

Johann Pibert
Berlin/Bonn

Madonna's *Celebration Tour* as a Starting Point for Affective Concert Psychology

Abstract: In this paper, affective concert psychology is developed by transferring the film-psychological experience matrix to pop concerts, with reference to classical concert studies, theater studies, and music psychology. The concert-psychological analysis of Madonna's autobiographical *Celebration Tour* presented here reveals the concert's central theme of the fight for survival, shows how Madonna, through bodily co-presence, synchronizes herself with her fans, profoundly touches them to tears, and moves them as a community. Generally, it is argued that pop concert performances are associated with a very high degree of intensity of concert experiences.

Johann Pibert (Dipl.-Psych.) is a doctoral candidate in Media Studies at the University of Bonn, currently developing the psychology of the performing arts. He was previously a personal assistant to the president of the Ernst Busch University of Theatre Arts in Berlin and a research assistant at the Film University Babelsberg KONRAD WOLF in Potsdam. He studied Psychology and Business Administration at the University of Mannheim and Film Studies as well as Journalism and Communication Studies at the Free University of Berlin.

1. Introduction

*No fear, people, no fear. And I will fight for you to the day I die.*¹

The positive intensity with which Madonna proclaimed her fighting spirit at the final concert of the *Celebration Tour* on May 4, 2024, in front of around 1.6 million people at Copacabana Beach in Rio de Janeiro is reflected in many ways in the experiences and behaviors of her fans. When I told my critically ill, bedridden mother—a die-hard Madonna fan—about the announcement of the greatest hits tour on January 17, 2023, she said, “I must not die before I see Madonna again. This will be my last concert.”

In *Madonna and Us. Confessions* (2008),² more than 60 Madonna fans—mainly music journalists, musicians, writers, and artists—‘sing’ a “multi-voiced birthday serenade of essays, prose, music stories, manifestos, interviews, song lyrics, Skype chats, commentaries”³ for Madonna’s 50th birthday. The largely autobiographical contributions impressively show how Madonna’s work and influence can accompany entire life stories.⁴ In this context, I assume that concert experiences are among the most intense due to the bodily co-presence⁵ of Madonna and her fans: “[pop concert] participants can gain aesthetic pleasure, sense of authenticity, tacit understanding and immersion, which are embodied experiences that cannot be replicated by other musical experiences and digitalization.”⁶

The apparent impact of a pop concert on the psychological triad—i.e., on how people feel, think, and act⁷—before, during, and after the concert requires a scholarly approach through concert psychology. Affective concert psychology allows a deeper understanding of the concert recipients’ aesthetic experiences. This paper extends the corresponding paradigm from film studies—the affective–integrative film psychology I developed⁸—to pop concerts. This is possible and useful because ontological *oppositions* between live and mediatised experiences generally prove to be unproductive:

¹ *Madonna: The Celebration Tour in Rio* (2024): 01:39:09–01:39:19.

² Grether/Grether 2008a. The book’s original title is *Madonna und wir. Bekenntnisse*. All translations from German into English are my own translations.

³ Grether/Grether 2008b: 14.

⁴ “For 25 years now, we have wanted to share in her desires, her depths, and her role-playing because we sense in every step of life she dances for us that it is our own archaic longings she so artfully pushes to the extreme and beyond”; *ibid.*: 10.

⁵ For more information on this, see Fischer-Lichte 2008: 38–40.

⁶ Luo/Hu/Guo 2022: 2838.

⁷ The psychological triad refers to both the basal mental functions of humans and the higher-level social functions of the self; cf. Pibert 2019: 142, Aronson et al. 2016: 124.

⁸ See Pibert 2019.

Like live performance, electronic and photographic media can be described meaningfully as partaking of the ontology of disappearance ascribed to live performance, and they can also be used to provide an experience of evanescence. Like film and television, theatre can be used as a mass medium.⁹

Nevertheless, I argue that research based on ontological and especially topological *differences*—instead of oppositions—between concerts, concert movies, and fan recordings (e.g., on YouTube) can be fruitfully applied in a particular case. Taking Madonna fans as an example, it can be assumed that the concert experience and behavior's very high degree of intensity is the central specific feature of pop concert performances. It would not be possible to achieve this high level of intensity by watching a concert movie or a fan recording.

Not only the intensity of the fight for survival and the autobiographical character of the *Celebration Tour*, interwoven with fan biographies, make it a suitable object of investigation in the development of the affective concert psychology, but also Madonna's status in scholarship: The extensive research on the Madonna phenomenon, exemplified by the 1993 anthology *The Madonna Connection*,¹⁰ has led to the emergence of Madonna studies as a subdiscipline of cultural studies.¹¹ Furthermore, Madonna's concert *oeuvre* plays a leading role in pop concert practice:

Her concerts are genre theory-defying shows featuring songs, of course, but also a spectacular *mise en scène* with clear dance, cabaret, circus, mime, street theater and Broadway/West End musical influences, not to mention the importance of lighting and multimedia resources. Whether performing live or through her music videos, Madonna is to be seen rather than listened to, thus paving the road for a good many (especially yet not exclusively female) artists, including the latest sensation in the music recording industry, Lady Gaga.¹²

In the following, I give an overview of concert-psychological approaches (2.) and present the concert-psychological experience matrix as the core of the affective concert psychology, analyzing selected scenes from the *Celebration Tour* (3.). The illustration of the experience matrix, based on concert excerpts chosen according to the theme of the fight for survival, answers the research question of whether the recipients' concrete experiences and behaviors have a very high degree of intensity. After the analyses, I conclude by embedding the paradigm set out here into current research (4.).

⁹ Auslander 2023: 27.

¹⁰ Schwichtenberg 1993.

¹¹ Cf. Perks 2023: 31.

¹² Prieto-Arranz 2012: 179.

2. Concert-Psychological Approaches

As stated above, pop concerts' impact on feeling, thinking, and acting makes concert psychology a useful paradigm for investigating concert experiences. Since the term "concert psychology" has not been established or coined by anyone yet—a corresponding Google Scholar search, for example, is unsuccessful—research relevant to concert psychology can only be indirectly identified through the disciplines of classical concert studies, theater studies, and music psychology.¹³ From the wealth of literature, I would like to highlight the works that seem most significant to me for developing affective concert psychology.

The recently emerging concert studies¹⁴ are primarily concerned with classical concerts, which, in terms of aesthetic experience, often have little in common with the "concert extravaganzas"¹⁵ of popular music. However, this field of research is highly relevant, as structurally analogous epistemological questions are to be expected. A look at the anthology *Classical Concert Studies. A Companion to Contemporary Research and Performance* (2021), edited by Martin Tröndle,¹⁶ reveals terms from the concert-psychological experience matrix presented below (e.g., concert event and experience; dramaturgy/formal aesthetics; concert space and time; moment of reception; atmosphere; concertgoers' behavior; performance culture) as well as axiomatic overlaps (e.g., presence/situatedness and processuality/dynamics of concerts; synchronization between the concert and its recipients; immediate aesthetic experience as an essential object of investigation). Based on the crisis of the classical concert business with its "musealization,"¹⁷ "aging audiences, declining attendance numbers, and a lack of new, younger target groups,"¹⁸ the call for a performative turn is loud in Tröndle's edited volume,¹⁹ with the central demand for a renewal of the performance culture.²⁰

Consequently, I use Erika Fischer-Lichte's aesthetics of the performative from theater studies²¹ as a theoretical basis. Under the guiding metaphor of "culture as

¹³ Concert experiences can be influenced by the fans' prior knowledge. Therefore, concert-psychological researchers are advised to consult culturally informed studies to anticipate the interpretations of on-stage events and signs evoked by the artist(s) in the case of a fan survey or to understand them better in a descriptive analysis. However, cultural studies research is not part of concert-psychological analyses. Instead, it provides background information on the cognitions of the recipients.

¹⁴ See Tröndle/Bishop 2021: 1–4.

¹⁵ Kellner 2003: 8.

¹⁶ Tröndle 2021.

¹⁷ Schmitt/Tröndle 2021: 251.

¹⁸ Rhomberg/Tröndle 2021: 316.

¹⁹ Cf., e.g., Cook 2021: 32–33. See also Tröndle 2011: 35.

²⁰ Cf. Rhomberg/Tröndle 2021: 318–319.

²¹ See Fischer-Lichte 2008, 1999.

performance,”²² Fischer-Lichte postulates the overlapping concepts of semioticity, aestheticity, materiality, and mediality.²³ (1.) Regarding semioticity, she assumes a precedence of performance over reference: “In performances, bodies, movements, gestures, sounds, and objects do not have a meaning *per se*, but only in the context of the performative processes in which they are utilized.”²⁴ In other words, recipients do not draw meanings from dramatic texts (in the case of pop concerts, from song lyrics and music videos) and their expressions through theatrical means but, first and foremost, from the performative processes they experience.²⁵ (2.) The aestheticity of performances lies in their nature as events,²⁶ corresponding to the concerts’ definition as events in the experience matrix shown below. This means that “the emergence of what happens is more important than what happens and than the meanings that are attributed later, that is after the event is over.”²⁷ (3.) Concerning materiality, the event-like nature of performances implies that they are “unique and unrepeatable” as well as “fleeting and transitory.”²⁸ Specifically, the materiality of performances includes their corporeality, tonality, spatiality,²⁹ and—as a “condition of possibility for their appearance in space”³⁰—their temporality.³¹ In line with this, the experience matrix incorporates space and time, in which movement unfolds, characterized by its intensity and dramaturgical intentionality. (4.) The mediality of performances is essentially characterized by the already mentioned bodily co-presence of artists and recipients,³² who together play “the game of performance”³³ according to particular rules. Thus, a performance can be understood as a “special form of face-to-face interaction”³⁴ and bodily co-presence as a “relationship between co-subjects.”³⁵ Fischer-Lichte includes the reversal of roles and the touch between artists and recipients, the community they create, and the liveness³⁶ of the performance in the bodily co-presence.³⁷ Bodily co-presence is the key distinguishing factor between concert and film psychology.

²² Fischer-Lichte 2008: 26.

²³ Ibid. For a summary, see Fischer-Lichte 1999: 223–225.

²⁴ Ibid.: 225.

²⁵ Cf. Fischer-Lichte 2008: 138. For more information on the emergence of meaning, see *ibid.*: 138–160.

²⁶ For more information on this, see *ibid.*: 161–168.

²⁷ Fischer-Lichte 1999: 225.

²⁸ Ibid.: 224.

²⁹ Cf. *ibid.* For more information on this, see Fischer-Lichte 2008: 75–130.

³⁰ Ibid.: 130.

³¹ For more information on this, see *ibid.*: 130–137.

³² For more information on this, see *ibid.*: 38–40.

³³ Ibid.: 33.

³⁴ Fischer-Lichte 1999: 224.

³⁵ Fischer-Lichte 2008: 32.

³⁶ On liveness, see Auslander 2023.

³⁷ For more information on this, see Fischer-Lichte 2008: 40–74.

Further insights into concert-psychological processes and phenomena are provided by music-psychological and other empirical studies in which the actual reception situation (and, in some cases, its before and after) of the classical or pop concert is examined. From the perspective of embodiment, Qiuju Luo, Siyue Hu, and Yunjiao Guo demonstrate the psychological factors of “synchronized body performance” and “emotional release” as well as the physiological factors of “body presence” and “immersion.”³⁸ With regard to bodily co-presence, Dana Swarbrick et al. show that head movements at a live concert are faster (but not more synchronized to the music) than when the same songs are listened to recorded,³⁹ which supports the intensity assumption made in the introduction. Wolfgang Tschacher et al. prove the existence of a “synchronized physiology as an index of immersion,” which they operationalize using concertgoers’ heart rate, respiration rate, and skin conductance response.⁴⁰ Moreover, Julia Merrill et al. find, among other things, a connection between programming—i.e., concert dramaturgy—and the recipients’ emotions.⁴¹

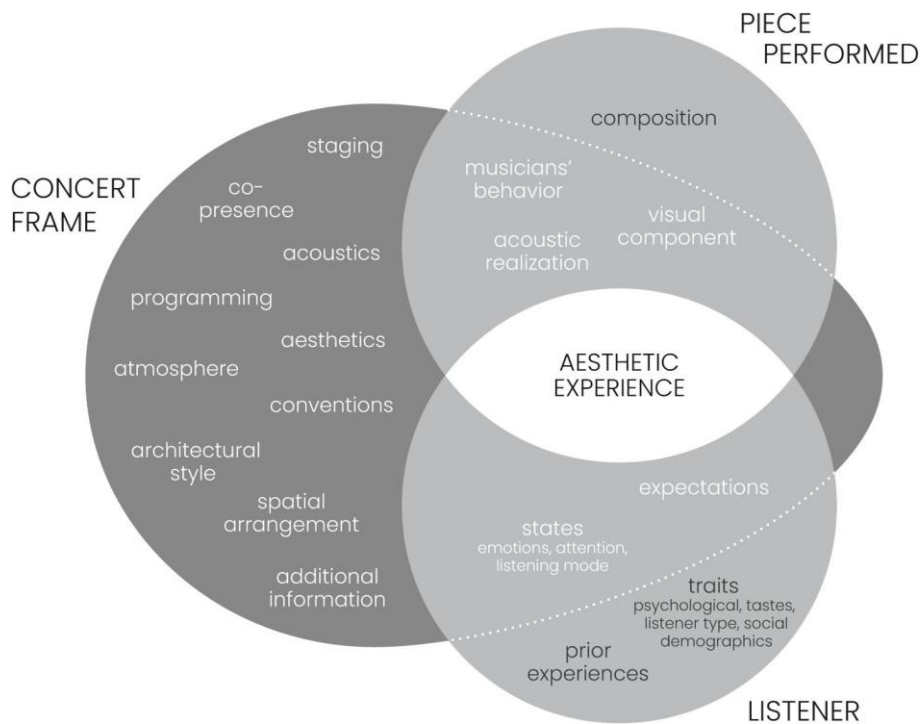


Fig. 1: Framework by Wald-Fuhrmann et al. 2021: 9

³⁸ See Luo/Hu/Guo 2022: 2847 and 2843, tab. 1.

³⁹ See Swarbrick et al. 2019: 6.

⁴⁰ See Tschacher et al. 2023; the quotation is on p. 153.

⁴¹ See Merrill et al. 2023.

In addition to a review of empirical studies on classical concerts, Melanie Wald-Fuhrmann et al. present a framework in 2021 whose basic idea corresponds to that of my experience matrix first published in 2019: aesthetic experience arises as a result of the encounter between the performance and its recipients in a specific reception situation.⁴² Although the authors formulate a basic idea from the top down and compile existing research from the bottom up, their theory development (fig. 1) can be described as insufficient in systematizing the various concepts since the hierarchical organization of concert experiences needs to be considered.

3. Concert-Psychological Experience Matrix

In contrast to Wald-Fuhrmann et al. and Tröndle and colleagues, who do not explicate the relationship between affect and cognition, affective concert psychology assumes a precedence of affective phenomena over cognitive ones. This precedence (that also guides the affective–integrative film psychology⁴³) is analogous to the precedence of performance over reference in the aesthetics of the performative, on which the affective concert psychology is theoretically based.⁴⁴ In accordance with Wald-Fuhrmann et al. and Tröndle and colleagues, affective concert psychology focuses on the aesthetic experience of artists and recipients. However, in the experience matrix presented here (tab. 1), the recipients' perspective is primarily shown. The experience matrix connects Daniel Stern's vitality pentad (intentionality/directionality, movement, space, time, intensity/force)⁴⁵ with the psychological triad (affect, cognition, behavior). It posits a hierarchical organization of these elements on four levels.

Stern has succeeded in combining humanities and social sciences by means of phenomenology,⁴⁶ which also underlies Fischer-Lichte's paradigm of the performative and Wald-Fuhrmann et al.'s framework.⁴⁷ Vitality and its dynamic forms in music, dance, theater, and film⁴⁸ can be examined using methods from both the humanities and the social sciences. Hence, Stern created the prerequisite for concert

⁴² See Wald-Fuhrmann et al. 2021: 2, fig. 1, and Pibert 2019: 150, tab. 1.

⁴³ Cf. Pibert 2019: 147–148.

⁴⁴ The affective concert psychology is not integrative because—due to bodily co-presence, i.e., reversal of roles, touch, community, and liveness—it does not have to integrate cognitive phenomena (reference) *to the same extent* as the affective–integrative film psychology.

⁴⁵ Cf. Stern 2010: 4–5, 8. Stern uses the terms “intentionality” and “directionality” as well as “intensity” and “force” (and other terms concerning vitality) interchangeably. He responds to criticism that “some of the shifts in terminology create problems” with the “difficulty of putting dynamic terms into precise words,” stating that “changes in the terms do not necessarily reflect significant changes in the underlying concept”; *ibid.*: 17.

⁴⁶ See Stern 2004, 2010.

⁴⁷ See Fischer-Lichte 2008: 141, Wald-Fuhrmann et al. 2021: 3.

⁴⁸ For more information on this, see Stern 2010: 75–98.

Concert		Encounter					Recipients		
Concert Event		Concert Experience					Concert Adventure		
Level of Aggregation	Formal Aesthetics	Vitality					Affect	Cognition	Behavior
		Intentionality	Movement	Space	Time	Intensity			
<i>Micro Level</i>	Scenic Moment	Space of Action	Present Moment	Emotion(s)	Stimulus Information, Sign(s)	Participatory and			
<i>Meso Level</i>	Scene/Sequence	Image-Space: Expressive Movement Unit	Episode of Consciousness	Feeling(s)	Situational Modell, Mental Representation	Documentary Practices			
<i>Macro Level</i>	Concert	Space of Concert vs. Space of Reception	Narrated vs. Narrating Time	Atmosphere vs. Mood	Explorative Interpretation, Satisfaction	Concert Choice, Commitment			
<i>Meta Level</i>	Concert Culture	Network: Concert Landscape	Phase of Life	Entertainment	Knowledge	Relational and Expressive Practices			

Tab. 1: Concert-Psychological Experience Matrix

psychology and, *in toto*, for the psychology of the performing arts,⁴⁹ which defines aesthetic experience as the immediate phenomenal experience—consisting of vitality forms, affects, and cognitions—in the encounter between the performance and its recipients.⁵⁰

The aesthetic experience takes place on three levels: the micro level of a single scenic moment, where the smallest units of analysis are located;⁵¹ the meso level of scenes or sequences—or whatever one wants to call dramaturgical units; and the macro level of the performance or concert. In addition, the experience matrix contains the meta level of performance or concert culture (e.g., an internationally networked concert landscape) and the recipients' behavior, which "can occur alongside the experience or precede or follow it."⁵² Intensity and affect share a column because it is the junction between the vitality pentad and the psychological triad, where the intensity of movement merges with the intensity of affective constructs. On the other

⁴⁹ See Stern 2004, 2010.

⁵⁰ This definition was first formulated for affective-integrative film psychology; see Pibert 2019: 148.

⁵¹ Cf. *ibid.*: 150.

⁵² *Ibid.*: 148.

side of the vitality pentad, intentionality merges with formal aesthetics. Finally, according to Hermann Kappelhoff, movement and space are inseparable.⁵³

Next, I illustrate the aesthetic experience and the behavior of the *Celebration Tour's* recipients using three concert excerpts and addressing all levels of the aesthetic experience. Only constructs from the matrix that are relevant to the analyses are explained. The analyses answer the research question of whether the recipients' concrete experiences and behaviors have a very high degree of intensity. The statements concerning intensity are based on my fourfold participant observation (two concerts in each of Cologne and Berlin). For the sake of coherence, all direct quotations are taken from the Cologne concert on November 15, 2023, because every concert has its "unique and unrepeatable" as well as "fleeting and transitory"⁵⁴ materiality. The statements are combined with a descriptive concert-psychological analysis that takes into account the most probable experiences and behaviors. Specifically, I conducted the participant observation before, during, and after the concert. It was open in relation to my interviewees and covert regarding the other concertgoers, implying a low level of standardization and a moderate degree of participation.⁵⁵ I carried out documentation during and after participation using my smartphone. Furthermore, I complemented the observation with descriptive concert-psychological statements, estimating the recipients' most probable experiences and behaviors. This is appropriate because not all internal processes and states become visible, and not all behaviors appear overtly. This method should only be applied if the observer is sufficiently familiar with the given performance culture and its typical audience.

3.1 "Celebration"/"Nothing Really Matters"

When the light goes out, it becomes apparent that Madonna is employing a bodily co-present person to initiate her autobiography⁵⁶ instead of elaborately produced videos on giant screens—i.e., contrary to the current pop concert landscape. The comedian Bob the Drag Queen walks from the rear left entrance of the arena's standing area through the crowd to the main stage. She addresses individual fans and shouts in German, "Cologne, are you ready for an amazing show?" Having arrived on stage and after the intimacy-inducing bridge of "Celebration" has been played ("Haven't I seen you somewhere before? / You look familiar / You wanna dance?"), she presents—supported by two smaller backdrop videos in a tube TV look—milestones of Madonna's life and career. As a result, she reactivates not only the fans' prior knowledge (tab. 1) of Madonna and the pop culture of the last 40 years but also their autobiographical memory ("She told us how to fuck!").

⁵³ See Kappelhoff 2007.

⁵⁴ Fischer-Lichte 1999: 224; see above.

⁵⁵ Cf. Flick 2009: 236.

⁵⁶ On initiation of aesthetic experience, see Pibert 2022 and Hartmann 2009.

This cognitive endeavor, located at the meta level, embeds the upcoming time journey in a larger cultural context but surprisingly proves to be a wrong track with Madonna's appearance. Entering from the back of a revolving stage, turning counterclockwise, and slowly revealing her face from a cloud of fog, the Queen of Pop—dressed in a black kimono, with an iridescent halo crown, and bathed in blue light—suspends her own life story by disclosing:

When I was very young
Nothing really mattered to me
But making myself happy
I was the only one

Now that I am grown
Everything's changed
I'll never be the same
Because of you-u-u-u

Nothing really matters
Love is all we need
Everything I give you
All comes back to me

When Madonna, costumed as a geisha/saint,⁵⁷ addresses the audience with a gliding, semicircular, all-encompassing gesture to “because of you-u-u-u,” she synchronizes herself with her fans in a highly emotional, intense way, which is a key moment located at the micro level of aesthetic experience (tab. 1). The vitality form of gliding in circles⁵⁸ constitutes the entire performance of the song, as Madonna later completes a full circular movement and, beyond that, flashes of light glide over her on spotlights arranged in a circle. In this way, she not only indicates the circle of life but also connects her biography with that of her fans at the meta level. Furthermore, the

⁵⁷ In “Re-worlding the oriental. Critical perspectives on Madonna as geisha,” Rahul Gairola discusses Madonna's geisha impersonations from the perspective of cultural studies in the second act of the *Drowned World Tour* (2001), in which domestic violence is negotiated, as well as in the *Nothing Really Matters* music video (1999), which deals with motherhood; Gairola 2004. Against the background of the commercialization of East Asian culture in American pop culture around the turn of the millennium, he refutes the accusation of “exploitation or fetishization of ethnicity for profit” by showing that, in the tour scene, “visual contradictions highlight a strategic shift away from crystallizing an ‘authentic identity’” and, in the music video, “a fantasy world [...] destabilizes rather than confirms any set notion of a stable ethnic identity”; *ibid.*: 108, 110, 115. Thus, the aesthetically coherent appearance as a geisha/saint could be counted as one of the “visual contradictions” uncovered by Gairola.

⁵⁸ Vitality forms are dynamic forms of experience. They are described with adjectives or adverbs such as gliding, drawn out, disappearing, bounding, forceful, cresting, etc.; see Stern 2010: 7.

“Nothing Really Matters” initiation is a “microcosm” that reflects the “macrocosm”⁵⁹ of the concert, thereby preparing the concert audience for immersion at the macro level. Immersion, understood as “the collapse of the opposition between art and reality,”⁶⁰ occurs when the space of the concert merges with the space of reception and the atmosphere⁶¹ of the concert with the mood⁶² of the recipients so that the narrating time is absorbed into the narrated time.⁶³ The narrated time—i.e., the 40 years of Madonna’s career—is supposed to elude interpretation, in line with the artist’s notion of “nothing.”

3.2 “Holiday”/“Live To Tell”

Nevertheless, Madonna tells *stories* from her life, which occasionally extend over several songs. On the meso level of the aesthetic experience (tab. 1), the stories form dramaturgical units in which an expressive movement⁶⁴ unfolds in an episode of consciousness⁶⁵ and which aim to evoke feelings. Regarding feelings (e.g., love, anxiety, grief), “the cognitive component of subjective perception plays a more important role”⁶⁶ than in emotions; feelings also last longer. Accordingly, the recipients develop complex mental representations of the situations depicted, which in turn contribute to the generation of feelings.

At the end of act one, we are in a New York club (space of action, tab. 1) in the early 1980s—i.e., at the beginning of the AIDS epidemic—with Madonna, who is still relatively unknown, having to fight her way into the club past the bouncer at the door. To the tunes of “Holiday,” a colorful and exuberant celebration evolves. All of a sudden, the song’s tone color changes from happy to threatening; a dozen dancers leave the room, except for Madonna and one person who falls to the floor; a loud heartbeat is woven into the song and, from now on, sets the rhythm; the huge disco ball descends from the ceiling and occupies the rotunda; Madonna’s voice, which repeatedly postulates “holiday,” incessantly veers off into anxious and disturbing sounds; finally, she holds the hand of the dying man and, horrified, covers him with her coat, whereupon both sink into the ground. The feeling of threat is transferred to the previously dancing recipients and increases to the fear of death.

⁵⁹ Hartmann 2009: 48.

⁶⁰ Fischer-Lichte 2008: 176.

⁶¹ On the concept of atmosphere, see Böhme 2017.

⁶² A mood arises when the connection to the numerous small affective events is lost; compared to emotions, it is weaker, less variable, and persists longer; cf. Pibert 2019: 148, Schmidt-Atzert 1996: 24, Merten 2003: 11.

⁶³ Cf. Pibert 2019: 151.

⁶⁴ See Bakels 2017: 71.

⁶⁵ See Stern 2004: 10.

⁶⁶ Pibert 2019: 148. Cf. Merten 2003: 11.

Thunder and lightning follow, with Madonna's voice-over singing, "Sitting on a park bench / Thinking about a friend of mine / He was only twenty-three / Gone before he had his time" —the beginning of "In This Life," as some recognize. Many struggle with tears.

Madonna rises to "Live To Tell" in a life-size picture frame ("I have a tale to tell / Sometimes it gets so hard to hide it well"). The expressive movement thus takes an upward turn after the downward one. A huge vertical screen unrolls from the ceiling, showing a close-up of Martin Burgoyne's face—Madonna's best friend, for whom she wrote "In This Life" ("I was not ready for the fall / Too blind to see the writing on the wall"). The screens with the faces, names, and dates of birth and death of four other friends unfold: Christopher Flynn, Keith Haring, Howard Brookner, and Herb Ritts. Singing with a face distorted by pain, Madonna 'flies' toward the photographs in her picture frame, creating interactions that are, in a sense, face-to-face. Meanwhile, the recipients become mourners. The five faces are replaced by five others and then by still others, including Freddie Mercury, which the audience acknowledges with cries and clapping. The photographs are each divided into two new ones, which in turn are divided into further ones, and so on—until hundreds of AIDS victims can be seen at the end. The feeling of grief is thereby intensified to infinity. There are no words for the horror of the AIDS epidemic, no interpretation, only the faces of the deceased and the abundance of tears of those who honor them.

3.3 "Mother And Father"/"I Will Survive"

383

In act three, Madonna celebrates the quintessence of the fight for survival in her most autobiographical scene, which consists of two songs and aims to trigger emotions. Emotions are short-lasting reactions to affective events and may include facial expressions, physiological changes, and subjective experiences.⁶⁷ The first affective event is Madonna's introduction to the first song: "This next song I'm gonna sing is about my mother—about *your* mother [she points to the audience]." A photograph of her deceased mother (Madonna was only five years old at the time) unrolls from below, and when the artist sings, "Nobody else would ever take the place of you / Nobody else could do the things that you could do" (fig. 2), the audience is moved to tears once again. At the micro level of aesthetic experience (tab. 1), the emotional contagion⁶⁸ of fans is complete because many have lost their mothers and can identify with Madonna, following her call "about *your* mother."⁶⁹ Altogether, participation, elicited partly through emotional contagion, generates a community⁷⁰ and produces the social relational emotion of *kama muta*:

⁶⁷ Cf. Pibert 2019: 148, Izard 1977: 4, Schmidt-Atzert 1996: 21, Merten 2003: 15–16.

⁶⁸ For more information on this, see Hatfield/Cacioppo/Rapson 1994.

⁶⁹ On reversal of roles, see Fischer-Lichte 2008: 40–51.

⁷⁰ See *ibid.*: 51–60.

Kama muta (Sanskrit term for 'moved by love') is a construct that conceptualizes the warm, positive emotion that we often label as *being moved* as a social relational emotion, which also encompasses a range of other, related labels such as *heart-warming*, *nostalgia*, and *love*.⁷¹



Fig. 2: Madonna sings "Mother And Father" to her deceased mother, whose photograph is displayed on a screen, on November 15, 2023, in Cologne

The scene and the expressive movement unit continue with a speech in which Madonna describes what has just happened as "one of my favorite parts of this show to look at her every night," pays tribute to the mothers of her adopted children, talks about her own maternal pride, and finally calls her children the reason for her survival. This is meant literally because, as most concertgoers know, only three and a half months earlier, Madonna was in an induced coma in the intensive care unit with a serious bacterial infection. Those present in the arena participated in this mediatized event to a certain extent—not only out of love, concern, and compassion but also because the tour was about to be canceled. The crowd is all the more moved when "First I was afraid, I was petrified"—the first line of Gloria Gaynor's "I Will Survive"—is heard. There is all the more participation in the sea of smartphone lights ("Please turn your lights on, turn your lights on"), and all the more intense is the shared enjoyment of life:

⁷¹ Swarbrick et al. 2021: 3.

Did you think I'd crumble?
 Did you think I'd lay down and die?
 [Madonna asks fans:] Did you?

Oh no, not I, I will survive
 Just as long as I know how to love, I know I'll stay alive
 Cause I've got all this life to live
 And I've got all this love to give
 And I survive
 [Fans sing without Madonna:] I will survive

All in all, the illustration of the experience matrix, based on the excerpts from the *Celebration Tour* chosen according to the theme of the fight for survival, reveals the very high degree of intensity of the recipients' experience and behavior, which can be seen as the central specific feature of pop concert performances. In fact, intensity is the column of the experience matrix that serves as the junction where philosophical and psychological entities are inseparably intertwined (tab. 1). This is the case because the essential vitality construct of movement (evolving in space and time, directed in a dramaturgical way) has an intensity at all four levels of aggregation that is reflected in the intensity of affective experiences. Intensity is thus a prerequisite for synchronization.

4. Conclusion

385

In this paper, affective concert psychology was developed by transferring the film-psychological experience matrix to (classical or) pop concerts. Extending the film-psychological paradigm to live concerts is an essential step in developing the psychology of the performing arts. The theoretical and methodological compatibility with disciplines relevant to concert psychology—classical concert studies, theater studies, and music psychology—underlines the transdisciplinary character of the affective concert psychology, which claims to combine humanities and social sciences. The concert-psychological analysis of the *Celebration Tour* presented here not only fits into Madonna studies but also provides reason to consider empirical studies of pop concerts in the tradition of music psychology. The concert-psychological experience matrix can be understood as a refinement of the framework developed by Wald-Fuhrmann et al. Specifically, this paper aimed to support the assumption that pop concert performances are associated with a very high degree of intensity of concert experiences. In the case of total immersion, this intensity can lead to a peak performance in the critically ill.⁷² This is how my mother, at the end of the first Cologne concert, contrary to all medical possibilities, clung to the railing in front of her to “Bitch I’m Madonna,” got up from her wheelchair—and danced.

⁷² Cf. Luo/Hu/Guo 2022: 2848.

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Music Video

Nothing Really Matters. 1999, mus.: Madonna, dir.: Johan Renck.

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"Nothing Really Matters." Single by Madonna (produced by Madonna/William Orbit/Marius de Vries), Los Angeles: Warner Bros. Records 1999.

Figures

Fig. 1: Framework by Wald-Fuhrmann et al. 2021: 9. The graphic has been taken from the online version of the article: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.638783>.

Fig. 2: Madonna sings "Mother And Father" to her deceased mother, whose photograph is displayed on a screen, on November 15, 2023, in Cologne. Screenshot from my own video.

Tables

Tab. 1: Concert-Psychological Experience Matrix.