by Antoine Oomen.



I am' and 'A womb of mercy', which precedes the Eucharist, are again predominantly sung by the choir.<sup>32</sup> The closing song 'Whoever would lose his life', is accompanied by a soprano solo.<sup>33</sup>

It is important to note that in the entire organization of this service the priest himself plays a secondary role. Instead, two different lay members of the evening wake committee are selected each year to choose a theme around which the various parts of the service will revolve. They select the prayers, the texts to be read and adapt the ritual accompanying the reciting of the names. The Eucharist naturally remains unchanged and the presiding priest does write his own sermon, although he does so within the chosen theme. The songs to be sung are suggested to this organizing duo by the choir itself, the choirmaster playing an important role in this, and they are generally accepted if they are seen as befitting either the theme or the more general commemorative purpose of the service. Even though the name of the choir might suggest otherwise, their repertoire also includes songs by other lyricists and composers in this Dutch ecumenical genre. This also goes for the songs performed today, although the names of all composers and lyricists remain unmentioned in the booklet. With the two choirs alternating between the church- and the cemetery service, the musical accompaniment of the church service varies considerably from one year to the next depending on the choir performing. This is where the issue of framing comes in. In the years that the Oosterhuis choir performs, the lyrics are in Dutch and therefore easy to understand for all those present, especially since they can also read along. The Latin chants sung by the Gregorian choir in the other years will generally not be understood by the parishioners. As such, the predominant effect of the latter is the creation of a sound experience, whereas the effect of the former will be much more lyrical in character. For some (older) churchgoers such a use of Gregorian chanting may also evoke an experience of a more strictly Roman-Catholic identity. This, however, is not to say that the songs performed in Dutch are experienced only on a literal-interpretive level, which given their poetic inclinations would be missing the point. The elements of the service that work on a more literal-interpretive level, like the service's word of welcome or its sermon, predominantly emphasize the service's healing function and the mediation of the past and the future. The contribution of the choirs to the framing of this performance, then, is to clothe or condense such functions in an experience that is at once beautiful, sacred and expressive. At the points where singing was done collectively, we encounter the fostering of community through joint experience.

<sup>32</sup> *Dit ene weten jij*, written by Henriette Roland Holst, composed by Mariette Harinck; *Neem mij aan zoals ik ben*, original English version written and composed by John L. Bell, translation by Gerke van Hielen; *Een schoot van ontferming*, written by Huub Oosterhuis, composed by Antoine Oomen.

<sup>33</sup> *Wie zijn leven*, written by Huub Oosterhuis, composed by Bernard Huijbers.

### 3.2. Reeuwijk

In the days leading up to All Souls' Day, Protestant Church The Ark in the nearby town of Reeuwijk, also hosted two occasions for ritual commemoration. In this case, neither of the two performances took place in a cemetery, although the Protestant minister explained that he was aware of such projects and had been considering doing something along these lines as well, feeling a need to offer the local non-churchgoing community an opportunity to be more actively and collectively engaged in a commemorative performance. Eventually, however, a more musically oriented opportunity had presented itself in 2011, when the organizer of the church's special Huub Oosterhuis services came up with the idea of organizing commemorative concerts.

Interestingly, these commemorative concerts, rather than becoming separate events by themselves, turned out to have a profound impact on the traditional commemorative church service, which had already seen various innovations in recent years. The most noteworthy of these probably was the decision to move the service from late November, now the customary time of year for such commemorative services to be held amongst Protestants, to the Sunday before All Souls' Day.<sup>34</sup>

On Sunday the 28<sup>th</sup> of October 2012, the effect of the new project on the regular service was immediately evident. Nico Hovius, the composer of 'Requiem for the Living' (*Requiem voor de Levenden*), the Dutch requiem to be performed in the commemorative concert scheduled for later that week, was found willing to also do the musical accompaniment on the piano for this church service. In the opening words of the service, there is an immediate reference to the concert coming up later that week, explaining that various sections of this concert will be interspersed throughout the church service. The choir follows up on this straight away by singing one of the sections of this 'Requiem for the Living', accompanied by the composer on the piano and a clarinet player. After the first prayers, the congregation itself sings 'Light that touches us in the morning',<sup>35</sup> a song from the Protestant songbook *Tussentijds* ('For the Time in Between').<sup>36</sup> Hovius also accompanies this song on the piano and after the Kyrie prayer he does the same for the Gloria hymn that follows. After the minister has addressed the younger children in the congregation, the choir sings their next segment, the lyrics of which start with 'One step to take in grief, two steps to go, but not the third',<sup>37</sup> a line that is later amply reflected upon in the sermon. After the first text reading, the choir sings again, followed by a short explanation by the minister of what this Requiem is about. He explains how lyri-

<sup>34</sup> Interestingly enough, the minister himself mentioned the growing societal interest in All Souls' Day as one of his primary incentives, amongst various more theological ones. Interview with David van Veen, 9 October 2012.

<sup>35</sup> See note 30.

<sup>36</sup> Interkerkelijk Stichting voor het Kerklied: *Tussentijds* (Zoetermeer 2005).

<sup>37</sup> *Eén stap te nemen in verdriet, twee stappen gaan, de derde niet.*

cist Gert Jan Slump uses the same kind of biblical material as that found in Brahms's *Deutsches Requiem* but combines this with extracts from Saint Francis' 'Canticle of the Sun', which can also be found as a hymn in the regular song-book.<sup>38</sup> The congregation proceeds to jointly sing several verses from this hymn as the second reading of the day. This interesting liturgical decision clearly emphasizes the strongly musical character of this particular service, and underlines its ties to the Requiem concert performed later in the week. After the sermon, which further reflects on the themes encountered in the songs, the choir sings another section from the Requiem. During the subsequent reciting of the names and the burning of candles, Hovius remains seated behind the piano, softly accompanying these rituals of commemoration. When these rituals have been completed, the minister concludes the commemorative part of the service, which is musically marked by Hovius switching to the organ for a more joyful accompaniment of the church collection and the closing hymn.

Analyzing the functions of music in this commemorative church service, it could be said that in it two performative modes were brought together. On the one hand, there are the type of church songs normally sung together; on the other, there are the sections from the Requiem performed for the congregation by the choir. These two modes can also be interpreted as two different types of framing, the former bringing about a predominantly liturgical experience, the latter being more akin to that of a concert. If this is the case, we might also suspect that there will be different functions corresponding to these different frames. And in fact, it could be argued that the regular church songs tend to stress the social function more and are more likely to foster community and mark identity through being sung together, having been sung together before. The extracts from the Requiem, on the other hand, being sung by a choir of considerable skill, made a substantial contribution to the auditory beautification of this ritual performance. Besides this, their being sung to the congregation, making them the audience, also added an element of entertainment to the whole. This being said, it is not only easy but also dangerous to overemphasize distinctions like these, as considerable effort was taken to in fact bring these two lines together and merge them into a single service. Apart from the more literal references to their unity in various statements throughout the service, the musical accompaniment by Hovius was an important unifying thread deliberately employed by those involved to turn two halves into a single whole.<sup>39</sup> The literal references explicitly pointed to healing through invocation of the sacred, to the mediation of the past and the future through the fostering of community, and even to the ethical importance of commemorating the dead. By contrast, the music appears to be performing its functions more implicitly. To be more

<sup>38</sup> *Liedboek voor de kerken* ('s-Gravenhage / Leeuwarden 1973) hymn 400.

<sup>39</sup> Personal communication with Bert Kwast, coordinator of the choir project and chair of the church council.

precise, it *performs* these same functions rather than outright explaining or interpreting them.

#### 4. All Souls' Day Requiem concerts

On Sunday November 4<sup>th</sup> 2012, a Requiem concert took place in Tilburg, organized by the *Ad Parnassum* chamber choir. This concert was performed for the fourth time on the first Sunday in November, which has become the customary date for such performances. A few years ago the choir decided to explore what sort of performances might make it more well-known in Tilburg and the surrounding area.<sup>40</sup> The *Ad Parnassum* chamber choir concentrates on music composed by contemporary Dutch composers. While the appreciation for the choir has always been high, the performances were nevertheless attended by only few people. In an attempt to attract a greater audience and possibly recruit new members as well, the choir board began to make plans for an annually recurring event that – phrased somewhat irreverently – might do the trick. Since there are already numerous Christmas and Passion concerts, the board decided to organize an annual Requiem concert in the fall. The idea was to combine this with the tradition of All Souls' Day, which is why the concert was scheduled for the first Sunday in November. Each year, next to a Requiem from the classical repertoire, a contemporary Dutch composition is performed, and if possible this is a composition commissioned by the choir itself. In 2012, Anthony Fiumara (Tilburg, 1968) was assigned the task of composing this contemporary composition, the result of which was the 10-minute long, a capella *Lamento*. This new composition was scheduled alongside Brahms's *Deutsches Requiem* for choir, soloists and piano duet. A foundation is in charge of acquiring funds for the organization of the annual Requiem concert, for instance by applying for grants; the choir is responsible for the organization of the concert itself, which takes place in the church of the Trappist Abbey of Koningshoeven, situated just outside Tilburg.

##### 4.1. A new phenomenon

The yearly Requiem concert by the *Ad Parnassum* choir is part of a newly emerging ritual, as referred to in the second part of this article. As far as we have been able to find out, the first Requiem concert took place in Nijmegen in 2004 under the direction of Sophia Brink.<sup>41</sup> Each year she puts together a project choir that sings parts of Requiem compositions and short songs around the themes of sorrow, death and consolation. A year later, in 2005, a tradition of Requiem concerts was started in Lochem, entitled 'Requiem for...' (*Requiem voor...*).

<sup>40</sup> Interview Daniëlle van Dijk, 21 September 2012.

<sup>41</sup> E-mail to the author, 29 October 2012.

These concerts are part of the annual programming of *Capella Amsterdam* under the direction of Daniel Reuss. Each year the concert starts with one part of the Gregorian Requiem mass, the office for the dead or another medieval unison chant. The music is interspersed with poetry or instrumental music, and in some years the Saint Gudula Church of Lochem is decorated with objects of art.<sup>42</sup>

In 2010, a yearly tradition of Requiem concerts was started in 's-Hertogenbosch. Without exaggeration, this can rightly be called the invention of a tradition:<sup>43</sup> it breathes new life into the custom of the *Illustre Lieve Vrouwe Broederschap*, a fraternity founded in the fourteenth century around the devotion to the Holy Virgin Mary, to commemorate its deceased brothers on the Saturday after All Souls' Day.<sup>44</sup> Actually, these revitalized concerts are dedicated to one of the most famous members of the fraternity, the painter Jheronimus Bosch (circa 1450-1516), the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of whose death will be commemorated in 2016.

In 2012, to mention just a few, other Requiem concerts were organized in Nieuw-Vennep (Durufé, Requiem; Purcell, 'Funeral Music for Queen Mary'), Maastricht (four late Romantic compositions, played by a symphony orchestra), Tilburg (Fauré, Requiem), Tilburg/Abbey Koningshoeven (Fiumara, *Lamento*; Brahms, *Ein Deutsches Requiem*), Utrecht (Fauré, Requiem), Heeswijk (Rutter, Requiem), Leiden (Brahms, *Ein Deutsches Requiem*), Amsterdam (Verdi, Requiem and *Stabat Mater*).<sup>45</sup> In Venlo, the Prisma Foundation organized a commemoration program entitled 'Night of the Souls'<sup>46</sup> and in Amsterdam in the arts center *De Nieuwe Liefde* ('The New Love') a meditative evening with music and poetry took place. A remarkable new initiative was the 'All Souls sing along concerts' (*Allerzielen meezing-concerten*) in Utrecht, organized for the seventh time in 2012.<sup>47</sup>

#### 4.2. Requiem concert, November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2012: 'Beauty consoles'

November 4<sup>th</sup> 2012, Sunday afternoon, 3 p.m.: over four hundred listeners have gathered in the church of the Trappist Abbey Koningshoeven, sitting in the choir stalls and on chairs specially placed for this concert. The concert starts with a speech by the president of the foundation that has organized this concert. He speaks of consolation and concentration. After this introduction, the choir enters and takes up its position in the middle of the church. The first

<sup>42</sup> Interview Gerthe Lamers and Rommie Hulsinga, 26 October 2012.

<sup>43</sup> E. HOBSBAWM & T. RANGER: *The invention of tradition* (Cambridge [etc.] 1983).

<sup>44</sup> V. ROELVINK, A. BODAR & M. VAN DE VOORT: *Bosch Requiem 2010* ('s-Hertogenbosch 2010) 5, 10. Since 1641 the 'Illustre Lieve Vrouwe Broederschap' is an ecumenical fraternity.

<sup>45</sup> Information derived from several websites, see for instance [www.zinweb.nl/zinlog](http://www.zinweb.nl/zinlog) > archief > oktober 2012 > 14 oktober 2012: Troostende Allerzielenconcerten.

<sup>46</sup> [www.nachtderzielen.nl](http://www.nachtderzielen.nl).

<sup>47</sup> [www.meezingconcerten.nl](http://www.meezingconcerten.nl).

composition is *Lamento* by the Dutch composer Anthony Fiumara; the lyrics are by the Dutch poet Remco Campert. In these lyrics, the words are repeated as if they are stuck in the narrator's mind. Perhaps we are hearing the thoughts of someone who is grieving. In reference to his composition, Fiumara remarks: 'The music expresses a sense of infinity. Listeners somehow touch eternity. It is against this background that *Lamento* should be seen, as mourning for the transitory nature of life, poured into sound in a circular form.'<sup>48</sup> After the performance of *Lamento*, the abbot gives his interpretation of the music we have just heard. There are four words that recur in his speech: mourning, beauty, consolation and remembrance. According to his interpretation, *Lamento* represents mourning, while Brahms's *Deutsches Requiem* consoles because of its beauty, and thus the concert as a whole gives the listeners the opportunity to remember their beloved dead friends and relatives. Without mentioning the Roman Catholic ritual of All Souls' Day, he associates this old ecclesial ritual with the new ritual of the Requiem concert. After the words by the abbot, the choir takes up its position again and sings the *Deutsches Requiem*, a composition which lasts more than an hour. The German text of this Requiem, which is derived from the Bible and was drawn up by Brahms himself, has been included in the program booklet, along with a Dutch translation. After Brahms's *Deutsches Requiem* there is a big applause, and not much later most of the people have left the church, some of them going to the abbey shop to buy beer, chocolate, books and candles.

The abbot mentioned two functions of the Requiem concert: remembrance and healing or coping. The conductor of the choir, Anthony Zielhorst, stresses consolation as being one of the intended effects of the concert:<sup>49</sup>

The *Lacrimosa* from Mozart's Requiem can really get to you, and so can the comforting part (Part Five) of Brahms's Requiem, that's a real tearjerker. I think that for most people it is more than a concert, and that it's really a consoling experience for them.

In the accompanying paper program, a beautifully designed booklet, Daniëlle van Dijck, the president of the choir, stresses the consoling and coping functions of the Requiem concert:<sup>50</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Daily newspaper *Brabants Dagblad*, 1 November 2012: *Die muziek drukt een gevoel van oneindigheid uit. Mensen raken aan de eeuwigheid. Tegen die achtergrond mag je Lamento zien, waarin rouw om vergankelijkheid verklankt wordt in een cirkelvorm.*

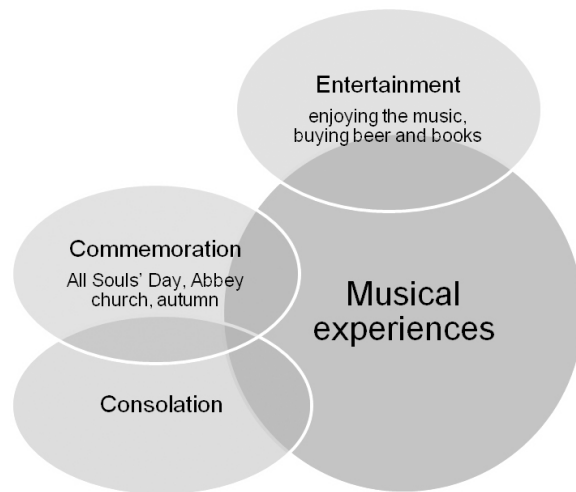
<sup>49</sup> Interview Anthony Zielhorst, 4 October 2012: *Iemand kan heel erg gepakt worden door het Lacrimosa van Mozart, of het troostdeel (het vijfde deel) van Brahms, dat is een tearjerker. Ik denk wel dat het voor mensen meer is dan een concert, dat mensen er inderdaad troost ervaren.*

<sup>50</sup> Booklet *Schoonheid brengt troost – Requiem in Koningsboeven* (2012): *Aansluitend bij de zich naar binnen kerende natuur biedt deze zondag ons de gelegenheid om met elkaar stil te staan bij het nemen van afscheid. Afscheid van degenen die ons zijn ontvallen, van toekomst, verwachtingen of idealen. Verlies hoort bij het leven en daarom rouwen wij. (...) Vandaag willen wij stilstaan bij leven en*

In resonance with nature turning inward, this Sunday offers us the opportunity to take the time together to say farewell. Farewell to those who have left us, to future expectations or ideals. Loss is part of life and that is why we mourn. (...) Today, we want to reflect on life and mourn, finding and recognizing each other, sharing in the beauty of words, silence and music. That we may be a comfort to each other is what we wish for today with all our hearts, for you and for ourselves.

The way the Requiem concert is presented and the communication about what is intended by the organizers of the concert is a way of framing at the level of interpretation. By using the words 'mourning', 'remembrance' and 'consolation', and by referring to the season of the year and the ecclesial ritual of All Souls' Day, listeners are influenced in the process of interpretation and giving meaning. The way the audience phrase their experiences could reflect the meanings attributed by the organizers. The way people actually experience the concert, however, is more than its verbalized interpretation. In conversations with members of the audience, and also with members of the choir who were not involved in the organization, there is one keyword that comes up every time, and that is the word 'beauty', which belongs to the level of experience rather than that of interpretation. The beauty of the performance is linked to consolation and commemoration on the one hand, and to enjoyment on the other. As far as the audience goes, we are dealing with their own personal process of experiencing, meaning making and attributing functions to the performance. In terms of Schechner and Lukken, the emphasis in their experiences is on the functions of healing and coping (consolation) and of marking identity by mediating the past and the future (commemoration) on the one hand, and on that of

entertainment on the other. They all emphasize, however, that the musical experience is dominant. This musical experience is linked to domains of meaning and to certain functions, but is not totally absorbed by these domains. In other words, the musical experience is precious in itself and is only partly related to the explicit functions of entertainment (enjoying the music, leisure), commemoration



*rouwen om in schoonheid door woord, stilte en muziek elkaar te kunnen vinden, herkennen en delen.  
Zo troost te kunnen zijn voor elkaar is wat wij u allen en onszelf vandaag van harte toewensen.*

and consolation. Besides that, we presume that the functions of commemoration and consolation are connected and partly overlap, as becomes apparent in the scheme above.

As said before, the scheme brings out that the musical experience is precious in itself, regardless of whether we put into words or otherwise interpret what this musical experience means to us or what its functions are. In this respect, we can learn from the way sound is viewed in Hinduism for example. In 1993, Guy Beck published a book on sound in Hinduism, titled: *Sonic theology*.<sup>51</sup> In Hinduism, sound plays an important role: drums, bells, gongs, cymbals, flutes and a variety of vocalizations (mantras) are part of the worship. This contrasts strongly with Western Christianity, with its emphasis on the word and on silence. The attention of Western scholars of religion is focused on 'sacred space' and 'sacred time', but to a far lesser extent on 'sacred sound'. Beck points out that even in the religions of the book orality plays an important role: the word is indeed spoken, recited, sung. A comparative study of the vocals in Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism and Christianity (Gregorian chants in particular) shows strong similarities: the vocals follow the 'natural flow' of the voice in a simple recitative. Can we study these sounds, regardless of the content of the texts sung and the associated meanings, as meaningful in themselves? The use of mantras in Hinduism, the repetition of the same sounds, challenges us to take the sound itself seriously. What from a semantic perspective is perceived as mindless repetition appears to be meaningful from a sonic perspective: the sound turns out to be a revelatory force in itself. This is also one of the conclusions Jochen Kaiser draws in his dissertation on religious experience and liturgical music. He writes, *dass die Töne und die Melodie eine hermeneutische Funktion haben*.<sup>52</sup> This hermeneutical function is an experience of the body and the senses and is difficult to verbalize. To put it bluntly, the musical experience is partly without predetermined explicit meaning and function. As an experience, it just is.<sup>53</sup> This corresponds to the way meaning is said to be constructed in and through rituals. Here, we refer to ritual studies specialist Roy Rappaport and anthropologist Wouter van Beek. They state that the primary meaning of a ritual is self-referential: the ritual *is*, and its performance is its meaning. We already saw Catherine Bell make a similar point, when she said that rites, as performances, create their own holistic world in which experiences validate their own importance. We argue that the same can be said of music and of

<sup>51</sup> G.L. BECK: *Sonic theology. Hinduism and sacred sound* (Columbia, SC 1993).

<sup>52</sup> J. KAISER: *Religiöses Erleben durch gottesdienstliche Musik. Eine empirisch-rekonstruktive Studie* (= Arbeiten zur Pastoraltheologie, Liturgik und Hymnologie 17) (Göttingen 2012) 267.

<sup>53</sup> E. HEIJERMAN: 'Muziek, taal en betekenis', in M. HOONDELT, A. DE HEER & J.D. VAN LAAR (red.): *Elke muziek heeft haar hemel. De religieuze betekenis van muziek* (Budel 2009) 17-45, p. 38-45.



music as (part of a) memorial ritual: the musical experience is not totally absorbed by its symbolic content or its functions.<sup>54</sup>

## 5. Conclusion: musicalized rituals and commemoration

In the preceding sections, we have presented three cases, three All Souls' Day rituals in which music is a more or less important element. In the case of Oudewater, the main function of the hymns is to illustrate the theme of the service or to reinforce its commemorative function. Actually, music is more or less treated as text in this case and, like the word of welcome and especially the sermon, has a predominantly catechetical function. In the case of Reeuwijk, the music itself is part of the ritual. The ritual itself is musicalized by the possibility of singing along and by the experience of listening to newly composed music. In the case of the Requiem concert in the Koningshoeven Abbey, this process of musicalizing is carried even further: the music *is* the ritual.

In all three cases, music is used in the context of commemoration. The intention to commemorate is evoked by the time of year, the ecclesial customs, the organizers, and also the place. In spite of these more explicit ways of framing the experience, however, the music itself, the sound, is left hermeneutically open, i.e., the sound itself does not impose meanings or make functions explicit, but is open to interpretation.<sup>55</sup> As was observed in the introduction, rites achieve their functions through multisensory framing, by which they create microcosms of self-validating experience. We argue here that the more musicalized the ritual is, the greater the role of the listeners becomes in terms of their experiencing these functions of the ritual for themselves. The act of experiencing takes place at the very moment of listening. The performance takes place 'now' and if we really want to listen, we have to stick to the 'now' (the present) of the music, otherwise we will not be able to listen anymore.<sup>56</sup> We can say that when a ritual is musicalized, it brings the past and the future into the experience of the now. In the process of listening, the past and the future are mediated in an experience of the ritual present. Perhaps (but this is speculation) the healing or therapeutic function of the music is not realized because it gives us the opportunity to commemorate, i.e., to be explicitly made conscious of loss, but because it places us outside the normal boundaries of time. There is the 'here and now' of experiencing the music, nothing else.

<sup>54</sup> R.A. RAPPAPORT: *Ritual and religion in the making of humanity* (Cambridge 1999) 65; W. VAN BEEK: *De rite is rond. Betekenis en boodschap van het ongewone* (Tilburg 2007) 36-38.

<sup>55</sup> C. KOOPMAN & S. DAVIES: 'Musical Meaning in a broader perspective', in *Journal of aesthetics and art criticism* 59/3 (2001) 261-273.

<sup>56</sup> M. HOONDELT: 'Presentie van het heilige in muziek', in P. VERSNEL-MERGAERTS & L. VAN TONGEREN (red.): *Heilig, heilig, heilig. Over sacraliteit in kerk en cultuur* (= Meander 14) (Heeswijk 2011) 115-127, p. 117-118.

One dimension of rituals that is mentioned both by Lukken (made into a theme as formalization) and by Bell (formalism, traditionalism, invariance and rule-governance) is repetition. We have reflected on this particular dimension in the first section of our article. Richard Schechner does not emphasize the repetitive character of rituals, but by defining performances as ‘twice-behaved behavior’ he indicates that every performance, including rituals, is the result of ‘recombining bits of previously behaved behaviors’.<sup>57</sup> Performances of music are ‘twice-behaved’ in a special way as well. We will illustrate this on the basis of three arguments. First, it is important to note that in the services in Oudewater and Reeuwijk use is made of hymnbooks. The communities thereby position themselves in a hymnological tradition, which is canonized and formalized by the hymnbook itself. They also position themselves in a liturgical tradition by choosing particular hymns that mark the identity of the community.<sup>58</sup> Secondly, in Reeuwijk, the lyricist of the ‘Requiem for the Living’ was inspired by the text of Brahms’s *Deutsches Requiem* and reinvigorates the singing of a Requiem not on behalf of the dead, but to console the living. Thirdly, the *Ad Parnassum* chamber choir deliberately chooses to sing a traditional and well-known requiem. While singing Brahms’s *Requiem*, the choir positions itself in the long liturgical and musical tradition of singing a Requiem to remember the dead. As such, repetition in the sense of ‘restoring’, ‘acting traditionally in order to commemorate the dead’ or ‘reverting to well-known repertoires’ is an essential part of the musicalized All Souls’ Day rituals.

In analyzing these three cases, it becomes apparent that focusing on music highlights certain important aspects of ritual. In particular, it highlights the importance of the ritual experience. In this experience, participants are often led to implicit interpretations of a ritual’s functions and meanings rather than having these explicitly explained. Going back to Schechner’s list of performative functions, we could argue that the first two functions he distinguishes, i.e., to entertain and to make something that is beautiful, most clearly denote those functions that deal with implicit experiences. It is interesting to see then that it is precisely these two that are missing in Lukken’s list of ritual dimensions. This absence might even be indicative of a certain negligence within the field of ritual studies with regard to such performative functions as entertainment and beautification. Paying closer attention to the ritual functions of music might be one way to make up for this negligence.

**Dr. Martin J.M. Hoondert** is assistant professor of Music, Religion and Ritual at Tilburg School of Humanities.

E-mail: m.j.m.hoondert@uvt.nl.

<sup>57</sup> SCHECHNER: *Performance studies* 29, 54-56.

<sup>58</sup> M. PLOEGER: ‘Spiritualiteit in taal en klank. Inleiding tot een nieuwe serie’, in *Eredienstvaardig* 17 (2001) 28-30. M. HOONDERT: ‘Identiteit en omvorming: spiritualiteit en liturgische muziek’, in *Tijdschrift voor liturgie* 90 (2006) 293-302.

**William Arfman MPhil** is a PhD candidate in the field of Religious Studies at the Tilburg School of Catholic Theology.  
E-mail: [w.r.arfman@uvt.nl](mailto:w.r.arfman@uvt.nl).

